CAPITOL® COMMISSION
Reaching Capitol Communities for Christ

Kyle McDanell
457 Versailles Rd.
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 750-1490
https://capitolcom.org/state/kentucky/

Malachi 5:1-6
Bethlehem: The City of Messiah

Divine anger is a strange subject for Christmas. Anger feeds fear of rejection. Discipline feeds fear of banishment. The same is true with divine anger. If God is angry, has he rejected me? That's the question of Micah.

Micah's ministry coincides with that of Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. Thus, the political and cultural backdrop to their ministries is the same as Micah's. Micah is appalled by the social injustice rampant in society and warned of their false security. Due to Judah's many sins, Micah's message is one of judgment and wrath (see Micah 2:1-3). Through Micah, God condemns political leaders Micah 3:1-3), prophets (Micah 3:5-7), and their priests (Micah 3:9-12).

Clearly God was angry at the people of Israel. They were in open rebellion against their Maker and God's justice required a response. However, there is hope. While anticipating judgment, Micah points Israel toward the hope of Messiah starting in Micah 5.

The chapter opens with the threat of violence and war. "Muster yourselves in troops" he begins in verse one. Anticipating either the Siege of Sennacherib, King of Assyria or the Destruction of Judah under Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, Micah warns "They have laid siege against us" (vs. 2). In all, Micah describes a scary and dangerous scenario for Israel. They will be destroyed. How will God save Israel? The answer is given in verse 2. He will not utilize kings, princes, or armies, but with an unlikely hero. Micah tells us the exact location of the birthplace of the Messiah. When Herod inquired regarding the birthplace of the Messiah, the biblical scholars knew, based on Micah 5:2, that the he would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah.

Note what Micah says about this coming ruler. First, he highlights **the Messiah's Humble Birth**. The hope of Israel in found in an unusual place. In the Nativity passages, the humility of Christ's birth is paramount. He is born to an unlikely couple, still unmarried, laid in a feeding trough, first visited by shepherds. The rest of his life is one of humility. The incarnated God had no house or home. The eternal King was barely known outside of Galilee.

One is immediately reminded of the classic Christmas hymn, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*. "How silently, how silently, / the wondrous gift is giv'n! / So God imparts to human hearts / the blessings of his heav'n / No ear may hear his coming, / but in this world of sin, / where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

Secondly, he highlights **the Messiah's Divine Origin**. "From long ago, from the days of eternity," (vs. 2) Micah writes. This is Divine language. Remember the context of this entire prophecy. Judah

is under God's judgment. The Babylonian captivity was an act of God's judgment. Yet it is also God who forgives and extends grace.

Thirdly, Micah highlights **the Messiah's Kingship**. No king was born king. Every king is born a prince. Jesus was never described as a prince who would one day be declared king. Rather, he is described as King – eternal. Even the magi – the king makers – fall before the Child-King. British pastor, Charles Spurgeon stated, "The moment that he came on earth he was a king. He did not wait till his majority that he might take his empire; but as soon as his eye greeted the sunshine he was a king; from the moment that his little hands grasped anything, they grasped a sceptre, as soon as his pulse beat, and his blood began to flow, his heart beat royally, and his pulse beat an imperial measure, and his blood flowed in a kingly current. He was born a king."

Finally, Micah highlights **the Messiah's Role as Shepherd**. Jesus is not a dictator-king, but a Shepherd-King. Who are the two groups who visit Jesus? Shepherds at his birth and the Magi when he was a toddler. Jesus is the Shepherd-King who leads us to Father.

Has God rejected his people? Micah's message is one of judgment, but it is also a message of grace. In Micah 7:18-19, the prophet states, "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. [19] He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea."

Micah's broad message is simply that God judges and saves the wicked. The way he condemns unrighteousness might be predictable, but how he saves is more unlikely. Grace is not merited through religion or ritual or tradition, but through Christ. Salvation is not granted by success or fame, but through Christ. Freedom is not found in family, friends or wealth, but exclusively through Christ.

If Christ's coming is from everlasting, then so is his love. Spurgeon summarized it well.

> I am sure he would not love me so long, and then leave off loving me. If he intended to be tired of me, he would have been tired of me long before now. If he had not loved me with a love as deep as hell and as unutterable as the grave, it he had not given his whole heart to me, I am sure he would have turned from me long ago. He knew what I would be, and he has had long time enough to consider of it; but I am his choice, and there is an end of it; and unworthy as I am, it is not mine to grumble, if he is but contented with me. But he is contented with me—he must be contented with me—for he has known me long enough to know my faults. He knew me before I knew myself; yea, he knew me before I was myself. Long before my members were fashioned they were written in his book, "when as yet there were none of them," his eyes of affection were set on them. He knew how badly I would act towards him, and yet he has continued to love me.