

## Bethlehem and Our Eternal King

Micah 5:2

Again, it is my great privilege and joy to minister the Word of God to you this morning. Will you take your Bibles and turn into the Old Testament to the prophecy of Micah and chapter five? This morning I would like to speak to you about Bethlehem and our eternal King.

In Luke chapter two we learn that an angel of the Lord appeared to a group of shepherds, shepherds that were out one night caring for their sheep on the hills surrounding Jerusalem, probably the sheep that were typically grazed in that place and used for temple sacrifices. Little did they know that the birth of the final sacrifice, the Lamb of God had just taken place and that they were the humble recipients of an angelic announcement.

In fact, in Luke two and verse 10 we read:

“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."<sup>1</sup>

After hearing that, the shepherds immediately went straight to Bethlehem, the city of David which was on the southern slope of Mount Zion, just a few mile away. And there Luke tells us that they “made known the statement which had been told them about this Child,”<sup>2</sup> to Mary, to Joseph. And there is a very fascinating statement there in Luke that tells us, “Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.”<sup>3</sup>

Imagine what went through her mind. “I have carried and delivered my Creator, the God of Israel, the one who is holy and unapproachable and utterly transcendent is now before me. He has now come to earth in the form of a baby. He has now taken on human flesh and now I caress and I nurse the God baby who will grow to be the God man. This is almighty God, yet now a helpless infant, the ruler of heaven and earth, the Messiah of Israel now squeezes my finger and yet he is the one that holds the royal scepter. How can this be?”

Indeed, it would have been astounding to have been able to talk with Mary at that moment and ask her, “A penny for your thoughts. What are you pondering here?”

There before her was the royal monarch lying in a feeding trough, not housed in a palace, but in a stable. And now the shepherds come sprinting. They are wild eyed. They are so excited. And they come to the place where the baby lay and they relay all of these things. Indeed, the young maiden had much to ponder.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 2:10-14.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:17.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:19.

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And given the praise that she uttered prior to giving birth to our Lord, the praise that is recorded in Luke one that is so rich in theology, we must understand that her comprehension of the magnitude of what the shepherds were saying and what had just happened can only be explained by the work of the Holy Spirit of God in her to help her understand the rich theology of the Old Testament. Mary would have understood that what the shepherds just told her was clearly a fulfillment of a prophecy, one in particular, the same one spoken later on to the terrified Herod when he inquired as to where the Messiah was to be born. And, remember, the chief priests and the scribes of the people responded by quoting the prophecy that we have before us this morning in Micah five and verse two.

Let me read it for you. “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.”<sup>4</sup> What an amazing prophecy, predicted over 700 years prior to the birth of Christ, a prophecy that, undoubtedly, Mary would have included in her pondering.

I invite you to join me this morning in examining this marvelous text because here the Holy Spirit reveals to us some astounding truths, profound truths that, frankly, cause me to be just lost in the wonder and the awe of it all. And here we learn more of the Christ of Christmas.

And, frankly, the soil in which we are about to dig can never be exhausted of the precious jewels that lie beneath it. Here we will find rubies of love and emeralds of grace and diamonds of mercy and golden nuggets of promise. And, thankfully, many lie just beneath the surface which, I confess, will be the limit of my ability to fathom and to communicate.

I wish to draw your attention to four categories of revelation that emerge from this text, each of which contain precious gems that help us grasp the riches of Christ Jesus and his mercy towards us. We will first see the birthplace of the king; secondly, the rule of the king; thirdly, the sending of the king; and, finally, the eternity of the king.

Let me give you some context regarding Micah’s prophecy.

The northern kingdom of Israel was about to fall to Assyria when Micah began his ministry and his ministry was primarily to the southern kingdom, the kingdom of Judah where he was from. And unlike his contemporary Isaiah who addressed the court of Jerusalem, Micah addressed the common folks.

The reign of Ahaz had brought spiritual decay to the country. The country was filled with spiritual lethargy, with immorality, with idolatry, with apostasy, hypocrisy. They had violated the most basic tenets of the Mosaic covenant. In fact, in chapter six of Micah’s

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<sup>4</sup> Micah 5:2.

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prophecy in verse eight he reminds them of what the Lord required of them. And that is, “to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God.”<sup>5</sup> But they had done none of this.

The southern kingdom, by this time, was very prosperous. The culture was marked by prosperity. Their military was perceived by many to be invincible and they were convinced that God had blessed them. But their perceived blessing merely masked the wickedness of their culture. It sounds very much like another country I know of, the one in which we live.

In fact, in Isaiah chapter five the prophet gives us a very graphic description of how God saw Judah, how he perceived their corruption. And if you study that text you will see that the culture was characterized by materialism and greed, by drunkenness, by debauchery. They had redefined morality calling evil good and good evil. They were haughty. They were defiant. Their leadership and their judicial systems were corrupt. And they even fully embraced religious syncretism where they would combine many different kinds of religious beliefs into one religion, very similar to our modern ecumenical movement today. In fact, the Old Testament sacrificial system of that day was so corrupt that it now included the vile worship of the Canaanite fertility God, Baal. In fact, the land by this time was filled with the “high places” where these people practiced their wretched forms of idolatry.

So God commissions his servant Micah to come and to preach to the people. In fact, his name means, “Who is like the Lord.” And his message was one of both doom as well as hope. It was a message that basically said, “Because of God’s holiness and his covenant relationship with Judah, he must judge you for your sin and for your disobedience. But ultimately there is a message of hope. One day he will establish a kingdom and he will place upon the throne of that kingdom a king who will reign in righteousness.”

That is why in verse one of chapter five we first read the doom. Notice what the prophet says. “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.”<sup>6</sup>

Now, although Assyria was their most immediate threat, eventually, according to 2 Kings chapter 24 and chapter 25, in 586 the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem and burned the city, plundered the city, captured the king Zedekiah “who did evil in the sight of the Lord.” And then in an act of hideous barbarism consistent with what the prophet says here at the end of verse one, they brought the king and all of his sons before Nebuchadnezzar, upon which they slaughtered all of his sons before the king’s eyes and then they put out his eyes, so that the last memory that he had given his sight would be the murder of his sons. And then they shackled the king, put him in bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon.

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<sup>5</sup> Micah 6:8.

<sup>6</sup> Micah 5:1.

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So this was Micah's inspired prophecy of impending doom because of sin. But this horrific judgment was followed also by a message of hope, a promise of future blessing because of God's faithfulness and covenantal love that he had towards his people, a covenantal love that he had first spoke of and given to the forefathers of Abraham and David.

Now this hope is what we have presented here in the text before us that helps us understand much more about our Lord and our Savior, the one whose birth we celebrate at this time of year.

First, notice what the prophet says regarding the birthplace of the king in verse two. "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."<sup>7</sup>

Now Ephrathah is merely the ancient name for Bethlehem and it was used to distinguish it from other towns with the same name such as the Bethlehem in Zebulun. But this refers to the Bethlehem where David was born as we read in 1 Samuel 17.

Now, the question arises: Why, of all of the places on earth, especially during that time, why would the incarnate king choose to be born in such an insignificant little village just a few miles south of Jerusalem? Why not Rome? Why not Jerusalem?

Well, I believe there are at least two reasons. First, because Bethlehem was a royal city of ancient days. Keep in mind that since Jesus was to be born King of Israel, it was only fitting that he be born in a city that was a royal city and, indeed, it was the royal city of King David's birth.

Over 1000 years before the Messiah king was born, God made an unconditional covenant with David in 2 Samuel chapter seven promising him that he would one day raise up a descendant which would be the coming Messiah, that would establish David's kingdom forever, an eternal kingdom whereby the whole world would be blessed through his seed. It was a promise so astounding that it left David speechless, the text tells us.

So I believe Bethlehem was the city God chose because of its royal history. But, secondly, I believe that Bethlehem was also a place that pictured the coming Messiah king.

You see, Bethlehem has a double meaning, that is, the term has a double meaning. It means "house or place of bread." But it also means "house or place of fighting or war." And certainly we know biblically that bread is the symbol of life, like the manna that God used to feed his people in the wilderness. And did not Jesus say in John six, "The bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world"? And he went on to say, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger."

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<sup>7</sup> Micah 5:2.

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And also fighting and war produces sorrow and death and both of these characterize the life of the Savior king. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Conflict was his daily fare as he warred against Satan and the kingdom of darkness. Conflict is the daily fare of all who follow Christ.

In fact, when a man eats of the bread of life he declares war on Satan and on the world. It is for this reason Jesus said in Matthew 10:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.<sup>8</sup>

In truth some of you are at war with him as I speak and only when you humbly submit to the king will you ever find peace.

To be sure, life and death mark both the past as well as the future of Israel. For example, we read in Genesis 35 that God changed the name of Jacob to Israel. And when he did that he said to him:

I am God almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you and kings shall come forth from you. And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, And I will give the land to your descendants after you.<sup>9</sup>

Now on the heels of that covenant Jacob's beloved wife Rachel died in childbirth and she was buried in Bethlehem. And there we know, according to Scripture, that Jacob sat up a pillar over her grave.

The son's name was Benjamin. And as Rachel was about to die she named him Ben-Oni meaning "son of my trouble." And you will recall that Benjamin was one of Jacob's 12 sons and eventually from Jacob's son Judah came King David and ultimately the greater King, the Messiah King, the Lord Jesus Christ. But it was in Bethlehem where Rachel agonized in the birth of Benjamin. And it was a place that later became a symbol to all of the Jews of the painful waiting of the sons of Israel for their promised Messiah.

Rachel was the ancestress of the northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh through Joseph as well as the southern tribe of Benjamin. And when the Babylonians later came to carry them off into exile, the prophet Jeremiah speaks for the Lord in chapter 31 and verse 15 and says, "A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 10:34-36.

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 35:11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah 31:15.

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And then 500 years later it was in Bethlehem where the enraged Herod slaughtered all of the male children and Matthew comments in Matthew chapter two and verse 17 about that particular scenario and here is what we read.

Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED, BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE."<sup>11</sup>

Now, we move forward in the history of Bethlehem and as we do we discover more reasons for its royal greatness and its symbolism.

About 900 years after Rachel a Moabitess journeyed to Bethlehem, her name was Ruth. And you recall that there she became a servant and a wealthy man named Boaz found her and took her unto himself to be his wife, and we know that Boaz was a type of Christ, the one who was Ruth's kinsman redeemer. And Ruth was even included in the physical lineage of the coming Messiah as we read in Matthew chapter one.

And you will recall that Boaz and Ruth had a son. His name was Obed. And Obed had a son and his name was Jesse and Jesse lived in Bethlehem and Jesse had a son and his name was David, and David became the king of the covenant of which is ultimately fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater king.

So it should be of no surprise that the Son of David, the Messiah King be born in the same royal place as Micah prophesied.

Beloved, it should be of no surprise to any of us that in the providence of God, in the first century AD, Caesar Augustus would demand a census to be taken, one that would require people to go to the place of their birth. And it should be no surprise, therefore, that Mary and Joseph would embark upon a 70 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, a very treacherous path, especially in her advanced state of pregnancy, ultimately to make their way to Bethlehem, their tribal home in Judea.

And I would be totally surprised if Mary and Joseph did not quote the prophecy before us in the very cadence of the hoofs of the little donkey that carried the virgin with child.

And would not this be a theme of Mary's pondering when the shepherds told her about the angelic announcement? "Today, in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 2:17-18.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 2:11.

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As a footnote, I find it fascinating that in Luke chapter two verses one through seven the inspired author is very careful to precisely reveal the sequence of events that led Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem of Judea, from the Galilee to Judea.

Now why would he do this? And, again, why not just go to Nazareth? And why such detail about the historical sequence of events? Well, I believe the answer is three fold. First of all, to demonstrate the sovereignty of almighty God to orchestrate the events of history through the miracle of divine providence that he might accomplish his purposes.

And, secondly, to confirm the inspired truth of Scripture. As McClain has rightfully stated, quote, “Upon the fulfillment of the jots and tittles rests the veracity of God.”

And, finally, to underscore the supreme importance of interpreting all Scripture, including the rest of Micah’s prophecy concerning the Messianic earthly kingdom, literally.

But as we consider the picture that is painted by the village of Bethlehem notice also the prophet speaks of her as being “too little to be among the clans of Judah.” Literally, this is a place that is not even large enough to be one province, a place of insignificance. Shall we say a David in the land of giants? Yet notice, “From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.”<sup>13</sup>

Dear friends, is this not a picture of Christ’s love for us? Is this not a picture of the character of his subjects? Are we not the little ones? Did not the king say that we must enter his kingdom like little children with no agenda, no haughty spirit, just simple helpless, dependent people who have faith believing the truths of the gospel.

Did he not say, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”?<sup>14</sup> And are we not like little insignificant Bethlehem? Yet has not Christ come to us?

I think of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians one where he says:

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 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, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.<sup>15</sup>

I am so thankful that Christ came unto those who are too little in the eyes of the world, people like you, people like me.

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<sup>13</sup> Micah 5:2.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 5:3.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

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So the prophet speaks of his birth place. But, secondly, the sending of the king. We read, "One will go forth for Me."<sup>16</sup> What an amazing truth this is. You see, here we read that the Father would send forth his Son. Jesus said in John 5:36, "The works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me."<sup>17</sup>

And in John chapter seven and verse 28:

Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."<sup>18</sup>

Oh, the depths of the Father's love that he would send his only begotten Son. Oh, the depths of the love of the Son that he would come and suffer and die in our stead. And, oh, the depths of the Spirit's love that he would cause the virgin to conceive the incarnate Son, that the Word might become flesh and dwell amongst us that we might behold his glory, and then that he would empower the Son of Man and sustain him in Gethsemane and sustain him upon the cross, and then that he would inspire the written Word that we might know the truth of saving grace, and then to think that he would convict us of sin and righteousness and judgment, and then that the Spirit would cause us to be born again and dwell within us and seal us until the day of redemption.

Dear friends, never forget, though the Father sent the Son, the Son voluntarily and willingly did the will of the Father. He set aside his glory to purchase our redemption, all of which was empowered and accomplished by the work of the Spirit.

The triune godhead is always involved in all of these things. Never separate them.

Oh, blessed be our glorious king.  
What work thou hast begun.  
Forever will our voices sing,  
All praise to the three in one.

So the prophet speaks of the birth place of the king and the sending of the king. But, thirdly, the rule of the king. Notice he says, "From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel."<sup>19</sup>

Now, some will be quick to say, "Boy, that was a failure. He came unto his own and his own received him not. They crucified the king. And now look at the Jews in the Diaspora. They are scattered all over the world, one little insignificant nation over there. God is finished with them now. What happened to the king?"

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<sup>16</sup> Micah 5:2.

<sup>17</sup> John 5:36.

<sup>18</sup> John 7:28-29.

<sup>19</sup> Micah 5:2.

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Well, while it is true that Jesus came preaching the kingdom to the Jew first, the lost sheep of Israel, the chosen people of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenant, it is all together untrue and frankly an assault on the character of God to assume that he will not do eventually what he has promised to do and that is to rule over Israel.

You will recall that when Jesus was here on earth people witnessed his signs and his wonders. They were absolutely astounded and they said, “Is this the Son of David?” And the Pharisees were quick to tell them, “No, no, no, no. You must understand. The miraculous works that he is doing is not a testimony of the power of the Holy Spirit. He does these works by the power of Satan.” And, of course, this self imposed blindness resulted in judgment. Such blasphemy would prevent anyone from ever being saved.

Indeed, Israel rejected their king. They crucified the Son of Man. But this was precisely according to God’s plan. You will recall on the day of Pentecost Peter said in Acts chapter two beginning in verse 22:

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.<sup>20</sup>

Now, beloved, what escapes the notice of the critic is that the promised King was also the Passover Lamb, the final and perfect sacrifice who came to make atonement for sin that we might be saved. What many fail to notice is that his redemption would precede the establishment of his kingdom.

All of this was planned. From the very beginning of his earthly ministry the Savior king preached, according to Matthew 4:17, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”<sup>21</sup> And did not Pilate say to him in John 18, “So you are a king?”<sup>22</sup> And Jesus answered, “You say correctly that 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.”<sup>23</sup> But did not also John the Baptist say in John 1:29, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world?”<sup>24</sup>

Is not the Lamb the one who is worthy to take the scrolls from the Father in his revelation and open the seals? Is not the Lamb the one that the wicked make war upon and yet he overcomes? Will not the glorious light of the Lamb illumine the new Jerusalem? So the long awaited messianic kingdom on earth had to be postponed and that was by divine design awaiting the future fulfillment when the king would return in all of his

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<sup>20</sup> Acts 2:22-23.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 4:17.

<sup>22</sup> John 18:37.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> John 1:29.

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glory. And during the interregnum, or during the interval between the king's first appearing and his second, the kingdom has taken the form of what Jesus called the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" in Matthew 13:11, referring to the truths not disclosed in the Old Testament, related to the gospel, related to the church.

Child of God, do not be "hornswaggled" here. Christ will return as King of Israel as he has promised. The prophet had foretold this and the converted rabbi, the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 11 verse 26 that a day is coming when, quote:

All Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.<sup>25</sup>

So the prophet reveals the birthplace of the king, the sending of the king, the rule of the king and, finally, the eternity of the king. He says, "His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."<sup>26</sup>

Now, beloved, this is a phrase that reveals the existence of the Messiah, the Son of Man and the Son of God from eternity past all through eternity future, from before time began through the coming millennial kingdom all the way through the eternal state, for eternity.

It says his goings forth are from long ago. This is a fascinating statement and Scripture bears testimony to this truth because we see the preincarnate Christ even in the Old Testament. He appeared as "the angel of the Lord" on several occasions.

You will recall that in Genesis 16 he appeared to Hagar near a spring in the desert and commanded her to return to Sarah.

You will recall that in Genesis 18 he appeared to Abraham where he promised him and his elderly wife Sarah that they would have a son and that out of Abraham's seed would come a great and powerful nation and that all of the nations of the earth would be blessed through him.

You will recall that in Genesis 31 he came to Jacob in a dream and in chapter 32, he wrestled with 97 year old Jacob all night after which the Lord blessed him and changed his name to Israel.

In Exodus three he appeared to Moses in the burning bush.

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<sup>25</sup> Romans 11:26-27.

<sup>26</sup> Micah 5:2.

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In Joshua five he appeared to Joshua near Jericho, remember, with a sword drawn in his hand. And he appeared to Gideon in Judges chapter six and said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.” And he went on to say, “Go in the strength that you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”

And you will recall, as well, in Daniel chapter three Nebuchadnezzar looked into the flames and he not only saw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, but he saw another form and it was the preincarnate Christ.

Oh, dear friend, to think that he appeared long before and he came again and appeared as a babe in a manger. And, beloved, he will appear yet again when he returns in the blazing glory of his holiness and in the fiery wrath of his indignation as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

And he says of himself in Revelation 19 beginning at verse 15:

And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."<sup>27</sup>

Yes, indeed, “his goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

Dear Christian, grasp this for a moment, to think the Savior king has not only existed as the second member of the triune godhead from all eternity, but to think that he also set his love upon us before time began. You will recall in 2 Timothy chapter one the apostle Paul tells us that by his own purpose and grace he granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity this love. And he says, “But now it has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus.”<sup>28</sup> And likewise, in Titus chapter one and verse one Paul tells us we were chosen of God. And he goes on to say that we have the “Hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,”<sup>29</sup> literally before time began, literally, in eternity past.

Now think of this. God chose to set his love upon you and upon me before the foundations of the earth. It is inconceivable. Under his sovereign control he orchestrated even your conception in your mother’s womb. Under his providential care he superintended your development and your birth. The psalmist tells us in Psalm 139, “For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Revelation 19:15-16.

<sup>28</sup> 2 Timothy 1:10.

<sup>29</sup> Titus 1:2.

<sup>30</sup> Psalm 139:13.

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He went on to say, “Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover we know, according to Scripture, that he even ordained the length of our life. Again, the psalmist tells us in the same psalm, verse 16, “And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.”<sup>32</sup>

Beloved, please understand as we think of these incredible truths, before you were born, he knew the color of your eyes, the color of your hair, the color of your skin, how your face would be formed, the size of your body. He knew your personality. He knew the sound of your voice. He even knew that you would rebel against him and violate his law and reject him requiring him to set his wrath upon you, that you would become his enemy, that you would be utterly unable to save yourself from the justice of his wrath.

And yet knowing all of that he also knew, therefore, that he had to set into place something that we could not do and that is to set into place a plan of redemption that we might be reconciled unto him through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-baby in the manger.

The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”<sup>33</sup> Oh, indeed, “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.”<sup>34</sup> How utterly incomprehensible.

As we leave the study of this text yet hopefully continue to savor it in the meditations of our heart, I wish to close with the stirring words of Charles Spurgeon who also commented on this text at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark in England, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1855.

Here is what he said, quote, “Blessed Lord Jesus! thou art ruler in thy people's hearts, and thou ever shalt be; we want no other ruler save thyself, and we will submit to none other. We are free, because we are the servants of Christ; we are at liberty, because he is our ruler, and we know no bondage and no slavery, because Jesus Christ alone is monarch of our hearts. He came ‘to be ruler in Israel;’ and mark you, that mission of his is not quite fulfilled yet, and shall not be till the latter-day glories. In a little while you shall see Christ come again, to be ruler over his people Israel, and ruler over them not only as spiritual Israel, but even as natural Israel, for the Jews shall be restored to their land, and the tribes of Jacob shall yet sing in the halls of their temple; unto God there shall yet again be offered Hebrew songs of praise, and the heart of the unbelieving Jew shall be melted at the feet of the true Messias. In a short time, he who at his birth was hailed king of the Jews by Easterns, and at his death was written king of the Jews by a Western, shall be called king of the Jews everywhere—yes, king of the Jews and Gentiles also—in that universal monarchy whose dominion shall be co-extensive with the habitable globe, and

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<sup>31</sup> Psalm 139:16.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Romans 5:8.

<sup>34</sup> Micah 5:2.

## Bethlehem and Our Eternal King

Micah 5:2

whose duration shall be coeval with time itself. He came to be a ruler in Israel, and a ruler most decidedly he shall be, when he shall reign among his people with his ancients gloriously,” end quote.

This is precisely what Micah prophecies here in chapter five and verse four. Notice what he says.

“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. And this one will be our peace.”<sup>35</sup>

My friend, is he your Savior and is he your King? If not, one day he will be your condemning judge. Won't you bow before him while there is yet time?

And oh, dear Christian friend, as we contemplate these glorious truths, as we contemplate the birth of Christ and all that that entails, may the depth of the truths that we have just examined result in greater heights of worship and praise for each of us and cause us to ascend to the very pinnacle of praise especially during this time of year as we celebrate the one who came to save us from our sins.

Let's bow in prayer.

*Father, we thank you for these eternal truths. Cause them to continue to resonate within our hearts. Lord, may we see you perhaps as never before and may we see the tapestry of Scripture presenting, once again, the glorious scarlet thread of redemption especially as we contemplate the birth of our Messiah King. Lord, commit us unto yourself in way that we might be ardent with a zeal for evangelism, that others may also know these truths. Bless us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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**Transcript Explanation:** Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

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<sup>35</sup> Micah 5:4-5.