

Why Christmas?

Micah 1:1–5

Introduction

Every year:

- We have Christmas.
- shops are bustling with people scrambling for presents.
- families working hard for big meals and Christmas trees.
- pastors prepare messages that come from passages the gospels celebrating the birth of Christ as Savior.
- We see pictures of people in a stable surrounding a small baby.
- Tinsel and lights fill the stores with bright colours.

But is that all there is to the Christmas story?

It brings us to a key question.

Why Christmas?

What are the key reasons for celebrating Christmas?

To get the answer we will travel back more than 700 years before the birth of Christ, to a prophet called Micah.

Open your bibles to Micah.

Historical Background

The book Micah was written about 735 BC - 710 BC.

He ministered during the reign of the kings:

- Jotham(750-731BC)
- Ahaz (731-715 BC)
- Hezekiah 715-686BC

Israel was a divided kingdom at this stage between the Southern and Northern kingdom.

In 722BC the Assyrians took the Northern Kingdom Israel Captive after defeating their capital city Samaria (a three-year siege)

So, this took place just before the Assyrians would come and conquer the northern kingdom and almost took the whole southern kingdom.

Micah prophesied against both kingdoms, but the majority of the content concerns the Southern kingdom.

A quick overview of Micah and you see a large list of sins addressed.

You read about:

- ▶ Micah 1:7 idolatry and collecting earnings from idolatry.
- ▶ Micah 1:9 Israel described as having an incurable wound.
- ▶ Micah 1:14 Deception
- ▶ Micah 2:1 Devising wickedness on their beds and in the morning do them.
- ▶ Micah 2:2 Them coveting people's fields and tear them away, they oppress people.
- ▶ Micah 2:4 how they are called faithless.
- ▶ Micah 2:8 how they are described as enemies.
- ▶ Micah 3:2 They hate good and love evil.
- ▶ Micah 3:2-3 about what appears to be cannibalism.
- ▶ Micah 3:4 practice evil deed
- ▶ Micah 3:5 Prophets who lead their people astray, for the sake of food.
- ▶ Micah 3:11 Priests instruct for a price and prophets divine for money.
- ▶ Micah 5:10 disobeyed God's commands concerning chariots.
- ▶ Micah 5:12-13 practiced soothsaying, idolatry, false religions, worshipping the work of their hands.
- ▶ Micah 6:12 cities of violence, inhabitants speaking lies, using deceit.
- ▶ Micah 7:2 there is no upright men, all lie and wait for blood shed.
- ▶ Micah 7:6 disrespect their parents.

You also read God's responses of intended judgment upon both kingdoms.

Reading Micah, it almost sounds like the day-to-day events of South-Africa

Let us dive into our passage as we glean from the Scriptures the true reasons for Christmas.

Passage

Micah 1:1–5 LSB

The Word of Yahweh which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he beheld concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Hear, O peoples, all of you; Give heed, O earth, as well as its fullness, and let Lord Yahweh be a witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple.

For behold, Yahweh is going forth from His place. He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth.

The mountains will melt under Him, And the valleys will be split, like wax before the fire, like water poured down a steep place.

All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? What is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?

Proposition

5 Truths About Yahweh's Actions That Reveal the True Reason for Christmas

1. Yahweh's Word vs 1
2. Yahweh the witness vs 2
3. Yahweh's decent vs 3

4. Yahweh's power vs 4

5. Yahweh's reason. vs 5

1. Yahweh's Word vs 1

Micah 1:1 LSB

The Word of Yahweh which came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he beheld concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Vs 1 reveals 4 truths which provides the setting for Micah.

- The Divine Source of the Prophecy
- The identity of the Prophet
- The time period of the prophecy
- The scope of his prophecy

Let's look at these truths

The source:

Micah 1:1 "1 The Word of Yahweh

The term word (dabar = Heb) is in the emphatic position in the Hebrew.

In a tumultuous time rampant sin, world political upheavals, invading armies were at the doorstep of Israel, when all hope seems lost.

The Word of Yahweh came to His people.

God spoke to His people.

Micah reminded His readers of the supernatural origin of His message.

This was Gods divine will for His people at this particular time.

The words of Yahweh, not the words of Micah, not the words of man

Since it is Yahweh's Word it is authoritative, inerrant and sufficient.

We continue:

The Identity

which came to Micah of Moresheth

Micah God's prophet bringing God's Word to His people.

Micah's name means: "Who is like Yehovah?"

His name reflects the incomparability of Yahweh.

There is no other being like Yahweh.

The lack of personal information about Micah implied that he wanted to elevate God and His Word, not Himself.

How many preachers these days try and elevate themselves rather than God? Micah likely spent time in Jerusalem as an elder representing his village's interests.

Micah came from a small village called Moresheth (tell el Judeideh) located in the foothills of Judah about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Moresheth means possession of the winepress, or possession of Gath likely indicating they made wine.

Moresheth formed a strategic location for Judah's defensive architecture.

God's Word through Micah revealed many future military threats, and included announcement of judgment against his own hometown (Micah 1:14)

Moresheth would face devastation with the impending invading armies.

The time period:

in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah,

Mentioning the king Jotham serves to reference the period just after king Uziaiah's death that marked a distinct turning point in Judean history.

Jotham reign had limited transformational impact on the kingdom, he focused on infrastructure and military strength but did not pursue religious reform.

Ahaz was:

- king of Judah and reigned 16 years.
- He was an unrighteous king.
- He was idolatrous, engaged in pagan practices, worshipped Baal and child sacrifice (2 Chronicles 28:1-4)
- During His reign Rezin, and Pekah of Israel invaded Judah killing 120000 men and taking captive 200000 women, children. Yahweh's Word came through **Oded** instructing Israel to return the captives.
- Now Isaiah gave God's Word to Ahaz telling him he should not fear the northern kings. He should trust Yahweh.
- He could even ask for a sign.
- But Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, so Isaiah gave Yahweh's sign.

Isaiah 7:14 LSB

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

- Ahaz then raided the temple and paid the Assyrians to attack Israel who invaded and captured Damascus and took large parts of North Israel (2 King 16:7- 18)

- The sign will 700 years later be fulfilled proving the faithfulness of Yahweh to His Word. You can trust Him.
- When Ahaz died his son Hezekiah began to reign (2 Chron 28:27)

Hezekiah was:

- King of Judah for 29 years
- Righteous king
- Followed Davids example.
- He brought about several religious reforms
- He shattered and removed the high places, sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah poles.
- He repaired the house of Yahweh.
- During His reign the prophet Isaiah, Hosea and Micah were active.

Jeremiah tells us something of Micah and His message during the reign of Hezekiah.

Jeremiah 26:18 LSB

Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, 'Thus Yahweh of hosts has said, "Zion will be plowed as a field, And Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the house will become the high places of a forest.

The early parts of Micah's prophesy was delivered during Ahaz's reign, but the majority was during Hezekiah's reign.

But our passage was looking at what happened during the evil King Ahaz's reign just preceding Hezekiah's reign.

The scope of His message:

which he beheld concerning Samaria and Jerusalem."

This is what he saw.

The Hebrew term beheld (haza) = a technical term for prophesy.

This was Yahweh's Word concerning Samaria the capital of the northern kingdom and Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern kingdom.

Micah's prophesy transitions from the fate of Israel to the fate of Judah. Mich 1:

covers God's divine judgment and exile on the northern kings.

Application

So how would one apply this to the events of Christmas.

The Christmas story is about the Word of God.

The Word that became flesh and dwelt among His people.

John 1:1 LSB
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 LSB
And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Contrary to Ahaz who chose not to trust Yahweh, the Christmas story is in fact fulfilled prophesy, proving the trustworthiness of God and His Word.

So, as you prepare the tinsel and the pudding for Christmas, remember that behind the Christmas story is the truth that God and His Word is trustworthy.

Celebrating Christmas proves you can trust Him.

Trust His Word despite everything in life seeming to be failing around you.

Is He your anchor this Christmas time period?

This brings us to the 2nd truth about Yahweh's actions that reveal the true reason for Christmas.

2. Yahweh the witness vs 2

Micah 1:2 LSB
Hear, O peoples, all of you; Give heed, O earth, as well as its fullness, and let Lord Yahweh be a witness against you, The Lord from His holy temple.

Micah 1:2 “2 Hear, O peoples, all of you.

The grammar reveals that this is a command given to the people.

Hear is in an emphatic position.

The term hear = Shema= hear listen obey, perceive the message, pay attention to the message

This was Yahweh's Word to all of Israel both the North and south even though Micah addressed the leaders in Jerusalem.

They needed to hear, listen and obey.

The next part reveals a command and is the main idea of the sentence.

It's the zoom Lense of a camera focusing on its main target.

Give heed, O earth, as well as its fullness,

This was Yahweh's declaration to the earth.

God was declaring to all people on the earth.

God's Word to Israel was also God's Word to the people of the earth.

By application You and I are commanded to give heed as well.

Heed = root implies the activity of hearing, paying close attention and obeying.

What should you and I pay attention to?

We find what you should heed in the next statements.

And let Lord Yahweh be a witness against you,

Pay attention.

Yahweh is a witness against you.

In Yahweh's courtroom, you stand in the accuser's dock with God as witness and by implication the judge.

In this context Samaria and Judah are in the accuser's dock.

But take heed, in the future, all people of the earth will be in the accuser's dock.

What were the accusations?

Micah reveals all the accusations, remember that list of sins I mentioned in the beginning of the sermon.

All the sins.

Israel had severely transgressed against this holy God.

So have you.

And God has a case against all those accused and God Himself is the incriminating evidence; He is the witness.

A witness that cannot be:

- silenced.
- killed
- bribed

A witness that is:

- perfect
- true
- all knowing.

even knowing the very motives of the heart

The grammar reveals that Yahweh continues to be the witness.

The term witness's root means to return or repeat.

The witness is one who returns to tell the story, to reiterate, to reveal firsthand perfect intricate knowledge.

God summoned the nations to His court room.

You nations listen now to the charges against Samaria and Judah.

Listen to the judgment against them.

Their destruction is just a picture of God's judgment for you.

God knows everything you think, feel, decide, say or do.

The problem of our world.

1. God's creation continuously declares there is a God.
2. God's Word is available.
3. God expects perfect obedience.
4. God himself will be the witness, the judge and the executioner.
5. Sadly, the world appears oblivious to judgment day.
6. It ignores God's Word.
7. It lives in utter rebellion.

The Christmas story is about.

Jesus who came as a witness to the truth.

John 18:37 LSB

Therefore, Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You yourself said I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

Jesus who came for judgment into the world.

John 9:39 LSB

And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.

Jesus came to prepare for judgment.

Luke 12:49–50 LSB

I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is finished! Jesus will judge the world.

Acts 17:31 LSB

because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He determined, having furnished proof to all by raising Him from the dead.

Jesus will judge the nations.

Matthew 25:31 LSB

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Jesus will judge the church.

2 Corinthians 5:10 LSB

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

And Jesus will oversee punishment in hell.

Revelation 14:10 LSB

and he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His rage, and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

And you will die, and you will face judgment.

Hebrews 9:27 LSB

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

And Jesus will personally be a witness either against you or for you on that day.

Matthew 10:32–33 LSB

*Therefore, everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.
But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*

Christmas reminds you of the ultimate witness that came who is also the judge.

Yes, Christmas is about a Savior born, but a savior from what?

The answer

- A Savior from God being a witness against you.
- A Savior from God's judgment sending you to hell.
- A savior from all the wrath that has been stored up against you.
- A Savior from your sin, Satan and the 2nd death.

*Bethlehem and Golgotha, the Manger and the Cross, the birth and the death, must always be seen together.
J. Sidlow Baxter*

The last phrase reveals the residence of the ultimate witness.

The Lord from His holy temple.”

The Lord is described as Yahweh, The Lord of the temple.

The Lord of His holy temple.

The term temple is the Hebrew word hekal which means both a palace or a temple.

The witness is both king and priest.

*Psalm 11:4 LSB
Yahweh is in His holy temple; Yahweh's throne is in heaven; His eyes
behold, His
eyelids test the sons of men.*

Jesus is both our high priest and king of Kings.

The Christmas story is also about the divine witness, who will be your divine judge someday.

Application

- You should remember that behind the Christmas story, is a divine court room, where you stand accused of being guilty before a holy God, who is both King, priest and divine witness.
- That's why the savior was born.
- Since you know you are guilty, acknowledge your sin to God, turn to Jesus and ask Him to be your savior and Lord.
- Trust in His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins, so that he may be your advocate and your refuge on that great judgment day.

This brings us to the 3rd truth about Yahweh's actions that reveal the true reason for Christmas.

3. Yahweh will come down vs 3.

*Micah 1:3 LSB
For behold, Yahweh is going forth from His place. He will come down and
tread on
the high places of the earth.*

Micah 1:3 “3 For behold, Yahweh is going forth from His place.

The **first term** for you indicates a reason.

The **2nd term** behold is a term like Lo, see, look! It's an attention getter.

It's also in an emphatic position.

Yahweh is moving.!

He is going out, going forth.

Yahweh in response to being a witness against His people, Both Samariah, Judah against the world left His Holy temple.

Why is He moving?

The next phrase tells us.

He will come down.

The grammar indicates a few things:

- It follows in sequence the preceding action, which means what follows Yahweh being the witness is Yahweh coming down.

More than 700 years later (2000 years ago), Yahweh came down.

But also, Yahweh will again come down in the future.

Note the theology here.

Yahweh came down (descended, lowered himself)

He moved from the exalted position of glory to a lower position.

God would come down to deal with the incriminating sinful problems of Samariah and Judah.

This ultimately also prefigures God coming to deal with the incriminating problems of the world.

Micah predicted Yahweh coming down in Micah 5:2

Paul described Jesus's incarnation in this manner.

Philippians 2:5–8 LSB

Have this way of thinking in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a slave, by being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The Christmas story is about a glorious, exalted God humbling himself.

Conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit

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Conceived in a virgin in the tiny town Nazareth.

- Born in Bethlehem
- Born in a stable

Christmas is a story of humble beginnings.

The Christmas story is about two comings ultimately.

- the first coming of Christ as a slave.
- the 2nd coming in the future as a king.

When the angel announced to Mary two comings:

Luke 1:30–33 LSB

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. (1st coming)

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, (2nd coming) and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and there will be no end of His kingdom.

He predicted the virgin conception the 1st coming.

He predicted the reign of Christ on the throne of David the 2nd coming, an eternal rule.

The next phrase reveals God's exclusive worship.

and tread on the high places of the earth.”

The high places were elevated places used for religious worship.

They were often associated with worship of idols. (2 Kings 23:5-20, 1 Kings 11:7-8)

When Jesus would come, he will tread on (bend, stomp heavily or roughly)

God does not allow competition.

When Jesus came in His first coming, He alone came as the Savior.

John 14:6 LSB

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.

Acts 4:12 LSB

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. coming to Jesus, you need to turn from any idols to worshipping Him alone.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 LSB

For they themselves report about us what kind of an entrance we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,

Amos prophecy was the same as Micah's.

Amos 4:13 LSB

For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what are His thoughts, He who makes dawn into gloom and treads on the high places of the earth, Yahweh God of hosts is His name.

Jesus demands exclusive worship.

The Christmas story is about a humble savior who demands exclusive worship.

To come to Christ, you will have to turn away from your own high place.

You need to turn away from your idols.

You are to worship Him alone.

Application

Christmas is about the incarnation of Jesus.

The Divine Yahweh clothed in human flesh coming in the form of a slave.

It's a picture of humility.

But it's also about him being the only God who is to be worshipped alone.

Are you worshipping Jesus alone, or does Christmas reveal you actually worshipping idols in this world.

Make sure Jesus is the center piece for you this coming Christmas.

This brings us to the 4th truth about Yahweh's actions that reveal the true reason for Christmas.

4. Yahweh's power displayed vs 4.

Micah 1:4 LSB

The mountains will melt under Him, And the valleys will be split, Like wax before the fire, like water poured down a steep place.

This pictures God coming from heaven and the first thing his feet touch is the mountains and then the valleys.

It reveals a picture of the power and greatness of God.

Judges used similar word to show the powerful God that came rescue His people.

Judges 5:4 LSB⁴ "O Yahweh, when You went out from Seir, When You marched from the field of Edom, the earth quaked, the heavens also dripped, Even the clouds dripped water.

Isaiah depicted the first coming of Jesus with similar kind of language to prepare the way for Jesus.

Isaiah 40:3–4 LSB

*A voice is calling, "Prepare the way for Yahweh in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.
Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley.*

Zechariah predicted the 2nd coming of Christ with similar language.

Zechariah 14:4 LSB

And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

All this shows you the reader God' omnipotent power.

Christmas story is a display of incredible power.

- God in His power added a 2nd nature to himself.
- God in His power caused a virgin to conceive.

The incarnation baffles the minds of Theologians.

Jesus as God still sustained the universe through His power while being an embryo in the womb of a virgin.

Application

Your and My response is simple

Worship Christ this Christmas day.

*If Christ is not first with you, Christ is nothing to you.
"Christ Is All", Volume 61, Sermon #3446 - Colossians 3:11
Charles Spurgeon*

The 5th truth about Yahweh's actions that reveal the true reason for Christmas.

5. Yahweh's reason for coming. vs 5

Micah 1:5 LSB

All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? What is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?

You may ask:

Why does:

- The word come?
- The witness comes?
- Yahweh come down.
- Yahweh tread on the mountains?

The answer is profound in its simplicity.

The Great God whom no one can resist,

The great Judge who is the witness

The one who summons the world to His court room.

Come and witness God's judgment

Why the judgment

because of the transgressions of Jacob and the sins of Israel.

God invites you into that courtroom to reveal to you how He would deal with those who transgressed His law and have sinned against Him.

Micah reveals Gods punishment of Samariah.

Micah 1:6–7 LSB

So, I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the field, Planting places for a vineyard. And I will pour her stones down into the valley and will lay bare her foundations.

And all of her graven images will be smashed, And all of her earnings will be burned with fire and all of her idols I will make desolate, for she collected them from a harlot's earnings, and to the earnings of a harlot they will return.

And Gods judgment upon Judah

Micah 3:9–12 LSB

Now hear this, heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and twist everything that is straight, Who build Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with violent injustice. Her heads pronounce judgment for a bribe, and her priests instruct for a price, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on Yahweh saying, "Is not Yahweh in our midst? Evil will not come upon us." Therefore, on account of you Zion will be plowed as a field; Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the house of God will become high places of a forest.

Application

The Christmas story ultimately is about your and my sins.

You have broken God's law.

Christmas ultimately is about Jesus, the Savior, who came to save His people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21 LSB
And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

Christmas is ultimately about a divine courtroom.

Impending judgment

But a provided savior

Reject Jesus and you will face judgment from God.

Accept Him and He will be your advocate.

So Repent,

Trust Him as Savior

and yield to Him as Lord for

the forgiveness of sin and peace with God.

Conclusion

Isaiah predicted the virgin birth.

But Micah gave the key truths that are foundational to the Christmas narrative.

And it's in chapter 5 we read:

Micah 5:2 LSB
But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from everlasting, From the ancient days.

Mathew would 700 years later say.

Matthew 2:6 LSB
'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Leader Who will shepherd My people Israel.

*It avails you little that Christ is born, or that Christ died, unless unto **YOU** a Child is born, and for **YOU** Jesus bled. A personal interest in the birth, life, and death of Christ is the main point for each one of us.*

Charles Spurgeon

Amen