

# Adult Teaching Resources

December 20, 2015



## Hope Waits

A Time for Praise — Luke 1:68-79

A Time for Joy — Zephaniah 3:14-20

**A Time for Peace — Micah 5:2-5a**

## Season of Christmas

A Time for Growth — 1 Samuel 2:18-26

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# A Time for Peace

*Micah 5:2-5a*

## FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Before the Lesson:** Prepare equipment need to show the presentation of “The Good Shepherd in Early Christian Art” for the Transformational Exercise.

### Fellowship Question

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Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

What is the smallest town you have lived in?

In what town/city were you born?

### Information

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The prophet Micah railed against his sick society. As we read these passages, let’s list the symptoms of his sick society.

[After the verses are read, ask class members to summarize this symptom. Jot that on the board under the word “SICK”.]

[Have class members read Micah 2:1-2; 2:9; 2:11; 3:1- 3; 3:5; 6:10-11; 7:3

- Micah 2:1-2 The rich stole from the poor.
- Micah 2:9 Powerless widows and children were evicted.
- Micah 2:11 Preachers promoted pleasure over piety.
- Micah 3:1-3 The “haves” cannibalized the “have nots”.
- Micah 3:5 Religious leaders based prophecies on what was best for them personally.
- Micah 3:11 Politicians took bribes
- Micah 6:10-11 Business owners cheated their customers.]

With all of this sickness — everyone looking out for themselves and hurting whoever it took to get ahead — it is no surprise that personal relationships were affected.

[Have a class member read Micah 7:5-6.]

## Information *continued*

How would you like to live in this sick society? Do we have some of the same symptoms today?

This is not God's dream for the world. God did not create us so that we would steal, harm, or cheat one another.

Micah shared God's dream for the world.

[Have a class member read Micah 4:1-4 and Micah 6:6-8.]

That is a much better world! It is not a sick world. It is a world of SHALOM.

[Cross an "X" over the list under SICK. Write the word SHALOM.]

When we hear the word "shalom", we might think of the word peace. It is the Jewish word of greeting in Hebrew. Aramaic offers the same word also used as a greeting by Palestinians, but pronounced "shal-em." Our concept of peace gets at it, but the word means much more.

According to Strong's Concordance (7965), shalom means "completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, the absence of agitation or discord."

So, peace? Yes, but more than an absence of violence. It means complete, whole, full. It means a healthy, not sick, society.

In this Advent season, we remember that the angels who visited the shepherds proclaimed, "Peace on earth!" This is God's dream for the world, SHALOM.

But who can lead us to that SHALOM? A shepherd could, according to Micah.

[Have a class member read Micah 2:12; 5:2-5a.]

According to Biblical scholar Kenneth Bailey, "In the Old Testament the good shepherd image is used in three ways. The *first* is where God is described as the shepherd of Israel [e.g., Psalm 23]...*Second*, the leaders of Israel are also referred to as shepherds [e.g., David, Moses] ... *Third*, the Old Testament also includes a promise of a new leader who will come from Bethlehem." (Kenneth E. Bailey. *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL:IVP Academic. 2004. p. 31f.)

When Micah refers to "one from ancient days, he is referring to this second category. Moses was a shepherd and later shepherded his people through the wilderness. David was a shepherd who later led his people as a great shepherd-king. David was considered the king of kings.

But even Moses and David had their problems. Do you remember why Moses had to flee Pharaoh's palace to become a wilderness shepherd? (Moses murdered an Egyptian for beating a Jew.)

And, although David began as a handsome, psalm-writing, faith-centered golden child,

## Information *continued*

what were David's moral issues? (David had wandering eyes that led him to commit adultery and murder.)

What they needed, and what Micah predicted was on the way, was a *new* king of kings. As THE BIBLE LESSON writer says, "The clear inference is that the coming ruler would be a virtual second coming of David, still remembered as Israel's greatest king and the first to truly unite the country."

But, whereas Moses was a murderer as was David, how does Micah describe this shepherd? (He will be "a man of peace.") This shepherd will usher in shalom.

We sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem" because Bethlehem was a little town. But it was not an insignificant town. It was the home of Naomi and Ruth. Ruth raised her son Obed in Bethlehem who raised his son Jesse in Bethlehem who raised his son David — yes, *that* David — in Bethlehem.

It would be like an American saying, "We need another president to come from Popes Creek, Virginia!" Do you know who was born there? It was the birthplace of George Washington. There is a monument to George Washington there, but if you are like me, you will have to do an internet search to find it.

"[Micah] looks for a David-like king to defeat the forces that would destroy the land and one who would bring unity and peace to a newly reconstituted community, one who would feed the people and secure their rights in a land finally ruled by [God]...What Micah wanted for Israel and the nations is precisely what the early Christians believed that the coming of their Christ meant for their world: justice, unity, peace. It is the hope of every Christmas. It is the hope of this Christmas. I wish each of you a Merry Christmas. But more importantly, I wish each of you a just Christmas, a peaceful Christmas that strives always for unity and wholeness for the world." (John C. Holbert. "What Did Micah Really Want?" <http://www.patheos.com/Progressive-Christian/What-Micah-Want-John-Holbert-12-17-2012?offset=1&max=1>)

What do you think of that last statement? "I wish each of you a Merry Christmas. But more importantly, I wish each of you a just Christmas, a peaceful Christmas that strives always for unity and wholeness for the world."

## Transformational Exercise

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This image of the Good Shepherd influenced Jesus. He enveloped himself with this image and used the image many times in his teachings.

[Have a class member read John 10:11.]

And, this image is one that meant a lot to the early church. We can see this in the earliest art we have of the early church found in catacombs in Rome.

"What was the popular Religion of the first Christians? It was, in one word, the Religion of the Good Shepherd. The kindness, the courage, the grace, the love, the beauty of the Good Shepherd was to them, if we may say so, Prayer Book and Articles, Creeds and Canons,

## Transformational Exercise *continued*

all in one. They looked on that figure, and it conveyed to them all that they wanted. As the ages passed on, the Good Shepherd faded from the mind of the Christian world, and other emblems of the Christian faith have taken his place. Instead of the gracious and gentle Pastor there came the Omnipotent Judge, or the Crucified Sufferer, or the Infant in His Mother's arms, or the Master in His Parting Supper, or the figures of innumerable saints and angels, or the elaborate expositions of the various forms of theological controversy." (Robert C. Trench. *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord*, 7th edition. London: John W. Parker. 1857. Quoted in Bailey, p. 21f.)

Why do you think the Church has focused on these other images and forsaken the shepherd image?

"Their most characteristic symbols and pictures are the Good Shepherd, the Fish, and the Vine. These symbols almost wholly disappeared after the fourth century... The Shepherd... suggested the recovery of the lost sheep, the tender care and protection, the green pasture and the fresh fountain, the sacrifice of life: in a word, the whole picture of a Saviour." (Philip Schaff. *History of the Christian Church*. Quoted in Bailey, p. 21.)

Is it time we go back to Bethlehem, to find this shepherd-savior?

In the next few moments of silence, reflect on these pictures. These are the earliest depictions of Jesus that we have. They come from the catacombs of Rome, Italy.

[Show the slide presentation. Take your time going from one slide to another, both so the captions may be read and so there is time for a moment of reflection. The presentation may be found here: <http://www.cbfnc.org/resources/resource-library/articletype/articleview/articleid/289/the-good-shepherd-in-early-christian-art>]

[After the slide presentation, close in a prayer something like this: *Good Shepherd, we are your sheep. Lead us to a just world and a peaceful world. Give us shalom. Amen.*]

**Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan?** You may send comments to the lesson plan author at [rjordan@cbfnc.org](mailto:rjordan@cbfnc.org). Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**The text** — Three notes about the text. First, the received Hebrew text of Micah is very difficult to read. It has apparently suffered in transmission, and is virtually unreadable at points, leading to a variety of differing translations. In addition, oracles of doom and visions of hope are sometimes awkwardly juxtaposed, making the text difficult to interpret.

Second, the verse numbers in Micah 5 are different in the Hebrew and English texts. English versions have 13 verses in chapter four, while the Hebrew text has 14. Thus, 4:14 in the Hebrew text is 5:1 in the English text, 5:1 in Hebrew is 5:2 in English, and so forth. The numbers remain off by one throughout chapter five, but realign at the beginning of chapter six. This study uses the English numbers.

Third, while the Revised Common Lectionary reading is Micah 5:2-5a, the pericope should be understood to begin with Micah 5:1, and possibly to end with v. 4.

**Micah’s prophecies** — At least one of Micah’s oracles predicts the fall of Samaria in 722 (1:4-7), so it would presumably have been made before that date. Other oracles seem to be clustered around the political crises of 711 caused by a threat from the Assyrian Sargon II, or related to an invasion of Judah in 701 by Sennacherib, who claimed to have destroyed 46 walled cities and put Jerusalem under siege. King Hezekiah was forced to pay tribute (cf. 2 Kings 18). Though Micah prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem (3:12), it didn’t happen for another 125 years.



**Mareshah** — Israeli tour guide Doron Heiliger (right) and an archaeologist at Tel Mareshah walk to a dig site near Micah’s home turf of Moresheth. Note the low hills, an area known as the shephelah.

**Quoting prophets** — Like Micah, Jeremiah predicted that Jerusalem would fall if its leaders and people didn’t reform their ways and change their doings. After a stern message in the temple during the days of Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:1-9), both

temple priests and other prophets accused Jeremiah of treason for criticizing the city and demanded of the royal officials that he be executed (Jer. 26:10-12). Jeremiah insisted that he was speaking for God, not himself, and deserved no death penalty. The officials agreed

## Digging Deeper *continued*

that Jeremiah had done nothing worthy of death (Jer. 26:13-17), and certain elders of the land testified in his behalf by quoting Micah:

*“Micah of Moresheth, who prophesied during the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, said to all the people of Judah: ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.’ Did King Hezekiah of Judah and all Judah actually put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD change his mind about the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster on ourselves!” (Jer. 26:18-19).*

**Dating Micah** — While more conservative scholars may attribute the entire book of Micah to the prophet from Moresheth, critical scholars tend to regard only the first three chapters as authentic to Micah. Fewer scholars attribute chs. 6-7 to him, and even fewer think chs. 4-5 came from the hand of the 8th century prophet. It is not impossible, however, to imagine that the same prophet who predicted doom could also harbor visions of hope beyond judgment.

Here’s a brief outline of the book:

I. Introduction (1:1-4)

II. Prophecies of Judgment against Israel and Judah (1:5-3:12)

III. Travail and Triumph: Visions of a Glorious Future (4:1-5:15)

IV. From Judgment to Redemption (6:1-7:20)



**Who were the enemies?** — The primary threat in Micah’s day had been Assyria, which conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BCE (under Tiglath Pileser III and Shalmaneser V), threatened Judah from 715-711 (under Sargon II), and besieged Jerusalem in 701 (under Sennacherib), forcing Hezekiah and later kings to pay tribute. The nation that ultimately overran Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, and deported its leading citizens between 597 and 587 BCE was Babylon, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar.

This well-preserved prism was commissioned by the Assyrian king Sennacherib to memorialize his military conquests. On it, he describes the destruction of 46 cities in Judah, and claims to have besieged Jerusalem, shutting up King Hezekiah “like a caged bird.”

## The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

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### Why is the quotation of Micah in Matthew 2:4-6 so different from Micah 5:2?

Most Christians are familiar with the story in Matthew 2 of how a delegation of royal officials known as the Magi traveled from the East (probably from Persia), claiming to have seen a star that heralded the birth of a king, and wishing to pay him homage. Following protocol, they went first to visit King Herod, likely assuming that he would know if a new prince had been born.

Herod was so famously paranoid that he executed anyone he suspected of plotting against him, including his Jewish wife Mariamne and two of his sons. It is not surprising, then, that he was intent on learning about any child who might have been born into royal aspirations, but for the sole purpose of eliminating him. While putting the Magi off for a while, Herod sent for the leading Jewish scribes and interrogated them, asking if any of their prophets had predicted the birth of a king.

The scribes responded with a loose quotation of Micah 5:2, to which they attached a phrase from 2 Sam. 5:1-3. The result is a bit different from Micah's original prophecy. A literal translation of Micah 5:2 would be "Now you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are small among the clans of Judah; for you from me will come forth one to be a ruler in Israel, whose coming forth will be from of old, from everlasting days."

Calling on this text, the scribes (according to Matthew, who would not have been there), cited a prophecy that a child would be born in Bethlehem of Judea, "for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" (Matt. 2:5-6)

First, Matthew deletes "Ephrathah" (probably the name of a larger clan or area to which Bethlehem had belonged), and replaces it with "of Judea," which would have been better known in the first century. He then adds emphasis about Bethlehem's size not included in Micah, and converts "clans" to "rulers." Whereas Micah says only that Bethlehem is small among the clans of Judah, Matthew says the Bethlehemites "are by no means least among the rulers of Judah."

Matthew then adds a phrase from 2 Sam. 5:1-3, where the elders of Israel were seeking to persuade David to accept the crown and rule over Israel as well as Judah. They had said to David: "The LORD said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." Matthew deletes Micah's comment about the new king's ancient origins, and says instead "for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

## The Hardest Question *continued*

The quotation in Matthew, then, is not a strict quotation of Micah, but a loose adaptation of two Old Testament passages that Matthew (or the scribes he purported to quote) had adapted and combined in order to strengthen the connection of Jesus to David, who was not only born in Bethlehem, but known as a shepherd-king.