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C1102 – January 12, 2011 – Micah 5:2-6
The Near & Far Coming

Last week we saw the near and far siege on Jerusalem. The near siege in Micah 4:9-10 and the far siege in Micah 4:11-13. This week we'll see the near and far coming of the Messiah. The near coming in Micah 5:2-3a and the far coming in Micah 5:3b-6. So we're going to see the same principle in Bible interpretation that we saw last week. The principles of Bible interpretation are called hermeneutics. They have whole courses in seminary on hermeneutics. Hermeneutics are the rules or principles of interpreting literature. We follow what is called traditional hermeneutics and we have to say that because with progressive views of language in the postmodern deconstruction movement we've had an infiltration of new systems of hermeneutics in Evangelicalism. So we are not going along with the crowd, we are maintaining the traditional system of hermeneutics and language. There's a whole series of rules involved in interpreting Scripture. We're not going to go through all the rules; you already know some of the rules: the golden rule of interpretation, the rule of context and so forth. But we do want to go through one rule that is used quite often in prophecy, the rule of double reference. This rule states that God often speaks of two events or persons in one passage that are separated by a long gap of time. But in the passage they are blended together in one picture and the gap of time is not revealed in the text itself. And we see this rule in both Micah 4 and Micah 5: in Micah 4 the near siege and the far siege. In Micah 5 the near coming and the far coming. There are two comings of one person, the Messiah, separated by a long gap of time. But in the passage they are blended together in one picture and the gap of time is not revealed in the text itself. Nevertheless there is a gap of time between verse 3a and verse 3b. And it's easier to see there is a gap of time now because we live after the facts of verses 2-3a but we do not live after the facts of verses 3b-6.

So, to introduce, we said last time that Micah 5:1 comes back to the near prophecy of Micah 4:9-10 which deals with the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 588-586BC and so 5:1 is dealing with King Zedekiah and the near siege against Jerusalem. Micah says, **Now muster yourselves with troops, daughter of troops; They have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.** Therefore, when he contrasts in verse 2, **But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,** the contrast is between Jerusalem and **Bethlehem**. Jerusalem was the birthplace of Zedekiah and every Davidic King after David. David was not born in Jerusalem. David was born where? In **Bethlehem**. And now he's making the point that the next great Davidic King would also be born in **Bethlehem**. And so it's an observation in the text that the Jews recognized that David was born in **Bethlehem** and then every other King after David was born in Jerusalem and here is announced that the next great Davidic King would be born in **Bethlehem**. All the Kings in David's line who were born in Jerusalem did not follow the Lord as did David. So Jerusalem is set against **Bethlehem**. And were stretching back now to link the great Davidic King not to Zedekiah and the other Kings in David's line who were born in Jerusalem, but all the way back to David himself who was born in **Bethlehem**. All rabbinic commentators before the time of Christ consider this verse to designate the birthplace of the Messiah. We know, even at the time of Christ, when the astronomers from Babylon came to Jerusalem in Matthew 2 searching for the King of the Jews, where did the scribes and Pharisees say he was to be born? "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:" and they quote loosely Micah 5:2. "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." So the great Shepherd would not be born in the great city of Jerusalem but in the meek and mild town of **Bethlehem**. And so the two greatest Davidic Kings who will ever rule from Jerusalem were not born in Jerusalem but in **Bethlehem**. The first Davidic King and the last Davidic King.

And now he goes forth to describe the birthplace of the last Davidic King. **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 going forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.** Now, the town of **Bethlehem** was a small town about 5 miles south of Jerusalem. Topographically it's 100 feet higher in elevation than the Temple Mount in

Jerusalem. We were able to visit there in 2006. Since the mid 90's it has been overrun by Arabs and so Israeli tour guides will not take you to Bethlehem. When we went our Israeli tour guide got off the bus and we were transferred to a Palestinian Christian tour guide and he took us to Bethlehem. And when you come back into Israel from Bethlehem you have to pass through a security checkpoint where an Israeli soldier makes you show your passport and identification. And I remember two or three of us on the bus did have our passport and identification. And so this fine Israeli soldier is making us hold up our passports and IDs and I think my brother-in-law didn't have his so he just held up his hand and someone else ducked behind the seat. And fortunately they didn't get caught because they would have been there for a few days trying to explain that one. So it's possible to breach Israeli security if you can get on a tour bus coming back from Bethlehem.

But in any case, we were able to visit the birthplace of the great Davidic King in **Bethlehem** and if you go they'll take you to the Church of the Nativity which was established in the fourth century by Constantine's mother, Helena, as the traditional birthplace of the King and you will go into a church which is actually built on a hillside and covers the grotto or cave in which it is thought Mary gave birth to the King. It is a class one site archaeologically which means that we are almost without any doubt at all that this is the actual cave the Messiah was born in.

Now the name **Bethlehem** is a compound word, *bayit-lechem* meaning "house of bread." Messiah is born in the house of bread and He is the bread of life. It was a shepherd's town as we know from the time of David. David was a shepherd boy and he tended his father's sheep in and around Bethlehem. And since the Messiah is the great Shepherd and He came to tend His Father's sheep He too was born in Bethlehem. So there are a number of linkages between David and the Messiah in our verse.

Now this David did not appear on the outside to be kingly material and neither did Jesus Christ; He had no stately form or majesty. When Samuel came to Jesse's house, Jesse brought his sons out and when Samuel looked at the oldest, Eliab, he thought "Surely this is the Lord's anointed." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance, at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." And the

story goes on that Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, "there remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." And so they sent for this young boy and when he arrived, "the Lord said, "arise, anoint him; for this is he."

And so he did not have the looks of a King. But God chose him to be the King of Israel. And chose David's house unconditionally in second Samuel 7:12-16; the Davidic covenant consisting of the three-fold promise of an eternal dynasty, an eternal throne and an eternal kingdom. And so David's house was chosen to be the house that would give rise to the King of Kings. And so it is only fitting that the King of Kings would be born in the same city as King David, **Bethlehem Ephrethah**. **Ephrethah** is the earlier name of the city and later it was named Bethlehem. Both names are used here to identify and distinguish this Bethlehem from another Bethlehem in the North of Israel. And so here we have identified the birth place of the King that will come forth from David that will restore the throne of David and will be **ruler in Israel**.

This town Micah says was **Too little to be among the clans of Judah**, meaning it was not considered as anything significant. A **clan** was a military-political subdivision of the tribe consisting of 1000 men, not the Ku Klux Klan. And Bethlehem was so small it wasn't able to contribute any men to the clan.

And now he says things too fantastic of any mere human being; so fantastic that all the great rabbis of old consider this to undoubtedly refer to the Messiah. The *Soncino* commentaries which are publishers of classic Jewish texts state, "This prophecy of the Messiah is comparable to the more famous *shoot out of the stock of Jesse* prophecy in Isa. xi... Micah foretells the coming of one from Bethlehem (i.e. of the house of David) who, in the strength of the Lord, will restore Israel to their land and rule with them in God's name and abiding peace."

Verse 2b, **From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His going forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity. From you,** that is Bethlehem, **One will go forth**, this speaks of his origins on the

human side. He will be born of a woman. He will be a full human being; a human body, a human spirit and a human soul. Therefore he is a true human. He's not an alien, he's not an animal, he's not an angel, he's a human being. And in the same era the prophet Isaiah prophesied that His birth would be of a virgin. Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel." This was to avoid the imputed sin of Adam passed directly from Adam to the offspring, to avoid the inherent sin passed from father to son, father to son down through history and to avoid the Coniah curse of Jeremiah 22, that line of David was cursed. And Isaiah also said, in 9:6, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;" and so it is another passage which speaks of the birth of a child and also of the gift of the son. As a child he is born; as a son He is given. As a child he has a beginning; as a son he is eternal. And so in Micah 5:2 we learn where the child will have his beginning. It is from Bethlehem that He **will go forth**. Why will he go forth? For what purpose? **To be ruler in Israel**. To be King.

And yet Micah adds, just like Isaiah, not only does he have a beginning from whence he will go forth but also **His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity**. He will come forth from Bethlehem refers to his *humanity* but His goings forth from long ago, the days of eternity refers to His *deity*. Now, two things are actually being taught with these last two expressions. The first expression, **His goings forth are from long ago**, refers not to His eternity but to His preexistence. Literally translated it says **His visitations are from ancient times**. In ancient times He was visiting the world, making appearances as the pre-incarnate Christ. So we would say anywhere the pre-incarnate Christ appeared in the OT up to this point is being referred to by this expression. It refers to His work in creation, His appearances to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, His appearances to Abraham and Isaac, His wrestling with Jacob, His appearance to Moses in the burning bush, His appearance in the fire by night and the cloud by day as He led Israel through the wilderness, His appearance to Joshua as commander-in-chief of the Lord's armies near Jericho. So the first thing referred to is His preexistence where he actively worked in history in a pre-incarnate form. The second expression goes beyond this. Not only is He pre-incarnate and active in history, but He is eternal. **His goings forth are...from the days of eternity**. That is, before time He is there. He is the eternal son of God. The great theologian Charles Feinberg, an Orthodox Jew who was converted to Christianity in 1930 and went on to study at Dallas

Theological Seminary and became professor of Semitic languages and Old Testament, says, "The phrases of this text are the strongest possible statement of infinite duration in the Hebrew language (Ps 90:2; Pr 8:22-23)." So He is not only preexistent, He is the eternal God.

Now, before we leave verse 2 we want to make one more observation about this great Shepherd King who would arise from Bethlehem to rule in Israel. **From you One will go forth for who? for Me.** Who's **Me**? The Father. **Who is the one who will go forth?** The Son. So we have the Son going forth on behalf of the Father to fulfill the Father's purpose, which purpose is ultimately **to be ruler in Israel**. He will not go to fulfill His own purpose, but his Father's purpose. The doctrine of _____, anyone know? What did Jesus say in the Gospels? I do nothing of My own accord but only what the Father tells me to do. I come not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me. These all reflect what great doctrine? The doctrine of kenosis. Christ emptied himself of the independent use of his divine attributes. He came to do the Father's will and He only utilized His divine attributes with the consent of His Father. He didn't give up His divine attributes. He had them throughout His entire earthly life. It's rather that He gave up the independent use of his divine attributes. He subjected Himself to the Father's will each and every moment. And here that doctrine is in seed form. The classic passage that amplifies this doctrine is Philippians 2, "He emptied Himself..." He goes forth **for** the Father, not for himself, for the Father and the Father's purpose.

Verse 3, **Therefore He will give them up until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child.** The nation Israel is going to be given up. And here he's returning to the themes earlier in the book; namely that the northern kingdom would go into exile to Assyria. That occurred in 722 BC. The northern kingdom was given up in 722 BC. And the southern kingdom would go into exile to Babylon. That occurred in 586 BC. The southern kingdom was given up in 586 BC. And here it is prophesied that it was the pre-incarnate Christ giving up the northern and southern kingdom from their dates of exile **until she who is in labor has borne a child**, that is, until the virgin Mary gives birth to a child. They already knew from Isaiah 7:14, which we quoted earlier, that the woman would be a virgin and the rabbis until at least 250 years BC and certainly in the time of Matthew, interpreted the Isaiah 7:14 as referring to a virgin birth. So we have, **she who is in**

labor with its ultimate reference to Mary. The nation will be given up until that Mary gives birth to this child

So this period is from 722 BC for the ten northern tribes and from 586 BC for the two southern tribes until Mary gave birth to the child in 5/4 BC. So let's think in terms of the four kingdoms of Daniel about this period during which they were given up.

The child was born in the Roman Empire. Now, before the Roman Empire we have the Greek empire and before the Greek empire we have the Medo Persian Empire and before the Medo Persian we have the Babylonian. Before the Babylonian we have the Jewish kingdoms. Now the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman Empires are all Gentile empires. So, when the southern kingdom of Judah went into exile in 586BC world power shifted from the Jewish kingdom to the Gentile kingdoms. That's a key event in history that has a number of fantastic repercussions, the rise of six world religions and Greek philosophy, a whole series of things come out of the 6th century.

We're interested in the shift in power from Israel to Gentiles. And Daniel 2 records this. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a statue and Daniel is able to interpret the dream as a basic sketch of four Gentile kingdoms; Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece and Rome. God, in Micah, says I'm going to give the Jewish kingdoms up, meaning I'm going to allow them to go under the control and oppression of four Gentile powers before I will deliver her and reestablish the Jewish kingdom as having superiority over the Gentiles.

So in 586 BC Israel went under the first Gentile kingdom which is Babylon. Babylon is the gold head of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Daniel 2. And Babylon's great contribution to the world system is fractional reserve banking; the banks keeping only a fraction of the actual monies deposited and lending out the majority of that money charging interest to build wealth. That's the fractional reserve system, the money idol.

Then Israel went under the second Gentile kingdom which is Medo Persia. Medo Persia is the silver chest and arms of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Daniel 2. Led by Cyrus the Persian the Medo Persian Empire contributed the idea of globalism to the world system; the idea of spreading a

global empire that will stretch from sea to sea. They respect no national boundaries, they are interested in creating a one-world nation. UN type thinking. We have Medo Persia to thank for that, the power idol.

Then they went under the third Gentile kingdom which is Greece. Greece is the bronze waste and hips of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Daniel 2. Led by Alexander the Great and his global conquest ideas given to him by Medo Persia, the Greek contributed the idea of rationalism; the idea that man's mind as autonomous is sufficient for explaining the whole universe, this is the intellectual idol; Plato and Aristotle, Greek philosophy. These are all Gentile ideas, ideas that are contrary to the word of God.

And finally they went under the fourth Gentile kingdom which is Rome. Rome is the iron legs and iron mixed with clay feet of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Daniel 2. It has two branches as we'll see later, the Western branch centered in Rome and the Eastern branch centered in Byzantium. And the great contribution of Rome is military might. The idea that if we are to have a global empire, controlled by the rationality of man and funded by the fractional reserve banking system, it must have the force of the military behind it to control it, the military conquest idol. In the final phase of Rome brings all these titles together into one massive idolatrous system.

And Micah is saying, the Lord is saying through Micah, I will give them up from the time of their exile until this fourth Gentile kingdom which turned out to be Rome. Now what that implies is that had the nation Israel received Jesus as their King in the first century then the kingdom of God would have come; the David dynasty, David's throne and David kingdom all would have been restored on the earth and all 12 tribes of Israel would be reunited in the land as one Jewish kingdom that would reign over the Gentiles. That's what the end of verse 3 is talking about. **Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel.** That is the remainder of the Messiah's brethren will return, there will be a reuniting of the divided kingdoms and a total restoration in the kingdom of God.

But that didn't happen in the 1st century when the Messiah came the first time. And that's why in the middle of verse 3 we see an illustration of double reference. Verses 2-3a refer to the near coming of the Messiah, the first

coming, and verses 3b-6 refer to the far coming of the Messiah, the second coming.

So now we are leaping ahead even ahead of where we are today. And I understand that you don't see a long gap of time indicated between this verse but we know there is a gap of time from other passages. Verse 4, **And He will arise and shepherd His flock**, that's Israel. **In the strength of YHWH, in the Majesty of the name of YHWH His God**. That's another look at the doctrine of kenosis, **His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth**. This is the 5th kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of Daniel 2. There are actually five kingdoms. And it's the 5th kingdom that is portrayed as a stone cut out of a mountain without hands and it smashes the statue destroying all four Gentile kingdoms. And then it grows into a great global kingdom that will never be destroyed and is centered in the Jewish King. And it is that 5th kingdom which is being described here as reigned over by the eternal descendent of David, the Messiah who goes forth from Bethlehem, yet his goings forth are from ancient times, even from eternity.

Even then when He arises to shepherd his people Israel He will operate in the power of Yahweh. In other words were seeing here that in the kingdom the Messiah is going to function in the same way He functioned at His first coming, namely He's going to give up the independent use of His divine attributes and operate **in the strength of Yahweh, and the Majesty of the name of Yahweh His God**, and that's another tipoff, **His God**, that He is not going to operate independently of His Father in the kingdom. He is going to operate in his resurrected humanity under the filling of the Holy Spirit such that He can reign as a true human being and demonstrate that true and perfect rule is a capability of true humanity. Resurrected humanity is true humanity.

And they, that is Israel, **will remain**, that is they will dwell in peace and security in the Promised Land which they will possess entirely. And then the reason is given; **Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth**. Again, just as the statue in Daniel 2 portrays, the global rule of the Jewish Messiah. The One who goes forth from the little town of Bethlehem will rule the whole earth from Jerusalem.

Now we come to verse 5 and 6 and these are controversial verses so I'll present this as clearly as I can. The question here is "Who is the Antichrist? Where does he come from? What are his origins?" Because, remember this is all occurring in a context dealing with the origins of the Christ. So if the Christ originates in Bethlehem of Judea then where does Antichrist originate? It seems to me that's the logic of the passage. And he says in verse 5, **This one will be our peace**, that's the true Christ, Jesus, **When the Assyrian invades our land**, that's a timing word. When will Jesus will be the peace of Israel? Answer: **When the Assyrian invades our land. When he tramples on our citadels**, so there is an Assyrian invasion of Israel led by quote "the Assyrian." **Then we**, that's Israel, **we will raise against him Seven shepherds and eight leaders of men.** **They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, The land of Nimrod at its entrances; And He will deliver us from the Assyrian When he attacks our land And when he tramples our territory.** Now let me introduce by saying that some commentators try to refer this to the past Assyrian rulers like Sennacherib who ruled in the 8th century BC and came against Jerusalem in 701BC when Hezekiah was ruling and because of Hezekiah's reforms when Sennacherib's armies had Jerusalem surrounded, and he boasts in his annals, "I have Hezekiah caged in like a bird," he's real arrogant about it, but then something happened and 185,000 of his soldiers lay dead on the ground the next morning. The Scriptures explain that because of Hezekiah's prayer the angel of the Lord smote them. And that's what's being described here. But I don't think the past interpretation works because in the middle of verse 3 what has Micah done? He's shifted to the total restoration of the Jewish kingdom and that certainly didn't happen after Hezekiah's reforms. In verse 4 the Messiah rises to rule over the whole earth. That certainly didn't happen after Hezekiah's reforms. And in verse 5 the Messiah becomes Israel's peace at the time this **Assyrian invades** Israel and that didn't happen in the 8th century BC. So I don't see any possible way for this to refer to a past Assyrian king. This refers to a future ruler, we'll call him Antichrist. And he is either Assyrian in descent or is put under the metaphor of the Assyrian rulers to convey as a tyrant ruler. Those are the two basic interpretations of the futuristic Assyrian in verses 5 and 6. That he is either of Assyrian descent, a genetic linkage, or the Assyrian here is simply a metaphor for what the Antichrist will be like, he will be like the ancient Assyrian tyrant rulers.

Now, turn to Daniel 9 to discover the people group from whom the Antichrist must arise. Sometimes people get it in their head that the Antichrist must be a Jew because the Jews would not accept a Gentile Antichrist. However, the Bible never says the Jews will accept a Gentile Antichrist. It says they will enter into a treaty with a Gentile Antichrist. And they've already entered a number of treaties with Gentiles so there's no basis from this idea that the Antichrist can't be a Gentile. Dan 9:26-27 reveals what people group the Antichrist will arise from. Daniel 9:24-27 is the greatest prophecy of the Old Testament, so far as extent and implications are concerned. In this passage the Angel Gabriel reveals to Daniel that the nation Israel is going to enter into a 70 week calendar. 70 weeks of years or 70x7 years which is 490 years. He gives the beginning point of these 70 weeks, he gives the ending point of the first 69 weeks, and he gives the beginning of the 70th week. In verse 26 he comes to the end of the first 69 weeks. "Then after the sixty-two weeks" added to the seven weeks of the prior verse we come to 69, "the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing," that's the crucifixion of the Messiah, he will be cut off. "And the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary." Who are the people who destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple? The Romans. When did they destroy it? In 70 A.D. Titus and the Roman armies came in and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. And here we are told that there is going to be a prince who is to come in the future and that he is going to come forth from these people who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. So if the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. then from where must the Prince who is to come, come from? Who must Antichrist descend from? From Rome.

Now, this is where a number of prophecy scholars get the idea that the Antichrist will rise out of Europe. Because when they think of the Roman Empire they think primarily of the Western branch of the Roman Empire. But let's go back to the picture of the Roman Empire given to us by Daniel in the statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. We said the two legs of iron and feet mixed with clay portraying the two branches of the Roman Empire. Remember the Roman Empire in the West had its capital city is Rome. And some prophecy scholars will say that the Antichrist must arise from the city of Rome; he must be Italian. But there is another branch of the Roman Empire in the East and its capital city is Byzantium, also known as Constantinople. And it is this branch of the Roman Empire that is often forgotten. Why it's forgotten I don't know because the Western branch of the

Roman Empire, centered in Rome, fell in 476 A.D. But the Eastern branch of the Roman Empire, centered in Byzantium, did not fall until 1453 A.D. under the Muslims. The Muslims have a whole history of trying to take over with *jihad* and rule the whole earth. Only historically ignorant people think Islam is a peaceful religion. Anybody who studied the last 1400 years knows that it is continually waging *jihad* to take over the whole world. And in 1453 they defeated Byzantium, the capital of the eastern branch of the Roman Empire.

So if Daniel 9:26 requires that the Antichrist must arise from Rome in descent, then we want to understand that this includes both the Western and Eastern branch of the Roman Empire. The question: was Assyria ever part of the Roman Empire? The answer is very clearly it was. Assyria is in the northern portion of modern day Iraq extending down the Fertile Crescent. And so some scholars, recognizing the Eastern branch of the Roman Empire is inclusive of Assyria, argue that Micah 5:5-6 are pointing out that the Antichrist will be of Assyrian genetics. That is, he will descend from Assyria. And that's why he's called the Assyrian.

They increase the power of this argument by pointing out that Antiochus Epiphanes IV is a type of the Antichrist who was Syrian. He reigned over the Seleucid branch of the Greek Empire. Alexander the Great made his conquests by great military might and he died at a very early age, 33. And because the kingdom had such great extent no single man could rule over it. And so his four generals divided the Greek empire into four sections. The Macedonian, the Thracian, the Ptolemaic and the Seleucid. The Seleucid Empire covered the promised land in the Middle East and a couple of centuries later it came to be ruled by a man of the name Antiochus Epiphanes IV and he was a tyrant ruler. He's predicted in Daniel 11 and he is the one who is portrayed by Daniel as a type of the Antichrist. He actually went into the Jewish Temple and desecrated it, offered a pig on it and this resulted in the Maccabean revolt which you can read about in the book of Maccabees. But in any case those who claim that the future Antichrist is of Assyrian genetics argue that Antiochus Epiphanes IV is of the same genetics, Syrian. Since he was Syrian and he was a type of the Antichrist doesn't it make sense that the Antichrist would be Assyrian?

So then the question arose as of late are the Assyrians the same as the Syrians? This actually came up about a year ago in a discussion I was having

with Dr. Tommy Ice, Dr. Robert Thomas, John Cross and Dr Robby Dean in Houston. Dr. Ice brought this up. In my research this week I found a paper by a Harvard graduate named Richard Frye titled *Assyria and Syria: Synonyms*. In this paper he argues that historically Assyria is Syria and it wasn't until the 19th century that scholars in the West began to divide Assyria from Syria and make them two different groups. But up until the 19th century Assyria is Syria. And that it was very common in linguistic studies for an *a-* to drop from a word. And that's what we have here. Syria is simply a shortened form of Assyria. They are one and the same. He concludes with this statement, "...those speakers of Neo-Syriac who live or lived in present-day Iraq or Iran prefer to call themselves Assyrians to distinguish themselves from the inhabitants of present-day Syria. They are not wrong in this designation, or in claiming descent from the ancient Assyrians," so yes, the population of Syria today is not Assyrian but historically Syria and Assyria were the same people group. Then he says it's perfectly valid to understand those who live or lived in present-day Iraq or Iran as the descendents of the ancient Assyrians. And if this is true then and the Antichrist is Assyrian in descent then he will arise out of Iraq or Iran.

Now turn to Isaiah 14:24-27. We have a third line of evidence that the Antichrist will be Assyrian in descent. Isaiah 14 is an eschatological passage. Isaiah prophesied in the same century as Micah. Isaiah and Micah are contemporaries. And they speak about many of the same things. Micah speaks of the Assyrian and here we have Isaiah speak of the Assyrian. Verse 24, "The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, ²⁵to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder." You could think, from just those two verses, that this occurred maybe in the 8th century BC. But verse 26 militates against that. "This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations." This is not a local event where Assyria is defeated. This is a global event that involves the whole earth and all the nations. So this lends credibility to the idea that the Antichrist is of Assyrian descent.

Now turn to Isaiah 31:8. Isaiah again speaks of the Assyrian. If you look at the end of verse 6, "So will the Lord of hosts come down to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill. ⁵ Like flying birds so the Lord of hosts will protect

Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it; He will pass over and rescue it. 6 Return to him from whom you have deeply defected, O sons of Israel. 7 For in that day every man will cast away his silver idols and his gold idols, which your sinful hands have made for you as a sin. 8 And the Assyrian," watch this, this is all future. "And the Assyrian will fall by a sword not of man, And a sword not of man will devour him." What's the sword of Revelation 19 that strikes the Antichrist? Is it the sword of a man? No, it's the sword of the One who rides on the white horse, who is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many crowns; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood and His name is called The Word of God... From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations...and he treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty." And so this is used as support that the Antichrist described in Revelation 19 is here described in Isaiah 31 as the Assyrian and it links to Micah 5.

So in the view that the Antichrist is of Assyrian descent you have at least three lines of support. First, Micah 5 discusses the origin of the Christ. He will arise from Bethlehem. We take Bethlehem quite literal and it was fulfilled literally, therefore it is logical to conclude that Micah also reveals the origin of the Antichrist as in Assyria, which is modern-day Iraq or Iran. Since Bethlehem is literal, Assyria is literal. Second, the only type of Antichrist predicted in the Old Testament was fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes IV who was of Syrian descent. Understanding that in the ancient world the Syrians were the same as the Assyrians would connect nicely with the future Antichrist also being of Assyrian descent. The third line of support is that at least two other passages refer to the Antichrist as "the Assyrian" who leads an end-times campaign against Israel.

With all this being said it still does not totally secure the identity of the future Antichrist as being of Assyrian descent. The Antichrist has many titles. He is called the little horn, the Prince that shall come, the willful King, the man of sin, the beast, the son of perdition, the Antichrist and many more. And it is possible that since Micah and Isaiah both wrote in the times when Assyria was the dominant world power, led by tyrant, despotic rulers, that the Antichrist is merely being depicted under the metaphor of the Assyrian. When he comes he will be like the Assyrian rulers of the eighth century, he

will be a tyrant, he will be a despot, he will oppress and persecute the Jewish people.

But in any case, whoever the Antichrist is he is the final ruler of the Roman Empire, the fourth Gentile kingdom of Daniel 2, this kingdom has two phases and its final phase will come to culmination in the role of the Assyrian. So let's see what will happen to him in verses 5 and 6. **This One**, that is the Messiah from Bethlehem, **will be our peace**. He will be Israel's peace and security. **When the Assyrian invades our land, when he tramples on our citadel's**, those are Israeli palaces. So here we have the Antichrist's invasion. He will gather his armies from all nations in the Valley of Armageddon to deploy for combat in the final destruction of the Jewish people. **Then we**, that is Israel, **will raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of men**. As far as I know this prophecy of **seven shepherds and eight leaders of men** is not repeated anywhere else in the Scriptures. But what it means is that when the Messiah returns He will rescue Israel from Bozrah, in modern day Petra, and head toward Jerusalem to put His feet down on the Mt of Olives, splitting the mountain providing a way of escape for the Jews who are in dire straits and at some point on that same day, the day of the second coming He will appoint **seven Jewish shepherds and eight Jewish leaders** for verse 6. **They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod at its entrances;** so that would refer to Iraq and Iran during the millennium. **And he will deliver us from the Assyrian When he attacks our land And when he tramples our territory**. Next week we'll get into the resultant peace and security that they enjoy in the Messiah's kingdom.

Tonight we have seen that though Zedekiah was deposed and the throne of David was left vacant for a time, one would arise whose goings forth are from eternity, whose visitations are throughout history before His birth, but his humanity will originate in Bethlehem, the city of David, who will one day reunite and restore all the tribes of Israel, he will be their peace and security, the nation Israel will no longer depend upon her military strength, prowess or intelligence agency Mossad, but will turn to her Messiah when the Assyrian invades the land. And He will rescue them and appoint seven shepherds and eight leaders of men who rule over the lands of Iraq and Iran in the deposing of all Gentile kingdoms and the establishment of a Jewish one.

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