

Micah's Prophecy of the Breaker

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Bible Text: Micah 2:13

Preached on: Sunday, December 15, 2013

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Dear congregation, there is no time of the year in which it is inappropriate to reflect on the Incarnation of Christ. The whole Bible in a way, reflects on Christ coming into the world. Even in advance, the Old Testament in every book nurtures the expectation of Jesus Christ who was to come into the world. Even in the first book, children and young people, there are Messianic prophecies that tell us to expect the coming of Shiloh into the world; "the lion of the tribe of Judah" he's called in the book in the book of Genesis, Genesis 49. Numbers also has a beautiful name for the Lord Jesus, he's called there "the star of Jacob." The prophets give glorious names to the Lord Jesus. Many of them we know: wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, Immanuel, the suffering servant of the Lord of Isaiah, as many such names for the coming Messiah. Zechariah refers to the Lord Jesus as "the branch." The last book of the Old Testament has that beautiful name, "my messenger." Malachi means "my messenger" and that's the name the Lord gives to his Son, his coming Son, "my messenger." Each of these names are precious, aren't they? They gave the Old Testament believers and us today as well, they give us a perspective as to who Jesus is and what he came to do when he came to this earth.

This morning with the Lord's help, we want to look at another of those names, perhaps one that is not as familiar but it's just as precious and filled with significance and I hope that by the end of today you will love the name that Micah gives to the Lord Jesus in Micah 2, verse 13. That's our text with the Lord's help this morning. There we read these words,

"The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them."

Our theme with the Lord's help simply is: Micah's prophecy of the Breaker. We'll see first of all, a captive people. Secondly, an Incarnate Redeemer. Thirdly, magnificent fruit. Micah's prophecy of the Breaker: a captive people; an Incarnate Redeemer; and magnificent fruit. Much of the prophecy of Micah speaks of judgments that God would bring to Judah because of their sin. Sin against the first table of the law, for idolatry, but especially sin against the second table of the law, man-to-man: oppression, immorality,

lying, stealing and the like. Much of the chapter that we read together enumerates the sins of Judah but occasionally Micah breaks away from the list of these sins and the judgments that would come upon the people and all of a sudden, in the midst of the darkness that he sees coming, there are shafts of brilliant light that prophetically he sees and he articulates. So without any warning in the verse of our text, together with verse 12, there is this marvelous Messianic prophecy that breaks through. One commentator says it like this, "The Lord's heart is such that he can turn from justice to mercy in a flash." The prophets knew that, understood that. Well, from our side, it's so impossible, from the Lord's side, it's so gloriously possible.

Well, Micah prophesied during the same time as Isaiah, some seven centuries before the birth of Christ, and Isaiah was the one who was given to prophesy that Christ would be born in a miraculous way, born of a virgin. You recall that don't you, children? "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son." But it was Micah who was given to prophesy that this child that would be born would be born in the town of Bethlehem. Children, do you know that prophecy in chapter 5 that says, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth he that is to be the ruler of my people Israel"? This is so fitting for Micah to prophesy this because Micah was a prophet who lived in the countryside. He was a rural man. Isaiah prophesied in the great city of Jerusalem but Micah was from a farming area about 20 miles or so from Jerusalem, southwest. He was used to areas like Bethlehem, farm country with farm life and farm animals and how fitting it is that he cast the prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ in our verse in agricultural language as a man who knows how things work on the farm.

He pictures for us in verse 12 and 13, a sheepfold scene. You see, after a day of grazing on the countryside of the hill country of Judah, the shepherds would take their flock and bring them into a kind of rock-walled enclosure to keep them safe through the night and to keep them together. They would be safe there from predators. But as the morning came, the sheep would want to leave the enclosed space and go into the pasture where they would find provision and supply. And commentators understand this Breaker two different ways. Some see this as one of the strongest of the rams who with the great strength of his mighty horns would muster all his energy and he would break through the rocky enclosure and triumphantly lead the whole flock into the open pastures to graze. He was called the Breaker. Others think the Breaker was simply the shepherd who while it was still night would come among his sheep and walk around them. The sheep would mill around and crowd his legs and then with the first shafts of the dawning day, he would move aside the boulders and the sheep would come behind this shepherd into the green pastures for a new day of fresh supply in the fertile grasslands. Really essentially, we don't need to choose between these two interpretations because both are doing the exact same thing and maybe the shepherd would use such a strong ram to break through. The main point, of course, is that the Breaker would break through that which would keep the flock captive and enclosed and would lead them into the rich provisions that they needed to sustain their lives.

This picture from agriculture was transferred onto the history of Israel. The judges, for example, were such breakers in their history, weren't they? There they were, the people,

enclosed, captive through the oppression of the enemies various and many. Many of them would even sigh and groan for deliverance and then all of a sudden, the Spirit of God would come upon Gideon, Samson or some other judge and there in the Spirit of the Lord, they would break through and the whole nation would follow behind them and their fortunes would be reversed and they would be brought into liberty once again, God having made use of a breaker. David, the anointed of the Lord, was also such a breaker, wasn't he? There the nation of Israel was in servitude to the Philistines, oppressed by them many times. Saul later on couldn't help them at all. There they all were cowering fearfully, at the mercy of the oppression of the Philistines, and through the Spirit of God, David was raised up and in the name of the Lord, with one smooth stone, the Lord made a breach in the oppression and the captivity in the nation of Israel.

So many people when they come to this text they think that Micah is prophesying some human deliverer. Cyrus some people say, king Cyrus who was to let the nation of Israel go free once again after 70 years of exile. Was Cyrus the breaker? Or some see this as Zerubbabel from the household and lineage of David who would lead the people out of the captivity of exile back to their homeland. Well, even if these things are true, they would be some kind of first level fulfillment but ultimately and I think very directly, Micah is prophesying that Bethlehem Prince who would come in the fullness of time. He would come among the sheep and he would be the God-appointed Breaker to free the captives of all times and all places.

What a glorious Breaker the Lord Jesus Christ is, especially when we think of the various kinds of captivities that he delivers from. None of us here, I trust, are in physical captivity but there are many kinds of prisons that can bind us. Think, first of all, of that terrible prison of sin. Micah has been speaking about it. We read these chapters, chapter 1 and chapter 2, and you realize what an enslaving force sin is. It brings people into misery. The worst of it is, when they don't see that it's sin that is rendering them captive. That's how the whole Bible presents sin. We have in Adam made ourselves willing captives to sin and to Satan and there we are by nature in a rocky prison of our own making. Paul says that unconverted souls are taken captive by Satan at his will. It can be those who are indeed addicted to sin, all sorts of sin; they can't live without their sins. They are chained, as it were, to alcohol or drugs or whatever it is. But decent looking, seemingly law-abiding people can be just as much ensnared and captive and the worst thing is that oftentimes they don't know it. Have you ever cried to God for someone to deliver you from your self-chosen bondage?

Besides the prison of sin, we can think of the prison of the law. When the Lord does his convicting work in our hearts and in our lives, he hems us in. He binds us in to law, to righteousness, to judgment. There we are face-to-face with who we are and we can't deliver ourselves. The law is, as it were, so many boulders that hem us in and we can't push them aside and they are reminders of the fact that we have imprisoned ourselves and there we are under judgment and under the wrath of God that must break down upon us unless we are freed, unless we are delivered.

Think thirdly of the prison of doubt, despair, of unbelief. You don't need to be unconverted here this morning to know something of that prison of doubt so perhaps someone among us this morning is being accosted and assaulted by giant despair. Children, remember that story in Pilgrim's Progress when Giant Despair locks up Christian and Hopeful into his horrible, inescapable dungeon? Doubt and unbelief can so terrorize you and they can remove from you any hope of freedom once again. What a terror it is when you're hemmed in a dark dungeon, despair and doubt. There is a Breaker we'll hear about very soon.

Fourthly and lastly this morning, the prison can be that simply of difficult circumstances that God has brought into your life, providences that hem you in and lock you up, at least so you think of it. Lock away all happiness and freedom and it feels sometimes as if God is working against you and you can't escape the heavy hand that he has brought into your life. This can be very confusing in the life of a Christian, young Christians but even older ones as well. This is not what you expect the Christian life to be. You thought it was one of joy and of freedom and of liberty. Like Jacob, you find yourself saying, "Everything is against me." Hardship has a way of imprisoning us. There seems no way out. Maybe you've tried. Maybe you've tried this and that and the other thing to get out of the mess of your life and of your circumstances: your family is in disarray; your personal life is just, you feel flattened, immobile.

Well, these are some of the prisons that we can experience that can underline for us the desperate need of deliverance. Did you come up to God's house today and God is uncovering you to the prison of sin? Dark dungeon to which you've cast yourself? Maybe you've tried to feel for the door, tried to get out but with every passing day, it seems like your fortunes are bad. You can't find the way out. You feel like a sheep that's ready to be slaughtered and, "Who can break out of the prison into which I have brought myself?" Well dear friends, this brings us to our second point. What a fitting title we have for the Incarnate Redeemer, his name is Breaker. Now, this might not seem to be such a magnificent title to us today, Breaker. It kind of sounds negative, Breaker. But think of it this way: you used to the term Redeemer, Liberator, basically this is the same notion. The Bible speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ as who redeems the captives and sets at liberty them that are bound. He's even called in Hebrews "the captain of our salvation," someone who goes before, leads people out of captivity. Now, the term "breaker" belongs really to those terms but it highlights so vividly, doesn't it for us, that this captain, this Redeemer, breaks through all the impossibilities and barriers and resistance that his people cannot overcome and surmount. He is a Breaker. He is the one who does what you and I can't. When we come against the walls of our impossibilities, they are immovable, they won't budge, but when he comes with his strong horns, he pushes them aside. He has the power to do so, doesn't he?

Notice how Micah says this here, it's very interesting: he says, "The breaker is come up before them." This Breaker doesn't stay as a safe distance, detached from the sheep. No, he comes among them. He comes close to them. Just think about that spiritually speaking: the Lord Jesus Christ was in the glory of the Father's bosom in all eternity, splendor and majesty were his, but in the divine eye, there was a flock of lost sinners who had

ensnared themselves and made themselves captive and in the heart of the Triune God and in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is this desire, "Lo, I come. I won't simply stay at a distance, I'll come among them." That's especially what we see in the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He comes among his captive people. He is born among them. He takes the lowly and humble birth in order to be there within the prison walls. Life here below. The Apostle Paul says it this way, "He was born of a woman. Born under the law to redeem." You could also say to break through for his people from that which held him from the law which ensured that they were captive because of their sin.

He has come to be a Breaker. You think of that child in swaddling clothes lying in the manger. His name, dear congregation, is Breaker. He has come to redeem his people from their sins. Zechariah saw it when he prophesied on that occasion and he said, "The Lord has visited and redeemed his people." He speaks there of, "Being saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." It's a marvelous thing when you see the Lord Jesus Christ as having taken bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. There he is among us. He has come into the prison. He has come within the walls, the dungeon, to which we cast ourselves and he is become like unto us in every respect, sin accepted. Oh, doesn't this make your heart cry, "Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given who is to redeem a captive people to himself."

Well, the devil will try to destroy him. The world will try to swallow him up but there he is among his people as their perfect Breaker. Think of: from the glories of heaven he stooped to the darkness, the dungeon of this world, to be among his people, to bring light to them that sit in the shadow of death. He has come so low. Not just even the lowliness of where we are but he's gone even deeper because all his lifelong he suffered but especially on the cross. It's there on the cross, dear congregation, that he does his breaking work, his breakthrough work. There under the storm of God's wrath, he satisfies the law so that the law has no more any argument. There he pays the price for sin. There he comes under the storm of God's wrath, under the billows that should come upon us in order that he from out of not just the stable, not just the manger, but that from out of the grave, he might break forth before his people. The Breaker has come up before them in order to break through the crushing load of sin in the lives of his people. Oh dear friends, just meditate on that this morning: this Breaker was broken in order that he might break through for his church that they be not broken but break free.

This Breaker did not only come up in history long past 2,000 years ago, this Breaker still comes up before imprisoned souls in the Gospel. Still today, in assemblies like this one all over the world, the news of this Breaker is proclaimed and captive souls hear it, "There is a Breaker among us. There is someone to whom we can draw near. He has come so close. He has come up before us by the working of his Holy Spirit." He not only breaks through the barriers in their life around them but he breaks through the barriers within them. He takes away those stones, those immovable stones of unbelief and of doubt and of sin in our lives that hem in our hearts. He not only breaks forth before us, he breaks through within us. His breaking work does not only take place with respect to the

law and sin but also in our hearts which need to be broken. Has your heart been broken by the Savior? By the message of his coming into this world?

Just think for a moment with me to that prison in Philippi. You know the story, don't you? A lot of times we think about how those prisoners, Paul and Silas, were miraculously delivered through an earthquake and through the Lord's mighty hand upon that prison there in Philippi where God appeared on behalf of his two servants, Paul and Silas. Yes, what a wonder that is but at that same moment, God was doing another wonder just as marvelous if not more marvelous because there was another prisoner, he was the jailer but he was a prisoner. He was a prisoner to sin and to wretchedness. The fact of the matter was that he didn't even know he was a prisoner, a spiritual prison bound him. And Paul and Silas as they brought the good news of the Breaker, of Jesus Christ and him crucified, as they brought this to this spiritual prisoner, the Lord Jesus Christ came up before him and he broke through in this man's life. By the end of the night, this man was set at liberty. He had been a captive as the darkness had settled that night but by morning's dawn, the Breaker had come up before him and he was loosed from the chains that held him.

Do you see what a mighty Breaker this Lord Jesus Christ is even still today from heaven? He's no longer on the earth. He's no longer in a manger. He's come up before his people. But he's still in the Gospel, comes up before them and listen to how Micah says it, he says, "He comes up before them." What a timely coming is Jesus' coming. It's always at the right moment. The exact right moment. Often to us it seems too late. Our expectation is dimmed and even dried-up but there he is. He comes up before them. Though he lingers, though he seems to delay, he breaks through at such a time and in such a way that his church cries out, "He is the Breaker to go before! Oh and he, such a spontaneous Breaker!" They are not even crying out for him and there he is coming up before them so courageously, so victoriously, breaking through every wall and prison and mountain in their life by his grace and Holy Spirit.

Just for a moment, think with me about how suitable and glorious this Breaker is. He's been appointed by God from all eternity to be a Breaker. God said to him, "Thou art my Breaker. On behalf of my people, I appoint you to this task." And he took it on so willingly and he's fully equipped. Every judge of the Old Testament and David as well, Cyrus and Zerubbabel, all of them had infirmities. They could do just a small deliverance under God and through God. None of them could be this Breaker for you and me out of the dungeon of sin.

Where are you looking today for a Breaker? For an escape from the prison, doubt and unbelief? From sin? The curse? The law because of sin? Where are you looking? Are you looking? Are you expecting this Breaker? This God-appointed Breaker? This poor man cried and the Lord heard him, delivered him out of all his troubles, the Psalmist says. Why look anywhere else for a Breaker? There is such a magnificent Breaker who breaks through the lives of wretched people like you and me, miserable sinners who don't deserve it. Oh dear friends, look to him today. Hear his word.

Perhaps you say, "But how do I know that he can break through in my life? And how do I know," someone else says, "that he has done this breaking work in my life?" Well, you'll know it when you examine what the text says in terms of the fruits, the magnificent fruits as we see in our third point of this Breaker. Listen now, the text goes on and it says, "The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them." There are three fruits here, the breaking work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the lives of his people. The first one is a holy striving. Notice what it says here, "they have broken up." They have broken up. This is really in the original, this is the same root word as the breaker. He breaks forth on their behalf before them and he enables them and empowers them to break through behind him. He is the Breaker but he makes them breakers behind him. They enter into that breaking work behind their Lord and Master. To speak of it spiritually, they break through that narrow gate. They break through that narrow way. At all cost, they must follow him. He has come up before them and they must follow after him. He has come among them and he has breached the wall that held them and they cannot but follow him.

They follow behind him and they do so in such a way that there is a breaking work that is left for them to do. Out of his strength and behind him, yes indeed, but there is a holy striving that is theirs. There is this misapprehension, this terrible heresy, going on in our world today especially in America, and that is that you simply have to come down an aisle, say a prayer and you're in and there is nothing else to the Christian life. You can live as you please. There is this liberty, they say. We'll come to liberty in a moment. But there's this liberty which, the way they speak of it it is nothing but worldliness. The Bible portrays it differently. It portrays the Breaker's people as a striving people, a people who cannot but follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; whatever the cost, whatever the danger, whatever the difficulty there is this holy striving in their life. You can read of this in the Gospel as that holy violence which God's people put forth that they might inherit the kingdom of heaven. No, they do not do this instead of the Breaker or ahead of the Breaker, they do this behind him, he clearing the way. But they climb over the rubble of their lives and they come and enter into the victory that the Lord brings them into by his Almighty, Holy Spirit. The Gospel doesn't make a sinner out of a person, it makes him or her a striver. Oh yes, it's true we're often weak; we're often discouraged. Sometimes our hands hang down and our knees shake but don't you know, dear believer among us, where there is no conflict, there is no crown? You must break through, don't you? Behind your Lord. Behind your Breaker. "Weakness give way. Discouragement go away. I must break through behind my Breaker."

"They have broken up." Well, sometimes it so surprising how the Lord does this in your life. It's kind of like Peter. Children, you remember when Peter was in prison there between four soldiers, chained to them all, in this darkest of dungeon of Herod, about to be slain? The darkest of night, the angel sent by Christ comes to Peter and the chains burst off and the doors swing open and Peter goes behind this Breaker, through every wall, through every gate until he is free. And so the Christian in the Christian life, yes there is this holy striving but there is this wonder, "How is it possible." It would not be

possible apart from the glorious Breaker who has said of himself that he is the way. "He is the way, the truth and the life."

The first fruit of this Breaker then is a holy striving but the second fruit is a blessed liberty. Listen, "they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it." Just think back to this picture of this flock that's there in that enclosed space. The boulders are hemming them in. There's no way through but then the Breaker goes before him. The stone is set aside and there are the green pastures of supply and provision and life, everything they need. There is the dawning of a new day. If the Son shall make you free, then you're free indeed. You see, it's a liberty of the children of God. Stand fast, dear church, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free and don't be put in bondage once again. One commentator says it like this, "The prophet sees in the Spirit here a never-ending stream passing through the gates and going out into freedom, into the full use of that liberty wherewith the Breaker has made them free."

My question for you this morning is: have you passed through the gate into spiritual freedom? Has that change taken place in your life? You know, 2,000 years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ came up among us, before us. He has broken through. Why are there are so many souls yet in the prison of their own self-inflicted bondage when the gate is open and the door has been set widely open? Why, oh why, are there still so many captives? Why have only so few passed to the glorious liberty of the children of God? Is it because there is no Breaker? No. Is it because his work is somehow insufficient? No. He's the most powerful and most equipped Breaker you could imagine. Oh my dear friend, judge your unbelief this morning. Point the finger where it needs to go. The gate is open. Death has been conquered. The dungeon door is open. Why do you yet sit there where you are? The Breaker himself comes this morning through his word and he says as it were, in the passage before us, "Why remain a captive when I have come up before the likes of you? Why remain under the curse of the law? Why with the gathering billows of the storm of God's wrath, why stay there in the place of judgment?" Oh, the vilest, you know, the vilest can break through. The most wretched can be saved. What did the Lord Jesus Christ say to that thief next to him on the cross? He said, "Today, you with me, in paradise." Do you hear the Breaker speaking? The Breaker is saying to this vile sinner next to him, "Today, with me," and he breaks through on behalf of him and there the two of them go into paradise.

Well, a holy striving, a blessed liberty. There is a third fruit and if you know something of this Breaker in your life, you'll know something of this as well: it's a glorious leadership. Listen to the text, "And their king shall pass before them, and the LORD at the head." There is one thing that marks every one of these people in whose life God has broken through: the King passes before them. They're walking the highway of holiness behind the King who goes before them and they want to keep close to him. Notice this King doesn't leave them. He doesn't just come up among them and then he's gone. No, he passes on before them. Where the church is, Christ is at their head. He's going through every valley, over every mountain, the whole way to Zion. He leads the way and under Jehovah's leadership, what a King they have. "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He leadeth me by quiet streams. He restores my soul. Yes, the devil might pursue

me. He will pursue me. He has been forced to give up his prey but this King sends his word and heals me, delivers me. And this King is so working within my heart, he is so breaking into my heart and he breaks through the hardness of my heart continually. And the hold that the world still has on my heart, he breaks it through his word. As I come into his courts and I hear his word, the King is going before me and he breaks that hold. What majesty is his! The King is at the head. Even the Jordan of death, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, the King is at the head. He has gone before. His footprints are there."

"The king shall pass before them and the LORD at the head." Notice that. Micah ends so gloriously. It's not just a King, the King at the head, that would be a wonder, but the LORD, the covenant Jehovah is at the head. This explains it all. This is the key that unlocks this whole text. How is it that a Breaker can come into the throes of sin? Who can come into the dungeon to which we have made ourselves captive? Can break through it and can lead his people himself at the head and pass from this life into everlasting bliss? It's because it's the LORD, the faithful one, "I am the LORD. I change not, therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Oh dear child of God, walk behind your King every step. There is the King's footprint. He's tested the ground before you. It's safe to walk behind him. He's not only the Redeemer, he's not only the captain of your salvation, he's the Breaker. When you meet up with a fresh wall of difficulty in your life, insurmountable you might think, remember this Breaker and he will give you to break through as well in his way, in his time. Look to him. Follow close behind him. The LORD at the head.

He is greater than David. He's greater than Samson. Do you remember Samson? As I close, Samson one day, he was in prison there in that city of Gaza. This God-appointed judge, what does he do? He comes up to that gate of Gaza, his strong hands lift it up and he puts it on his back and there is opening. There is breakthrough. The dungeons have been broken through. And Samson goes to the top of the mount there and he throws those gates as if they were twigs down off the rocks where they crash, never to be seen again. Your Breaker, dear church, is not just in Gaza, he's gone to the grave. He's gone into the throes of death, to the dungeon of death. Whoever could break through those bonds? He's taken the gates with his own nail-pierced hands, he's placed them on his back and he has thrown them off. for every one of his people, off the cliff. No more to be seen. He has broken through. What a Breaker.

Do you know this Breaker? Are you following this Breaker? Without him there is no life. Without him there is no liberty. But 2,000 years ago, the gate came off and the door is open. Why are you still in prison? Amen.

Let us give thanks and pray.

O blessed Breaker of thy church and people, we bless thee for appearing in thy word today, invigorating our hearts, making us to see that true liberty lies not within us but in thee, that thou has gone before and has come up among us in our wretched bondage, Lord, that we brought on ourselves and thou has become Incarnate of the Virgin Mary,

born under a law to redeem those under a law. O humble our hearts this morning. We pray to thee, Lord, that thy people would be devoted to follow after thee whatever life brings, that they would know that the footsteps of the Breaker go before them, the Lord at the head. Lord, for others who are still incarcerated, bound and chained to their sins, O Lord, help them to see the open door, help them to see the Breaker who has gone before. May he be all their expectation, all their hope, through the powerful working of thy Holy Spirit. And break through, O Lord, for us as a church and congregation as well. It is our desire, Lord, to see thy great name glorified in our lives and in our church. Well, do that breakthrough work, Lord, in many different ways in order that thy people would praise thee and magnify thee as the Lord at the head. We ask all this and the pardon of every sin in Jesus' name alone. Amen.