



Christ Reformed Community Church

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“King for the Ages” Micah 5:2

I want you to take your copy of God’s Word and turn with me this morning to Micah chapter 5, Micah chapter 5 in the Old Testament. It is most years that I will preach a one-off Christmas sermon, sometimes two as in this year. When we had our annual Christmas celebration last Sunday evening, I also preached a Christmas message. I guess the best way to say it is that there is relevancy to some of these older passages of Scripture, particularly from the New Testament, that prophesy of the birth of Christ that have particular relevance for our own times, and I think Micah 5:2 is one of those texts. And this morning I’m going to seek to show you the relevance of this text for our own times, but first let me read it, just one verse, Micah 5:2:

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.*

The Christmas story is really a story of a King, a King birthed into a fallen world, and a King that would not only bring salvation, but a King who would establish a kingdom. Proverbs 14:34 says: “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*” “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any [nation].*” That’s an interesting verse because it says that sin is a reproach to any nation, which implies the fact that there is only one law, and the breaking of that one law equals sin. And so, when a national fails to be marked by righteousness, it is marked by sin, and when that takes place, it is a reproach to any people. That is to say, no human government has independent authority from God. We know this from the New Testament, Romans 13:1: “*For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist have been instituted by God.*”

There was a historian of times past by the name of Arnold Toynbee, sort of an interesting last name. He would have been kind of what we would refer to today as a “nominal” Christian, and he in his history of the world, chronicled twenty-one powerful civilizations, all retaining influence for a time but all that eventually fell away. And he spoke about the rise and the fall of Babylon, the rise and the fall of Greece, the rise and the fall of Rome—all culminating and all falling. Babylon was a pagan empire. It was a pagan nation, but it really serves as an example, other than Israel, of course, where God will bless a nation, He’ll retain His favor upon a nation, even one that’s a pagan nation for a time, but He will remove that blessing based upon the principles of

Proverbs 14:34: *“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”* You’re familiar with the story of Babylon. You’re familiar with King Nebuchadnezzar. He was raised as a king in God’s providence, and in a time in which Daniel came onto the scene, Nebuchadnezzar liked Daniel and his friends, and he rose them to high ranks in his kingdom. Daniel himself became a ruler over the entire province of Babylon. We read about this in the prophet Daniel, in Daniel 2:47. It says: *“The king answered and said to Daniel, ‘Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.’”* Daniel had interpreted dreams of this great king, and then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts. He made him ruler of the whole province of Babylon as a chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. That was Nebuchadnezzar, but Nebuchadnezzar had a descendant. He was a man by the name of King Belshazzar, who was brought low because of his pride. And we also read about this, written by Daniel, this time in chapter 5, speaking of Belshazzar: *“But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly,”* the Bible says, *“he was brought [low] down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him.”* That was Belshazzar.

As Mark Twain once said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but history does rhyme.” And Belshazzar was really copying off what we believe to be his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar when he was brought low because of his pride because there was a period in Nebuchadnezzar’s history before he praised God in which he walked on the palace roof, and he beat his chest in all of his greatness, and really in a sickening glory and display of self-glory and pride, took credit for all that he had attained in his kingdom. All that God had blessed Babylon for, Nebuchadnezzar took credit for that. And you remember the story; God brought Nebuchadnezzar low from the heights of his lofty pride. Driven to the beasts of the field, he ate the grass with the wild oxen and fell into utter and total obscurity. But by the grace of God before the end of his life, he repented of that. He was restored to his throne, the kingdom was restored to him, and he once again found honor and blessing by God, and his kingdom found that; and once again, Babylon was a world-influencing nation. This is why God blessed Babylon again. The words of Nebuchadnezzar: *“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and [all] his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.”* That was literally true in his life. He walked in pride on the palace roof, but now he’s repenting and more importantly, he worshiped God.

Daniel says in Daniel chapter 4, he *“praised and honored”* God, he says *“who lives forever.”* *“For his dominion,”* Nebuchadnezzar said, *“is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation.”* In other words, Nebuchadnezzar recognized there was only one kingdom that mattered, and that was the kingdom of God. There was only one true and final King, and that was God, the one who had the authority and the sovereignty to bring the great Nebuchadnezzar low, and so he repents of his sin and God blesses this pagan nation now that recognizes God as the true God. And Daniel the prophet actually recounts this history of Nebuchadnezzar repenting of his sin in all of humility to Belshazzar, his grandson, but sadly his grandson doesn’t repent, and in Daniel chapter 5 we read: *“And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this.”* Though you knew all of this history, this repeating of history, “You have followed in the footsteps of your grandfather, but though he repented, you have failed to repent.” And so, Daniel gave the prophecy in accordance with the vision. *“God has numbered,”* Daniel said, *“the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end.”*

Now, the point of all of this talk of Babylon’s influence, the rise of Nebuchadnezzar, the repentance of Nebuchadnezzar, the raising up of Belshazzar, the failure of him in his pride to repent, actually takes place in a dream that Daniel interprets where the kingdoms are represented by a great statue. The head of that statue is made of gold, and we believe that that represents Babylon. The chest and the arms made of silver, which probably represents the Medo-Persian empire. The middle thighs of bronze representing Greece, and then the legs of iron and the feet of iron mixed with clay representing Rome—the history going all the way from the top Babylon all the way down to Rome. And then there is the statement that Daniel makes in Daniel chapter 2. He speaks of a rock, and I want you to think about Christ because He is the Rock not cut by human hands that would destroy all these kingdoms and any who would not bow the knee to Christ, and this kingdom would become a mountain so large as to fill the whole world. That’s what Daniel prophesies.

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and [even] the gold [head]. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.

What is Daniel telling Nebuchadnezzar? What is Daniel telling us? Well, of course, he’s telling us there is only one true kingdom. The kingdom that will last is not a kingdom ruled by mere man but one ruled by the King of Kings who rose triumphant, and when did He rise? This Rock, the Rock of Christ rose during the Roman period, during the Roman reign, something fulfilled that Daniel prophesied. And you say to yourself, “What does all of this have to do with Micah 5:2?” Well, notice your text again back in Micah 5:2:

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.*

In other words, this has been predicted. This has been planned. This has been predestined. This is what all of history pointed forward to was the birth of the God-man, the birth of the King, the birth of Jesus, the Christ. Here Micah calls him a “ruler,” and if you notice with me in verse 4, a ruler who will “stand and shepherd his flock.”

*And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.
And he shall be their peace.*

Micah, by the way, is writing nearly 150 years before Daniel, and he speaks about the same sort of kingdom, the same sort of ruler that Daniel would speak about; this son of Mary and Joseph,

who is also the Son of God who could come to establish His kingdom, who would come to shepherd His people, who would come to defeat our worst enemy which is the devil. First John 3:8: *“The reason the Son of God appeared,”* or was manifested, or was born into this world, *“was to destroy,”* John says, *“the works of the devil.”* This is the kingdom of God coming against the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of light that has been dawned into the world. Now, it’s interesting because Micah the prophet writes like all prophets. He is a prophet not merely of hope, not merely of light but one of judgment, one of darkness. We see that the prophets regularly spoke about the fall of Israel in the midst of their prophecies, and Micah is no different. And I’ll remind you that Jesus was also a prophet, and did He not, as we’ve seen in Mark’s Gospel in Mark chapter 13, that Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem.

Remember, the disciples are looking at all the buildings of the temple and saying what wonderful buildings these are, and Jesus said, “Yes, that is nice, but do you understand that not one stone will be left on another that will not be thrown down?” Well, Micah is a prophet like Jesus. He predicts, if you go back with me to chapter 1, that the capital of Samaria is going to fall; and because he is predicting the fall of Samaria—that’s in the Northern Kingdom of Israel—and because we know he’s also speaking to the coming reality of the doom of the southern kingdom, Jerusalem, that will come years later—no irony here—by Babylon, we know that His judgment is really against the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. But he speaks here in chapter 1, notice for example just verse 6: *“Therefore I will make Samaria a heap in the open country, a place for planting vineyards, and I will pour down her stones into the valley and uncover her foundations.”* That is almost identical language to the language of Jesus speaking about the fall of Jerusalem. Not one stone will be left; they will all fall. And then he says, *“What is the transgression of Jacob?”* in verse 4, *“Is it not Samaria? And what is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?”* So, he’s speaking to both the Northern and the Southern Kingdom, that disaster has come, that darkness has come. For example, verse 12 of chapter 1, it says, *“Disaster has come down from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem.”* So, he is predicting the fall of Samaria, the Northern Kingdom in 722, but after that in 586 will be the fall of Jerusalem.

Micah is predicting both of these things, and he gives to us the reason why. Skip with me to chapter 3. He says in verse 1, the end of it, *“Is it not for you to know justice?—you who hate the good and love the evil.”* This is a people who hated good, and they loved evil. They hated the law of God. They said that that which was evil was good, and that which was good was evil. Does that sound familiar to our own nation? And he says about the leaders in verse 2, they *“tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones.”* They *“eat the flesh of my people.”* They *“flay their skin from off them.”* They *“break their bones in pieces.”* They *“chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron.”* This is a culture of death and depression, a lack of justice. So, what does he say in chapter 3 and verse 12? *“Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the house a wooded height.”* Wow! Judgment is coming. These leaders were killers both physically of God’s people—you know that Israel is known for their burning of children in honor of Molech, the false god—but also metaphorically this was a culture of death, a culture of darkness. What does he say in chapter 3, verse 5? *“Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets,”* They are going to *“cry peace,”* but there’s not going to be peace. Verse 6:

Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,

*and darkness to you, without divination.
The sun shall go down on the prophets,
and the day shall be black over them;
the seers shall be disgraced,
and the diviners put to shame;
they shall all cover their lips,
for there is no answer from God.*

In other words, the judgment is so severe that God is going to make the prophets of God a shame and a sham because they're not speaking the truth anyway. Utter and total darkness and devastation. Think of our own nation. Think of the rise of abortion. Think of our own nation and how many pulpits across the land today are not being filled today because even the Christian church in the United States has said that to go to church on Christmas, even though it's Sunday, is not a necessary thin, something as fundamental and foundational as that. And to be sure—don't misunderstand me this morning—the United States has not replaced Israel as God's covenant people. Israel was uniquely God's covenant people, but we do have a godly heritage, don't we? Comparing the United States with Israel is legitimate on some level because, like Israel, the United States was forged and brought together in large measure by the worship of the one true God. When you read history, you see that many secular people like to paint someone like George Washington out to be a nonbeliever, some sort of self-serving, personally ambitious sort of deist. But in a prayer journal these are George Washington's own words. He wrote them in his twenties. He said, and I quote:

O most glorious God, remember that I am but dust, and remit my transgressions, negligences and ignorances, and cover them all with the absolute obedience of thy dear Son, that those sacrifices of sin, praise and thanksgiving which I have offered may be accepted by Thee, in and for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ offered upon the cross for me... Direct my thoughts, words and work, wash away my sins in the immaculate blood of the lamb, and purge my heart by thy Holy Spirit.

George Washington, one of the founders, or John Witherspoon, who wrote at the time of the American Revolution. He was then the president of the College of New Jersey. That's known today as Princeton. He said this, and I quote:

He is the best friend to American liberty who is most sincere and active in promoting true and undefiled religion, and who sets himself with the greatest firmness to bear down profanity and immortality of every kind.

Or what about Benjamin Franklin, a clear unbeliever? A clear unbeliever, but one who enjoyed hearing the preaching of George Whitefield, and one who confirmed the power of prayer before the constitutional convention of Philadelphia in 1787, just a few years after the Revolution. He said this, and I quote: “In the beginning of the contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection.” And Franklin said this:

The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth- that God Governs in the affairs of men. And [he says] if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his [God's] notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?

Just a few quotes and quips from our founding fathers. But like Israel we have been uniquely blessed by God, and like Israel we are on life support, running the risk of forfeiting those blessings. Like Micah’s day, darkness covers our land as it did Israel in his day, but the same ray of hope provided by Micah in his dark day shines brightly into our dark times. After darkness, light. I mean, that is the motto that we love to say, *post tenebras lux*. And as Mark Twain said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme.” Do we really believe that the history of the United States is worse than the history of Israel? Think about her idolatry, her immorality, burning children in the name of Molech. In fact, you could make an argument, it’s at least arguable that her history is more sinful than the United States history, and yet many people have given up hope of revival and reformation for our own country. If there’s going to be revival and reformation, it would certainly come in a country like ours that has a godly heritage. And yet in any event, our hope is not in one particular nation or a political leader.

God’s kingdom is the final kingdom, and Revelation tells us that God’s kingdom is filled with a great multitude that no one can number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, and that the light of God’s kingdom will mark the nations and they will walk in it, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. This is the hope of the gospel. I hope that as we speak about the hope of the gospel, your hope is not merely in the future reality of heaven, as glorious as that is. That is our greatest hope—our forgiveness of sins in Christ, the inheritance of eternal life, freedom from the pains and the sickness and the sin of this life. But the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom is not merely about something in the future and heavenly. It’s about God’s promised blessings on the here and now from a people that names the name of Christ, a people that proclaims the gospel, a people that points, beginning with their home and their church and nation, back to God. So, our hope is the same as that of Micah, as he tells his nation to repent, and what does this hope involve? Well, it involves three little points that I want to make from Micah 5:2:

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.*

Our hope is to be the same as that of Micah, and what did this hope involve? Well, first, Micah directs our hope to a place, to a place where he was. In our dark times, there is a ray of hope shining from Bethlehem. Notice the beginning of verse 2:

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel.*

He says there at the beginning of verse 2, “*But you.*” “That is you, Israel. God’s judgment is upon you. Your culture, your society has deteriorated into ruin symbolized by the rubble of Samaria and

the future rubble of Jerusalem, the capital cities.” And he even speaks about the siege. He sounds like a military commander. Verse 1, skip back:

*Now muster your troops. O daughter of troops;
siege is laid against us;
with the rod they strike the judge of Israel
on the cheek.*

I mean, he predicts a siege involving—listen to this—a public humiliation on the political leader of Israel. I have a question for you this morning. Have you watched a presidential press conference lately? And it is very difficult to watch for a number of reasons. Is this not an example of the type of public humiliation that God heaps upon a nation that has rejected His truth, a sort of second-hand slap on the cheek? And Micah points that out. Micah points out the judgment, but in these words of judgment is a ray of hope, and he directs us, first of all, to a place. He says, “*But you,*” in spite of all this sin and this judgment, “*O Bethlehem Ephrathah.*” In other words, hope is going to spring not from mighty Jerusalem, not from the capital city, but lowly Bethlehem; Bethlehem some five miles southwest of Jerusalem, too small to even be found on maps, this little village. And Micah is making the statement around 700 BC, and he’s saying that greatness is going to come from this little village, this backwoods town, as it were, with one red light—Bethlehem Ephrathah. And we know from Matthew 2:1 that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, providentially fulfilling this passage of Scripture, and how did Jesus get there? Well, you know the readings of the New Testament that we read during Christmas time, that the Roman emperor required a census to be taken, and so the citizens returned to their hometown, and Joseph and Mary traveled in obedience to the civil magistrate to Bethlehem. And you remember that the emperor wanted to know how many people were there in Bethlehem. This was a census, and yet, in the midst of him wanting to know how many people were there, there was one yet born that was far more important than all the people that were there: Jesus the Christ, and Jesus was born into this period of darkness.

Herod the Great was considered the king of the Jews, and just like the leaders in Micah’s day it was Herod who ate up the people. Remember, he commanded the slaughter of all the male children in Bethlehem, precisely because this prophecy in Micah 5:2 was recited to him, and we know that from Matthew chapter 2. He inquired as to where the Christ was to be born. You don’t think that Christ’s kingship has anything to do with the political realm of nations and kingdoms? Herod thought so. Rome thought so. They viewed the birth of Jesus as a threat to their authority. They viewed the birth of Jesus as a threat to their kingdom, to their empire, to their rule. And of course, Herod Antipas, Herod’s son, was also evil. He asked for the head of John the Baptist to be given on a platter. You remember that story, and the reason that John’s head was taken off is because he denounced the immorality of Herod because John believed that the character of the civil magistrate should match and reflect the character and the holiness of God’s law. You don’t think that Herod viewed John as a threat to his authority? But you see, folks, our hope for the future is found in the bright light of the past in Bethlehem where Christ came to dwell. That’s where Micah points us: “*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah.*” Calvin says, and I quote: “Christ, who came down to us in his incarnation, that he might lift us up to the Father.” And that is really the hope of the gospel.

The hope for the world hasn’t changed. Hope is always found in Bethlehem, for it’s in Bethlehem where the light of God dawned in a baby boy born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, to

proclaim the gospel and to die for sinners to give us the hope of the forgiveness of our sins and the sovereign rule of King Jesus, a kingdom of peace. But this innocent pure baby who was born in the place of Bethlehem is not all Micah wants us to understand. Micah directs our hope not just to a place where he was, but number two, to a person. That is what he became. Notice the second half of verse 2. It says, “*From you,*” that is from Bethlehem, “*shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.*” “*Ruler in Israel.*” This is not just a sentimental time or a sentimental thought about the innocence of a baby. This is about a baby who would become a man, and this man would become dangerous. In fact, He would appear so dangerous to the civil authorities that Rome would crucify Him under the direction of the Jewish authorities of Israel. Geographically speaking, He was born in Bethlehem, but theologically speaking, what He would become—notice it there in verse 2—He would become a “*ruler in Israel.*” You see, Micah is speaking to the holy remnant of his day who have repented of their sin, and he is telling them, “Listen, there is coming a ruler in Israel that is going to stand in stark contrast to the rulers that you are under now. You know, the rulers that flay your skins, that throw you into the cauldron, who have made you to be part of this culture of death and sin and decay? There is coming a ruler. He’s not going to be like the baby-eating Herod. He’s not going to be like the people-eating leaders of Micah’s day. He is going to be a Shepherd-ruler who was going to feed His sheep with the spiritual bread of heaven.” In fact, just verse 4 again:

*And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.
And he shall be their peace.*

He is a ruler that comes from humble origins, Bethlehem, but He also comes from heavenly origins. He came from heaven to earth, and He does not eat the flesh of His people. He gives His flesh to us for spiritual food. Remember what Jesus said, John 6:51: “*I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.*” It is no coincidence. Let me just say this, that Jesus in the first manifestation of the God-man was providentially in Bethlehem, for the name Bethlehem literally means “house of bread.” It means “city of bread,” an appropriate birthplace for the Bread of Life come from heaven; that in the wilderness and darkness of Micah’s day and our own day is the hope of a ruler who will bring peace, peace with God, forgiveness of sins, peace with man, a Shepherd who will feed His sheep with the manna of heaven, as we walk in the valley of the shadow of death, even a culture of death. You remember, Jesus said “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*” “*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.*” Jesus is the Shepherd, and He is the manna that has come down from heaven to feed His people the good news of salvation. Jesus was explicit about this.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came

down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever [Jesus says].

And so, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the “house of bread.” He’s the living bread. Matthew 1:21: *“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”* There was obedient life represented in the bread through the pouring out of His blood represented in the cup, these emblems of the gospel that remind us we must eat of Christ and drink of Christ. We must believe in Him if we want to have eternal life. So, the bright star appointed to this person of hope, this future ruler, and of course we understand. During this time of year, we love to read that narrative, and we read it last Sunday evening, for those of you that were here with us, that: *“In the same region there were shepherds out in the field.”* Is it ironic to you that there were shepherds to whom it was first announced, the coming of the Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, the ruler? This isn’t a coincidence. This is purposeful. *“Shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night,”* because there was coming another one who would have a spiritual flock. He would be the ruler of them.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David [city of bread] a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

I mean, just picture for a moment the imagery. Surrounded, yes, by His earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, but then surrounded by these dirty shepherds who had just had announced to them before anyone else from the angels of heaven, the coming of this Christ child. These shepherds surrounded the Good Shepherd. He was the Good Shepherd sent to feed His sheep with salvation, and there He was lying in a manger, in a feeding trough in Bethlehem, the house of bread, from which would spring manna that He would feed His people with. This is the person of hope.

But Micah directs us not only in these dark days and in the dark days of his own period to a place a hope—that is where He was, Jesus, and a person of hope, what He became, the ruler of Israel—but he also directs us not only to a place and a person, but he directs us to a power. A place, where He was; a person, what He became, but a power. How does He rule? Notice the end of verse 2: *“Whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”* I love this expression. Let’s first look at what he means by *“from ancient days.”* That’s the last thing that he says, but the first thing we’ll talk about for our purposes. The ancient of days—what does this mean? Well, since the same town of Bethlehem was where David was born, David was born in Bethlehem, the founding king of Israel, so too would this ruler, Micah is saying, would come from the *“ancient of days.”* He was of ancient, royal, kingly blood. David’s kingdom would be ruled by a descendant from his loins. Now, turn back with me to 2 Samuel chapter 7, because here we have what is often called the Davidic covenant, 2 Samuel 7. But this is also a Christmas passage because all of this dovetails with what Micah predicted, what came true in New Testament days—the coming of Christ. There is a prophecy. These are the words that come to David, 2 Samuel 7, and we’ll just pick up in verse 12. God says to David through Nathan, verse 12:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom [notice this] forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men.

That is a reference to the crucifixion of Christ. He will bear the iniquity of us. God will count our sin upon His head and “will discipline [or punish] him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men.” Verse 15: “But my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.” Verse 16: “‘And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.” In other words, the point of the end of verse 2 of Micah 5 is that David’s kingdom would not be ruled by a mere man. This kingdom would be ruled by an eternal God, an eternal kingdom ruled by the very power of God. That’s what it’s saying. So, we read the prophet Isaiah: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder.” And what is His name going to be called? “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” These are names of deity, the titles of the divine. “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.” Micah is saying that the future ruler would be from the root of Jesse. He would be a descendent of David. He would have ancient blood, but notice again in verse 2, His “coming forth is from of old.” In other words, He never had a beginning. This is the Mighty God. This is the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. This kingdom will have a power like none other because it will be ruled by not just a mere man but by the God-man.

Psalm 74:12: “Yet God my [God] is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.” “God my [God] is from of old.” Jesus was “from of old.” His origins are none. He had no origin. He is the son of David, and He is David’s Lord. He is the son of David, and He is the Son of God. This kingdom has an eternal power connected to it because it’s ruled by the one powerful God. Therefore, what Micah is saying in Micah 5:2 is that the origin of this ruler is not merely Davidic, from ancient days, but it’s also divine, from of old. He never had a beginning. He always existed. This is our ruler. And unlike the rulers of our day who use us for their own selfish purposes, unlike the Roman Empire who looked for heads to count for self-serving tax purposes, unlike Herod who looked for the head of John the Baptist, and He looked for the baby in the manger, Jesus is our Great Shepherd and ruler. He’s the Good Shepherd, right? John 10:14: “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.” The Father has numbered all the hairs upon our head. He is guarding us and watching us. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” He says in another place, because “I and the Father are one.” “Our hand is one, they are eternally secure.”

That’s the message of peace. That’s the message of the gospel. That’s the message of hope. That’s the message of Christmas, to say this: Jesus came to establish peace through the spiritual bread of offering Himself as a life obedient to God, and then a life crucified upon the cross of Calvary as

our substitute. He offers, first of all, peace with God, right? Peace with God because we are at war with God. We are in rebellion to God. *“All of us, like sheep, have gone astray,”* and that’s why Peter says to all the elect sheep, they have *“returned to the Shepherd and Overseer”* of their souls because He is calling forth all of His elect sheep to be at peace with God. There will not be world peace. There will not be peace in the culture apart from peace with God, vertical peace with God that comes through the gospel, but the result of that vertical peace, our justification, being declared righteous is the reality of peace between man and man. So, we declare this peace, and we also declare Proverbs 14:34 that *“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”*

So, what do we do? What do we do? We proclaim the gospel. We proclaim Christ crucified. That is the only message of hope. We pray for our nation. Paul is clear about that in 1 Timothy 2. We are to pray for kings, all those in authority over us. We are to pray for their salvation. We are to pray for their repentance. We are to pray that they make wise decisions so that we can live dignified and quiet and peaceable lives, but we don’t just pray for our nation. We plead with the nations. In other words, we are ambassadors as Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, *“We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.”* And we plead with civil magistrates to *“be reconciled to God.”* We plead with our fellow citizens to *“be reconciled to God.”* We send missionaries out into the world that they might plead with others *“to be reconciled to God.”* The only political platform we have is the fact that Christ is come to establish His eternal, powerful kingdom. So, we pray for our nation, we plead with the nations, and number three, we prepare our own nation. How do we prepare our own nation? It begins one sinner at a time coming to Christ, one family at a time wholly devoted to God, one church at a time set apart to the glory of God, and that eventually, generationally has an impact for good. Psalm 14:5 says, *“God is with the generation of the righteous.”* That’s a promise. *“God is with the generation of the righteous.”* That’s our generation, as we look to Christ, as we seek to bring up our children *“in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,”* as we *“proclaim the gospel,”* as we cultivate a healthy covenantal, generational faithfulness passed down. And I really like the King James Version of Psalm 14:5. It doesn’t say *“God is with the generation of the righteous.”* It says, *“God is in the generation of the righteous.”* *“If God is for us, who can [stand] against us?”* So, we are to be optimistic because of the hope that Micah proclaims, the place of hope, the person of hope, the power of hope. *“History doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme,”* and my prayer is that our nation would return to the way it began. How do you do that? You return to Christ. Every nation that submits to Christ will be blessed by God. I’ll leave you with this quote from a Puritan, his name William Dyer. He said this and I quote: *“The Son of God became the Son of Man that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God.”*

And all this He did to save the nations. That’s the purpose of God—to save the nations. It begins with our generation. It begins with our nation. It begins with you. It begins with your family. It begins with this church, as we hopefully proclaim optimistically and confidently the gospel, knowing that the gospel alone can save sinners and bring them into the one and only eternal powerful kingdom of God that brings with it not merely blessings in this life but eternal and heavenly blessings for all who call upon His name. Let us pray.

Our Lord God, we thank You for the Old Testament. We thank You for the prophet Micah who reveals to us this glorious hope of the gospel found in the promise of the coming of the Messiah. Father, we have gathered here this Lord’s Day to worship You. This is more about Your worship

and Your glory. It's more about obeying You and submitting to You than it is about one day out of the year. But we're just normal Christians coming together on the Lord's Day like we do every week to worship Jesus our King, and yet to be reminded of the glories of the incarnation, where He came from: Bethlehem, who He would be: a ruler, and His identity as the God-man. It gives us comfort and hope in the midst of wicked rulers, knowing that the true and final kingdom will not be ruled and is not ruled by mere man but is ruled by the God-man, the one who identified with us by dressing Himself in human flesh, died for us at Calvary to redeem us. And we have the chance to proclaim that gospel to the nations. Father, help us to do that faithfully, but may Christ truly be sanctified in all of our hearts, in all of our homes, in this church, so that as we pray for reformation and revival, we're not praying for it without doing anything, but Lord, we are putting our hand to the plow with optimistic hope that Your kingdom will come and Your will be done *“on earth as it is in heaven.”* Give us the confidence in the gospel, not in our flesh, to do Your will, O God, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.