

Bethlehem Ephrathah, From You Will One Go Forth for Me to be Ruler in Israel

Church December 24, 2023

Micah 5

1 “Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; They have laid siege against us; With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.

2 “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 long ago, From the days of eternity.”

3 Therefore He will give them up until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel.

4 And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the Lord, In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.

5 This One will be our peace. When the Assyrian invades our land, When he tramples on our citadels, Then we will raise against him Seven shepherds and eight leaders of men.

6 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.

7 Then the remnant of Jacob Will be among many peoples Like dew from the Lord, Like showers on vegetation Which do not wait for man Or delay for the sons of men.

8 The remnant of Jacob Will be among the nations, Among many peoples Like a lion among the beasts of the forest, Like a young lion among flocks of sheep, Which, if he passes through, Tramples down and tears, And there is none to rescue.

9 Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries, And all your enemies will be cut off.

10 “It will be in that day,” declares the Lord, “That I will cut off your horses from among you And destroy your chariots.

11 “I will also cut off the cities of your land And tear down all your fortifications.

12 “I will cut off sorceries from your hand, And you will have fortune-tellers no more.

**13 “I will cut off your carved images And your sacred pillars from among you,
So that you will no longer bow down To the work of your hands.**

14 “I will root out your Asherim from among you And destroy your cities.

**15 “And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath On the nations which
have not obeyed.”**

Recently, as I was shopping at Sam’s Club- I ran across a man, who was talking to someone on the phone. And I couldn’t help but over-hear him mention the Bible Study he was having at his home. And he sounded very excited about exploring the Bible with his Friends.

When he hung up- I mentioned to him how wonderful it was to hear him talk about studying the Bible at his house. And he then explained to me- in very excited tones- all that he wanted to accomplish with that Bible Study. So, I encouraged him and went about with my shopping.

A few weeks later, I ran into him again. We spoke and I asked him how the Study was going; what Book of the Bible they were in; and how his friends were receiving the Word of God.

He dropped his head and this time he wasn’t excited at all. He told me that as they were studying a book written by some Christian Author- that several of the people voiced Objections to what the Author was saying. I asked him what he did to solve that Problem and he said,

“God showed me that I can’t expect people to believe things that are controversial. So, from now on, I’m not going to get into Issues that are debated or that everybody doesn’t already agree on.”

His Answer hit me like a gut-punch. So, I asked him what Issues he was talking about. And he said, *“You know, things like the Trinity; the Virgin Birth; the Deity of Jesus; the sinless Life of Jesus and His literal Resurrection.”* He said, *“I can’t expect people to just buy into those doctrinal Issues- they’re just too Controversial; and they cause such Division. So, we’re just going to stick to the Fundamentals from now on.”*

So, as politely as I could, I asked him, *“What Fundamentals?”* And he replied, *“You know, that God loves us; and has a Plan for our Lives; and wants us to accept Him into our hearts.”* I told him that I would pray for him- but that it really was important that he teach the doctrinal Issues. And he replied, *“Well, I’m going to leave all that to you Pastors to do- because I’m not sure I buy into all of them, either.”*

That Conversation illustrates very well what the Christian Church is face with in this hour. Because somebody made the conscious Decision many years ago to stop teaching biblical Truth- the current Population of some of the largest Churches on this Coast have no idea *what* they believe; or *why* they believe it. For

some Reason, many Church Leaders back in the 1960's; 70's; and 80's just stopped teaching the basic Truths of the Bible to the people. And the Result is that now- 30, 40, and 50 and 60 years later- the sons of the sons of the sons of the people who were no longer taught the Bible- are confused or even ignorant of what the Holy Bible actually says.

And that would be bad enough- but what is even worse and infinitely more frightening to me- is that there doesn't seem to be any concern among them about this Tragedy. There is no Concern, for example, that if they don't believe in what the Bible teaches about the Trinity- they will, by default, believe in something else that the Bible does NOT say. And because they have no idea whether Jesus was actually God in human Flesh- how that might affect whether or not He is able to forgive their Sins.

In other words, the Lack of biblical Knowledge about basic fundamental Truths; the Absence of any Effort to be in agreement with historic, orthodox Christianity; the "laid-back" Attitude about Issues that are very Practical; and very Important; and very Necessary- doesn't seem to concern them at all. And what's even worse- the Ignorance of these Truths is not seen as effecting their Walk or their Relationship with God at all.

In other words, it is becoming *increasingly* true that the Understanding about deep, mysterious, Truths that the Bible absolutely and unapologetically teaches- is viewed by more and more people who say they are saved- as being just "fluff"; and religious Information that is completely unnecessary and not useful; and Information that they can just leave out or ignore- because it doesn't affect anything; and because it doesn't impact their normal daily Lives.

The Truth of the matter is that there are NO Doctrines; there are NO Teachings from the Bible that are NOT Controversial. One of the things that makes Christianity so unique- and utterly "set apart" from all of the other Religions of the World- is because EVERYTHING we believe and hold dear is earthshaking. EVERYTHING is Controversial. EVERYTHING about Christianity is unique and different and EVERYTHING that the Bible teaches is mysterious and supernatural and miraculous and powerful and Life-changing.

There are NO "bland" Subjects in the Bible. No "vanilla" Issues that mean little or nothing. EVERYTHING the Bible teaches is important; EVERYTHING seriously affects us; and EVERYTHING impacts our daily Lives!

There is not a single core Doctrine of the Christian Church that was not "hammered out" from the Scriptures by some of the most- godly men who ever walked on this earth- under terrible and intense Opposition. EVERY SINGLE core Belief of orthodox Christianity was opposed; debated; argued; and fought over. NOTHING was simply accepted. NOT a single Truth that we hold dear today was brought into the Church and taught and heralded by men who were burning with

the Fire of God- that was not condemned by others. And the first men who taught those Beliefs were persecuted; attacked; vilified; and routinely sent into Exile.

There has been a Price paid for every Truth that the Bible unashamedly proclaims. And those of us who live in the Comfort and the Security and the Ease of the 21st Century American Church will be hard pressed to justify why we didn't know; and why we didn't care that we didn't know about those Issues when we are confronted with the men who were attacked; and punished; and tortured; and even killed for giving them to us.

And not least among those powerful; mysterious; supernatural; miraculous; Life-changing; and foundational Truths of Christianity- without which we do NOT have Christianity- is the *unbelievable* Concept that, at a certain Time; in a certain obscure Village; with a certain Woman- the Omnipotent Almighty God- Who created all things- *ex-nihilo*- with His spoken Word; and Who owns all of the stars; of all of the Galaxies; and all of the sub-atomic Particles of the Universe- took on human Flesh; and was born as a real human baby; and became Man!

This Miracle was so astounding that they had to *invent* a Word to describe it: "*The Incarnation*". So, the Scholars took the Latin word, "*In*" which has to do with "*to be*" or "*to made into*"; and the word "*caro*" which has to do with the word "*Flesh*"; and they created, "*Incarno*". And later that Latin word was brought into English as, "*Incarnation*".

So, the Time of the year that we call, "*Christmas*" is *supposed* to be a Celebration of the Birth of Jesus. And the Birth of Jesus represents this mysterious; miraculous Event of God taking on human Flesh and becoming Man. So, the Incarnation is the "*fleshing*" of God. And to help the saved people of the Church understand this amazing, breathtaking Miracle a little better- the ancient Creeds of the Church sought to explain it a little better. For example, around 150AD, the Church developed what is now called, the "Apostle's Creed". And the Section that talks about Jesus simply says,

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

... very short and sweet.

Later on, in 325AD- the Church developed what is now called, the "*Creed of Nicaea*"- which was a *summary* Statement that came out from the *Council of Nicaea*. And in that Creed- there is a Section about the Incarnation that says,

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ... Who for us Humanity and for our
Salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate, became human, was born

perfectly of the holy virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.
By whom He took body, soul, and mind, and everything that is in Man, truly
and not in semblance.

... which goes into more Detail about Jesus.

This Creed sought to end the Debate that was raging back in the 4th Century concerning the “Nature” or the “Essence” or the “Substance” of the Tri-une God. So, the writers *officially* and *formally* declared that Jesus was “*Incarinate*” and that He “*became human*”. And lest there might be some Confusion about what they meant by that- they also said,

“By whom He took body, soul, and mind, and everything that is in Man,
truly and not in semblance.”

But some 56 years later- the Problem remained and so, around 381AD, the Church further developed what they wanted Believers to understand about Jesus. And so, they wrote the well-known “*Nicene Creed*”- which says this about God taking on human Flesh:

And I Believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
The Only-Begotten Son of God,
Begotten of the Father Before all Worlds;
God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God;
Begotten, not Made,
Being of One Substance with the Father,
By Whom all Things were Made.

And then around 500AD- the Leaders of the Church were faced with yet more Heresies and false Teachings about Jesus and Salvation And so, they saw the Need to develop a much *larger* and much more *detailed* Creed that they called, the “*Athanasian Creed*”. And in that Creed- they said,

“Now this is the true Faith:
That we believe and confess
that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son,
is both God and Human, equally.
He is God from the Essence of the Father,
begotten before time;
and He is Human from the essence of his mother,
born in time;

completely God, completely Human,
with a rational soul and human flesh;
equal to the Father as regards to Divinity,
less than the Father as regards to Humanity.
Although He is God and Human,
yet Christ is not two, but One.
He is one, however,
not by His Divinity being turned into flesh,
but by God's taking Humanity to Himself.
He is One,
certainly not by the blending of His Essence,
but by the Unity of His Person.
For just as one Human is both rational soul and flesh,
so too the one Christ is both God and Human.”

Sadly, the Debates; and the Arguments; and the Attacks against Jesus; and the Incarnation; and His dual Nature; and His sinless Life; and His full Deity; and His Crucifixion; and His literal and bodily Resurrection; and His Ascension; and His ongoing Ministry of Intercession; and His 2nd Coming didn't stop with the development of the Athanasian Creed. But the Creeds were getting *longer and longer*- and were becoming *harder* for the mostly illiterate Congregations to memorize.

So, the Church left off developing Creeds and, instead turned to developing various “*Catechisms*” and “*Confessions of Faith*”- that help the Believer learn about fundamental, orthodox, biblical Christianity through a series of Questions and Answers. And we are “journeying” through the “*Heidelberg Catechism*” in this Church at this Time.

But I hope you can see that the Incarnation- the “*Fleshing of God*” is NOT some “side-issue”. It isn't some “Oh-by-the-way” Information that people can either take or leave. God taking on human Flesh and becoming Man is a *fundamental* biblical Truth of the Christian Faith. In other words, without the Incarnation- we would NOT have the Christian Faith. So, the Efforts by people both then as well as now- to either greatly *minimize* or outright *ignore* the Incarnation- is Sin.

You cannot just take core Beliefs away from the Faith and still have the *same* Faith, because it is those Core; Controversial; Mysterious; Deep; and Profound; Miraculous; and Supernatural Truths that make Christianity what it is; and what it has *always* been. So, to monkey around with primary Doctrines doesn't do *anything* except *create* an entirely *different* Man-made and false Religion.

Because Christianity has *already* been defined. And it contains many Beliefs that are humanly impossible and yet, they are true. And among them is the Incarnation.

Now by God's Providence- this Lord's Day falls just before the Day that we take to celebrate the Incarnation. And it also happens to coincide with the early morning Bible Study we are conducting here as we go verse-by-verse; line-by-line; precept-by-precept through the Book of **Romans**. And as I have told you many times- the *primary* Theme of **Romans** is NOT Grace; or Mercy; or even Salvation. The *primary* Theme of the Book of **Romans** is "*Righteousness*" and how guilty Gentile Sinners can be "made" Righteous- which is what allows them to enter into Heaven forever.

You see, it takes MORE than to be forgiven to go to Heaven. If we plan on being in Heaven with God forever- *in addition* to being forgiven for ALL Sin (Past, Present, and Future)- we MUST also become "just as Righteous" as God Himself.

And the Roman religious System believes that. But they teach that it is our *own, personal, intrinsic* Righteousness that must be developed into being sinlessly Pure. And that's why they invented the Myth concerning "*Purgatory*". The Leaders of this religious System understand that NO human being can attain sinless Purity in this Life and on this earth. And so, they *created* Purgatory- where the soul goes after Death to be purified before it can enter into Heaven.

But the Bible doesn't teach that; the Apocrypha doesn't teach it; and we shouldn't teach it either. The Bible teaches that, at the moment of being Forgiven- within the Part of Salvation called, "*Justification*"- the very Righteousness of Jesus that our Lord *earned* by living a perfectly sinless Life for 33-1/2 years on this earth- is imputed or credited or given to the Believer. And the Way in which that spotless Righteousness is imputed to the Believer is NOT through the Sacraments or in the participation of the Mass. Guilty Rebels are given the Righteousness of Jesus Christ through the "*Agency*"; or the "*Vehicle*"; or the "*Means*" of Faith alone. And that Truth was taught in both the Old and New Testaments concerning Abraham. First, Moses wrote this as God the Holy Spirit "moved" him:

Then he [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6)

... and then the Apostle Paul developed the Doctrine of "*Justification by Faith Alone*" by what he infallibly wrote in **Roman 4:1-3**:

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

... but **Romans** is a very interesting Book in that it was written to not only teach about how guilty Sinners can be forgiven and made Righteous- but it also is a Book that explains what happened to the Jew when God took on Flesh and became Man.

You see, even though Jesus was a Jew; and the Apostles were all Jews; and even though the majority of the population of the Christian Church during its first 10-15 years of Operation were all Jews- for the most part- the Jews *categorically* rejected Jesus as being the Messiah and the fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecies. And that Rejection has lasted to this very Day. And this created quite a Problem for the Church- as they were left to explain why.

If Sovereign Election is true- then *why* didn't the Jews believe in Jesus? If the Call of God on the Jewish people was "**IRREVOCABLE**" (**Romans 11:29**)- then *why* did they not embrace Jesus as the Messiah? Is Election somehow not Permanent? Did God change His Mind? Why did God drive out the peoples of the other Gentile Nations that were greater and mightier than the Jews; and then deal with the Jews under the Old Covenant- "to the *exclusion* of the other nations of the world" (**Deuteronomy 26:19**)- only to then keep them blinded about Jesus under the New Covenant? How can the Jews be "God's chosen people" and also "**Enemies**" of the Gospel (**Romans 11:28**) at the same Time?

The Book of **Romans** gives us the Answers. So, immediately after his powerful Exaltation about the permanence of Salvation in Jesus at the End of Chapter 8- the Apostle then wrote three Chapters (9,10&11) that explain this amazing Mystery.

But because tomorrow is the Day that we take to celebrate the Incarnation- I want us to leave the Teachings of **Romans 11** and zero in on the Prophet Micah- who delivered his "*Burden*"¹ back in the 8th Century BC.

But as I began to do that- I noticed that the "*Burden*" of Micah is the SAME as the "*Burden*" of the Apostle Paul in **Romans**. Because the primary Theme in **Romans 11** is:

Has God rejected his people, Israel? Is He finished with Israel or is there a Future for the Jewish people in Christ?

¹ An Old Testament Prophet's "*Burden*" was the Word of the Lord that God had given him to speak

But Micah, like most ALL Old Testament Prophets, was burdened by that very SAME Question in view of Israel's Sin and God's Judgment. Micah penned this Book during the Days when the golden-tongued Prophet Isaiah was in his Ministry- around 800 years before Jesus was born. And both Micah and Isaiah saw Assyria march in and capture the northern Kingdom (Israel) and take the ten Tribes that lived there into Captivity. And Micah was saved; and he loved God; and so, this Prophet knew that all this Calamity and Destruction and Misery was due to God's correct and proper Judgment on a people who were sinning with abandon. And so, the primary Question concerning Israel's Future weighed very heavy on his mind.

Therefore He [God] will give them [Israel] up until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel. (Micah 5:3) [clarification added]

Now the phrase, “**She who is in labor has borne a Child**” refers to the Coming of the Messiah as real human baby (The Incarnation). But what did God through Micah promise would happen AFTER the Messiah has been born?

... Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel.

... referring to the 10 Tribes that were taken away captive by Assyria!

Okay! Great! The 10 Tribes will come back! When? One thing that is almost *universally* true about the Old Testament Prophets is that they were very *vague* about their Timeline. “WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?” is NOT usually spelled out by those men. So, what seems that might happen by next Thursday might actually be 2,000 years away. And something that the reader thinks would never happen in a hundred years- might come to pass by the End of the next week.

But the Promise has been made. The 10 Tribes are coming back from their Captivity! All we need now is a specific “Time-Line” as to WHEN.

But Micah is silent about a clear Date. He does NOT tell us exactly when- but he DOES give us a hint. We know it is AFTER the Messiah comes; and we know that it's connected with the Messiah's “Coming”² (Advent), but precisely WHEN the Prophet doesn't say. He just knows this:

The Messiah is coming, and His Coming will mean a great ingathering of Israel.

² For the most part, the people who lived under the Old Covenant didn't understand that there would be two different “Advents” or “Comings” of the Lord.

.. and this is what Paul understood from the Old Testament Prophets and that is what he teaches in **Romans 11**. For a “Season”³ there is a Hardness and a Blindness on Israel. And that has made them to be *unresponsive* to the Gospel. But the Day is coming when that Hardness and that Blindness will be taken away- and then “*ALL Israel*”⁴ will be grafted back into the Tree of true, redeemed Israel- which now means: into Christ and His Church.

The senior Professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, Leslie Allen connected **Romans 11** and **Micah 5** together when he said this:

“Paul is heir to Micah in **Romans 11**, where in [a] similar vein he views a mainly Gentile Church as a lopsided thing and looks forward to the time when Jewish believers would be added in appropriately large numbers.”⁵

In other words, when verse 3 says, “**the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel,**” this is Micah’s way of saying “**all Israel will be saved**” (**Romans 11:25**)- using Old Testament language.

But let our Focus today be on the Wonder of the Prophecy of the Coming of the Lord. And let us rejoice today- NOT that at some Point in the Future- all of the Jews (who have been chosen for Salvation) WILL, in fact, be saved. But let us rejoice today, that because this Messiah has come- you and I are saved! And let us allow for Micah to help us feel the Wonder of being saved; along with the Greatness of our Savior, Jesus the Messiah!

First, let’s get the Connection between **Micah 5** and Jesus Christ crystal clear. In **Matthew 2:1-6** the Holy Bible says:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 6 '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.'"

³ We are now in the Beginning of the 3rd Millenia of that “Season.”

⁴ Paul makes it abundantly clear in **Romans 9, 10, & 11** that the phrase, “ALL ISRAEL” does NOT mean all of the Jews. It simply refers to all of the Jews who have been chosen by God for Salvation. God NEVER included ALL of the Jews in anything. God Himself slaughtered Jews in the Wilderness because they did not believe. So, even in the Old Covenant- it was NEVER that every single Jew was chosen.

⁵ Leslie Allen; *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*; NICOT; page 351

The Chief Priests and the Scribes knew that **Micah 5** was a reference to the Messiah- who they were waiting on. So, they told King Herod: “*The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem*”. And that is *why* God saw to it that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, even though his mother and Joseph were living in Nazareth when she got pregnant. And it is also why King Herod made the Jews go to the “*cities of Origen*” to pay their taxes and be counted in the Census rather than just go to Jerusalem. And both Mary and Joseph were in the lineage of King David- which “*city of Origen*” was Bethlehem. The Messiah HAD to be born in Bethlehem- because that is the City God gave to Prophet Micah here in Chapter 5.

In **John 7:40-42**- we see that the common Understanding among the Jews was that the Messiah HAD to be born in Bethlehem:

40 Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet."

41 Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"

42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

... so, both the Leaders and the people knew that **Micah 5** predicted the coming of the Messiah- the Ruler who would be King in Israel.

Micah 5:4b

... Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.

The coming Messiah- the coming Ruler and King- the Coming Prophet and Priest- would NOT be just a “tribal King”. This man will be King over all the other kings of the earth; and He will be Lord over all of the other lords of the earth! This man would be “Great” to the ends of the whole earth- NOT just in Israel!

But the entire Prophecy of Micah is filled with amazing Contrasts and among them is the Insignificance of Bethlehem against the GREAT Significance of the One who is born there.

“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 long ago, From the days of eternity.” (Micah 5:2)

In other words, Bethlehem is scarcely worth counting among the cities of Judah. Yet God chooses it to bring forth His magnificent Messiah. Why? Why

wasn't Jesus born in Rome; or Cairo; or Alexandria; or Jerusalem? Wouldn't that have been more fitting for the Ruler to be born in one of those great and famous Cities?

One Answer is that the Messiah MUST be of the Lineage of David and David was a Bethlehemite. That's true, but that Fact misses the main Point of verse 2. The Point of verse 2 is that Bethlehem is small and insignificant- NOT that it is great or famous because David was born there. (That's what the Scribes missed in **Matthew 2:6**) God chooses something small, quiet, out of the way, and seemingly unimportant and does something there that changes the entire Course of both History and Eternity!

But why? Why is God interested in using a seemingly insignificant little Village? Because when God does things like this- we then are stopped from boasting in the Merits or the Achievements or the supposed "Goodness" of Man; and we are *forced* to boast in the glorious Mercy of God. So, God is interested in accomplishing three things- simultaneously:

1. That He alone is glorified
2. That our Mouths that boast about our own Merit and Accomplishments are closed
3. That God's true people find the fullness of their own Joy- in God alone being glorified

... and that is true, not only with the Incarnation; but also with Salvation; and throughout the entire Bible.

Bethlehem is small and hasn't done anything to boast about. So, we can't say, "*Well, of course God set His Favor on Bethlehem- look at all the human Glory Bethlehem has achieved!*" All we are left to say is, "*God is wonderfully Free. And so, He is not impressed by our Bigness; or our Accomplishments. He does nothing in order to attract attention to our Works. He does everything to magnify His own glorious Freedom and His Mercy.*" The Apostle Paul puts it like this in **1Corinthians 1:27-31**:

27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

29 so that no man may boast before God.

30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

So, God chose a Stable so that no Innkeeper could boast, "*He chose the Comfort of my Inn!*" God chose a Manger so that no Woodworker could boast, "*He chose the craftsmanship of my bed!*" He chose Bethlehem so no one could boast, "*The Greatness of our City attracted the Almighty to be born here!*" But then God also chose you and me, "freely" and "unconditionally", to shut the Mouth of all human Boasting about how much we love God and how Good we are! That is the Point of **Romans 11** and it is also the Point of **Micah 5**.

The deepest Meaning of the "Littleness" and the "Insignificance" of Bethlehem is that God does not bestow the "Blessings of the Messiah" (the Salvation of our souls)- on the Basis of our "Greatness"; or our "Merit"; or our "Achievements." He does not elect Cities or People because of their "Prominence" or their "Grandeur" or their "Distinction". When God chooses- He exercises His Own "*Divine Prerogative*". So, God is the only truly "*Free*" Being in the entire Universe. So, God chooses "*freely*", in order to magnify the Glory of His own Mercy- NOT the "glory" of our "Distinctions" or "Importance". So, let us say with the angels, "*Glory to God in the highest!*" NOT, "*May WE be glorified!*" We get the Joy! But God alone gets the Glory!

But then please notice a 2nd thing Micah shows us about Jesus, the Messiah. He makes clear that Jesus *secures for us the Promises of God*. Jesus Christ is the "**YES!**" in ALL of God's Promises, so that if you trust in Jesus- you will *personally* inherit those Promises. How does Micah show us this?

Any Jew in those days, hearing Micah predict the Coming of a Ruler out of Bethlehem who would feed His Flock in the Strength of the Lord, would think *immediately* of two people: David the King and the coming "Son of David", the Messiah. And so, there are at least three Links with David in this Passage. (1) David was from Bethlehem — that's why it was called the "*city of David.*" (2) David was a Ruler in Israel- he was, in fact, the *greatest* Ruler, a "**man after God's own Heart**" (1Samuel 13:14). And (3) David was a Shepherd as a boy, and later he was called the "**Shepherd of Israel**" (Psalm 78:71).

And the Point of having these three Links with David is this: Micah is *reasserting* the absolute Certainty of God's Promise to David. Recall from 2Samuel 7:12-16 where God said to David,

"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. "I will be a father to him and he

will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.””

The amazing thing about Micah is that he *reasserts* the Certainty of this Promise- NOT at a Time when Israel is rising to Power; or even when the Nation was at Rest- but at a Time when Israel was sinking toward complete Oblivion! The northern Kingdom has already been destroyed; and the southern Kingdom was about to come under the Judgment of God. So, things weren't looking Good for the “Home Team”.

The point I am making is this: the Coming of Jesus was the *Confirmation* of the Promises of God. Here's the way Paul put it in **Romans 15:8b**:

... Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers,

Or as he said in **2Corinthians 1:20**:

For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

So, if you are “in Christ” by Faith, you WILL inherit all the Promises of God! And that means that Christmas is God's great Nullification of all human Boasting; and a Confirmation of all Divine Promises. So, give up all Boasting- and enjoy all the Promises!

Finally, Micah shows us that Jesus Christ will protect His people and give them Peace. Verse 4:

And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the Lord, In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth.

Look what he offers in this verse.

First, He will “arise”! The true Messiah won't lie around waiting for us to serve Him. No, He will be on His Toes, alert, and endlessly working for those who trust Him as their Shepherd.

Second, he will “*shepherd* His Flock”. He will not leave us to find our own Food. He will lead us to green Pastures which are beside still Waters. There will be no Need that will remain unmet in Jesus Christ!

Third, He will serve us “*in the Strength of the Lord, in the Majesty of the Name of the Lord his God.*” His good Intentions for us will not be hindered by lack of Strength. The Strength of the Lord is omnipotent Strength. Therefore, if you are trusting in Christ, omnipotent Strength is on your Side! Walk behind Him like a trusting Sheep and He will overcome every Obstacle to your Purification and Joy forever.

Fourth, notice that *He shall be Great to the ends of the earth.* There will be no Pockets of Resistance unsubdued. Our Security will not be threatened by any alien forces. Every knee will bow and confess Him, “Lord!” And the whole earth will be filled with His Glory!

And finally (at the beginning of verse 5) *He will be our Peace!* And, yes, in this Context that includes final, earthly, political Peace. The Prophet spoke of it already in **Micah 4:3:**

And He will judge between many peoples And render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they train for war.

One day the Ruler — the King of all the other kings of the earth and the Lord of all the other lords- will return and make that breathtaking Promise a Reality. And I *do not* and *will not* ever *minimize* the Glory of it!

And so, the great Christmas carol will finally be fulfilled:

**He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness
And wonders of his love.**

But I end this Sermon with a different and much *deeper* Peace. A Peace that **MUST** happen *before* there can be any true Peace on this Earth. There **MUST** *first* be Peace between us Sinners and God. Before we can ever see genuine and lasting Peace on this earth- our sinful Unbelief and His terrifying Wrath must be removed- forever! That is our *deepest* and most important Peace. And it is also our greatest **NEED** as well as the greatest Gift this Christmas: that you and I would prove beyond any doubt that God has set His Love on us; and that we have been adopted into God’s Family; and have had **ALL** of our Sins forgiven; and that you and I have had the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us by Faith alone!

The Prophet Micah saw it coming- down the long road of Time- vaguely. Yet he had experienced it- *personally* (**Micah 7:8&9**). And he described it *wondrously* at the End of His Burden:

18 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.

This was the great Work of the Messiah that the Prophet saw. So, yes, there were Enemies on earth that must be defeated if we are to have this Peace. But the great Enemies of Sin and Judgment- those were the *greatest* and the *worst* Enemies! And the utter Destruction of those Enemies would be what Messiah would do when He comes!

So, the gospel Message at Christmas 2023 is this: Jesus Christ has trampled underfoot ALL the Enemies at the Cross! And so, *for everyone who trusts in Him, their Sins are cast into the Depths of the Sea; and they are made Righteous in Him!* Therefore, we do NOT say, “*Glory to us!*” Instead, we say, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, Peace among those with whom God is pleased!*”

Amen. Let's pray!

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.