

From Bethlehem

Micah 5:1-15
Halifax: 25 December 2011

Introduction:

It has been my practice, since I became a minister of the Word,

- to break from whatever series I am preaching from time to time to preach a special message on a topic that happens to be on everyone's mind.
 - As you are all very well aware, on this particular day, in our society, we traditionally remember the birth of Christ.
 - It is, in itself, a good thing to meditate on the birth of Christ, and I am very happy that people's awareness of Him is heightened at this time of year.

However, I find that as I mature in my faith, I have less and less use for following the church calendar.

- Sadly, I have observed over the years that those churches that make more and more of the church calendar make less and less of the Lord's Day.
 - Those who would not dream of working on Christmas or missing their Christmas feast have no problem working or going shopping on Sunday.
 - Some will even forsake regular Lord's Day worship when Christmas happens to fall on a Sunday as it does this year.
 - This falls under the condemnation of Jesus who warned the Pharisees that they were making the commandments of God of no effect by their traditions.
 - In other words, God's commandments were being ignored in order to keep the church's traditions.
- What's more, following the church calendar seems to put many churches into an Old Testament mode of worship...
 - in which they try to play out the drama of redemption and sort of relive the events as if they were happening all over again.
 - The mother of apostasy in the west, the Roman Catholic Church, goes so far as to teach her congregants to rely on her own sacrificing of Christ in the mass—
 - Instead of looking back at His sacrifice and looking to receive nourishment from it, she attempts to offer it all over again.
 - Rather than joyfully proclaiming what Christ did, she does it all over again as if Christ did not do it well enough the first time.
- The book of Hebrews in particular establishes this as the fundamental difference in Old and New Testament worship.
 - Christ had not done His work yet, so in OT worship God appointed that work to be presented to the people through the service of the temple.

- It was what we might call a pre-enactment of Christ's work.
 - It was about shadowing the work of Christ through ceremonies...
 - New Testament worship is about proclaiming the work of Christ (through preaching) which has now been accomplished by Him.
 - The emphasis of the entire New Testament is not ceremony, but preaching.
 - We are not given much instruction about ceremony because ceremony has been replaced with preaching and with the two sacraments—
 - and even the focus of these sacraments is not on shadowing the work of Christ but rather on showing us the benefits of believing on Him.
 - They are not dramatic presentations, but connecting ordinances.
 - When we come to the Lord's Table, it is not a drama re-enacting the event of the crucifixion;
 - It is about our present participation—feeding upon—the sacrifice that Christ made 2000 years ago.
- It is very important to understand the uniqueness of New Testament Worship because those who return to the shadows very often end up without the substance.
 - The average Roman Catholic will go to Christmas mass,
 - and he will understand that Christ came into the world,
 - but if you talk to the majority of them, you will find that they are not resting in what Jesus did to save them...
 - They are relying on the church to do what is needed to save them by replaying the events.
 - That is, in fact, what they are taught to rely on.
 - The truth is, the church does nothing to save.
 - The church is rather the pillar and ground of the truth whose task it is to proclaim the Saviour—
 - not to redo His redemptive acts again and again for the salvation of the people.
 - That is fundamentally what the Roman Church is trying to do and there is nothing about this in the New Testament.
 - It is all about proclaiming Christ through preaching.
 - This is why those who are committed to following the scriptures must beware of slipping into a mode in which before Christmas,
 - we set ourselves in a posture as if we are looking for Jesus to come the first time—He has already come!

So be it understand that in preaching about the birth of Christ today,

- I am proclaiming Jesus to you in order that you may rest in Him for your salvation.
- I am not attempting to replay the events of His life, but to proclaim them with a call to you believe in Him.
 - You will never be saved by “entering into the moment” through a replay of Christ’s work,
 - but you can be saved by relying on what He did which I proclaim to you.

So be sure that you listen and that you believe in the One I am pointing you to.

- I want to look today at a text that speaks of the place of Christ’s birth—Bethlehem...
 - Bethlehem and not Jerusalem!

- It is Micah 5:2 and it says:
 - **Micah 5:2: But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.**

- I chose this text because it has so much to do with what we have been looking at in Acts 6 and 7 in our regular sermon series...
 - In that chapter, Stephen proclaims to his fellow Jews that the temple and the ceremonial law in which sacrifices were offered was temporary and was only provisional.
 - He proclaims that God has now sent the One who fulfills that which all the ceremonies pointed to...
 - And that salvation is to be found in Him as, in fact, it always was...
 - Indeed, even when the ceremonies of the Old Testament were appointed to shadow the work that Christ would do,
 - they were not meant to be understood as any more than shadows.
 - The One who was coming to save was presented by them in that way until He came to actually carry out the redemptive acts that were appointed for Him.
 - The majority of the Jewish people in Stephen’s day had come to rest in the ceremonies instead of looking to Jesus who was shadowed in them.
 - Thus, when He came, they did not recognise Him.

 - One of the things the Jews were especially fixated on was the temple at Jerusalem.
 - But we have been seeing how Stephen showed them that God blessed Abraham and Joseph apart from the temple and apart from Jerusalem.
 - They needed to see that God was not confined to the temple or to Jerusalem.
 - He had determined rather to bring salvation out of Bethlehem.

I. Bethlehem represents what is small, yet unexpectedly fruitful!

- The name itself means “house of bread.”
 - *Beth* mean house and *lehem* means bread.

A. Just think of the history of this little town.

1. As Micah says, it was “little among the thousands of Judah,” or as some translate it, “too little to be among the thousands...”
 - This refers to those divisions of the people that Moses had made into clans of thousands—
 - Remember? There were divisions of 10s, 50s, 100’s and 1000’s.
 - The town of Bethlehem was hardly large enough to be one of these clans of a thousand.
2. Yet, again and again it is a place associated with unexpected fruitfulness from God...
 - A place from which blessing comes from sources that blessing was in no way expected.
 - Let’s take a look at the history of the place...
 - a. First, we have the account of Rachael when Benjamin was born.
 - In Gen 35:16-22 the account is given that at Bethlehem, she went into hard labour and brought forth her second son.
 - She named him Ben-Oni which means son of my sorrow, and she died giving birth.
 - So it would be that years later the Virgin Mary would bring forth a Son that would be to her a son of sorrow...
 - Yet, we are told that Jacob named his son Benjamin which means son of my right hand—
 - and so also was the Lord Jesus both a son of sorrow and the one who is at God’s right hand to carry out His work.
 - Bethlehem became known as a place of weeping—Rachael weeping for her children...
 - yet, it was also the place from which Benjamin came, the one who completed the twelve that made up the twelve patriarchs.
 - b. Consider secondly, Naomi—in the book of Ruth...
 - Naomi means sweetness or pleasantness, but when her family experienced famine in Bethlehem, they went to Moab with their two sons.
 - But in the course of time her husband and both of her sons died.

- She decided to return to Bethlehem, expecting to die as a widow, and her daughter-in-law Ruth insisted on coming with her.
- Naomi was very bitter and had very little hope.
 - She told people not to call her Naomi any more, but Mara which means bitterness.
- But in Bethlehem, her faithful Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth was taken notice of by a faithful man named Boaz who married her.
 - And Ruth brought forth a son named Obed, and Obed begot Jesse and Jesse begot David who became Israel's greatest king—a man after God's own heart!
 - What fruitfulness came from this poor bitter widow!
 - And from such an unexpected place—from her widowed Moabite daughter in law!
 - This Gentile becomes a progenitor of King David himself, from whom, of course, Christ came.
- c. But you will remember that when David was born, there was nothing much expected of him either.
 - Jesse his father was an ordinary man and David was his youngest of several sons.
 - Yet, the day came when Samuel was instructed to go to Bethlehem to anoint Israel's next king!
 - And even to Samuel's surprise, the one God chose was David!
 - David, the one God raised up from being a shepherd to shepherd His people Israel and lead them back to God.
 - David, the one God raised up to lead God's people into battle so that they were not swallowed up by their enemies!
 - Isaiah picks up on this whole idea of unexpected fruitfulness in some of his prophecies about Christ...
 - when he prophecies that Christ will come out of the root of Jesse...
 - By saying that Jesus comes from the root of Jesse instead of the seed of David,
 - Isaiah is showing that the house of David will be fallen when Jesus comes forth...
 - It speaks of the time when the illustrious house of David would be reduced to ordinariness again—
 - cut down to what it was before David had become king!
 - A mere stump from which something great would come forth once again—even the Messiah!

- In Isaiah 11, it says:
 - **Isa 11:1-3: There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD...**

TRANS> So you see that Bethlehem is set forth in scripture as a little place that is unexpectedly fruitful!

B. This is exactly the way the LORD presents Bethlehem in Micah 5—a place from which fruitfulness springs forth unexpectedly!

1. You can see that Micah 5:2 is a contrast—it says, “But you Bethlehem...”
 - a. It is contrasted with verse 1 where the house of David is seen to be reduced to a place of lowliness and dishonour.
 - The troops of Israel are said to gather themselves together.
 - The language is not that of troops gathering to go out to battle,
 - but rather of them cowering in a huddle behind walls in a besieged city.
 - We are told that the judge—the ruler of Israel—will be struck with a rod on the cheek...
 - That speaks of the highest possible insult to a king or judge as he is here called...
 - A king can only be struck on the cheek by his enemies when his kingdom has fallen into their hands.
 - b. Micah prophesied at the same time as Isaiah...
 - And so in his prophecies, he speaks of fall of Jerusalem into the hands of the Babylonians in the days to come.
 - He and Isaiah prophesied of these things in the 700s BC, and the fall of Jerusalem occurred in 586 BC.
 - It was a time in which there was no ruling house of David...
 - only (to use Isaiah’s words) “a stump of Jesse.”
 - The family was no longer reigning in Jerusalem from the time that Jerusalem was destroyed until the coming of Christ.
 - As Micah says in 5:3:
 - **Micah 5:3: Therefore He shall give them up, Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; Then the remnant of His brethren Shall return to the children of Israel.**
 - That is just what the LORD did—

- He gave His people up so that even though they returned from Babylon, they remained a vassal to other worldly powers...
 - Daniel was greatly troubled when by prophetic vision he saw that upon returning from captivity,
 - Israel would not be restored to their glory days, but would first be under the Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans at which time Messiah would come.
 - Daniel had hoped that after the 70 years of exile, the kingdom would be fully restored,
 - but he saw that such would not be the case for several centuries...
 - and that even then Messiah would at first appear as but a little stone.
- c. And we are told in Micah 5:2 that the Messiah Himself will come forth, not from a palace at Jerusalem, but from Bethlehem.
- **“Out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel...”**
 - The house of David will not be restored at Jerusalem so that Messiah will be born there...
 - But he will come from lowly Bethlehem as David did—
 - Not from a great thriving Bethlehem, but from the same lowly Bethlehem that David came from.
2. There is a lesson for us in this...
- a. The lesson is that the Messiah did not come to Israel or to the world because of our own righteousness.
- He came when the very nation where God had chosen to put His name and to reveal His salvation had fallen under judgement for over 5 centuries.
 - He came to them, not because they were righteous, but rather to save them from sin.
- b. You need to know that my friends—you all need to know that.
- 1) The sending of Jesus Christ was an act of sheer mercy and grace!
 - There was nothing in man to commend us to God—not even in the best of us—not apart from the grace of God.
 - We were all completely ruined by the fall.
 - We were obnoxious to God.
 - 2) You can see that in yourself, can’t you?
 - We do not love our creator—we do not give thanks to Him—we do not worship Him in sincerity.
 - We all go our own way—

- We despise authority and we oppress those under our care.
- We all mistreat our neighbours and we even the very ones we love.
- We get caught up into ourselves and we don't care for others.
 - Would any of you dare to deny it?
 - We come short of the glory of God in whose image we were created!
 - We were made to represent His beauty in our lives, but instead we portray Him as corrupt and defiled!
 - We resist His call and hang on to our corrupt ways.
 - We love sin and we love idols and we love covetousness, but we do not love the living God.
 - There is none righteous, no not one. All have gone astray

3) So you see that when Micah wrote, it was before the house of David had fallen.

- God had been remarkably preserving it because of His promise to David.
 - But now Micah has declared that this house will fall, and that it will not be restored so that even though Messiah will come through David's seed,
 - He will not be born in a palace at Jerusalem, but in the little town of Bethlehem.
 - The place from which blessing springs forth out of nothing
- We are saved by grace, and not by works!
 - That's what a ruler springing from Bethlehem teaches us!

II. And now I want you to see just who this One is that comes forth from Bethlehem!

A. It is very clear that Micah is speaking here about Messiah.

1. It is very clear because Micah refers to Him as "**the One** to be Ruler in Israel."
 - He is not speaking about just another king, but **the One** that God had promised from the beginning.
 - **The One** promised to Adam and Eve when God told them that the seed of the woman that was to come would crush the serpent's head in Gen. 3:15.
 - **The One** promised to Abraham when God said,
 - "**In your seed (not seeds) all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.**" in Gen. 22:18.
 - **The One** the LORD promised through Moses in Deut 18:18 who would be a prophet like Moses that everyone must hear...
 - **The One** promised to David when God said,

- “I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted One chosen from the people...His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven.”
 - And in time of Micah, He was **the One** of whom Isaiah spoke when He said:
 - “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgement and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)
 - He is **the One** to be Ruler in Israel forever!
2. It is also plain that Micah 5:2 refers to the Messiah because of the words **to Me** that are used here...
- Micah is quoting the LORD to say: “Yet out of you [Bethlehem] shall come forth **to Me** the One chosen to be Ruler in Israel.”
 - This ties in with God’s word about David when He had raised him up to be king in place of Saul, and He said,
 - “I have provided **Me** a king.”
 - The Messiah was to be King over God’s people *for God*.
 - He was “the **Lord’s** anointed.”
 - He is the One of Ps. 40 who says, “I have come, O God, to do **your will**.”
 - Jesus told us over and over that He had been sent by the Father to do His will.
 - You should never think that God the Father was against us and then Jesus decided to come and fix things—to turn away the Father’s wrath and anger...
 - No, it was the Father who took the loving initiative to send Jesus.
 - It was His plan.
 - He “so loved the world that He gave His only Son.”
 - Those who are saved are referred to as the Ones that the Father has given to the Son to be saved.
 - These words “to Me” show us that this One who came to rule was the one who came to do the Father’s will,
 - that He was the Lord’s anointed or the Lord’s Christ.
 - Micah is definitely speaking about the Messiah here.
- B. This prophecy is so clear that at the time of Christ’s birth, virtually all the Jews were looking for the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem.

1. We can see this by the way that the Jewish leaders answered Herod when he asked them where Christ was to be born.
 - We read about that in Matthew—when the Magi came and said:
 - “Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”
 - We are told that Herod inquired of the chief priests and scribes and they said:
 - “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: But you Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd my people Israel.”
 - There was no debate about the matter.

2. Even the ancient Jewish rabbis believed that Micah 5:2 referred to the Messiah...
 - In other words, this is not just some obscure passage that Christians caught hold of when Christ was born in Bethlehem.
 - The Jews have long understood it in this way:
 - The Targum says,
 - “out of thee shall come forth before me the Messiah, that he may exercise dominion over Israel.”
 - Jarchi’s note is,
 - “out of thee shall come forth unto me Messiah, the son of David;”

3. This is so obviously the meaning of the passage that even many modern Jews (since the time of Christ) admit that it refers to Him.
 - Abendana paraphrases the words thus,
 - “out of thee shall come forth unto me a Judge that is to be ruler in Israel, and this is the King Messiah; for because he is to be of the seed of David, from Bethlehem he will be.”
 - It is so obvious that this refers to the Messiah that Lyra, another modern Jew, makes fun of certain modernist Christian scholars who have claimed that this passage refers to King Hezekiah!
 - He teases that these Christians seem to “Judaize” more than the Jews!
 - Of course he denies that *Jesus* is the Messiah—
 - He justifies this denial by claiming that Jesus did not rule over the Jews, but was ruled over by them when He was put to death on the cross.
 - But to deny that Micah prophesies that the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem, or to deny that our Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem, is something that well studied Jews simply cannot do.

TRANS> But how could this One do anything of real significance for us?

- Well it is because there is something extraordinary about Him...
 - Something marvellous!
 - Something very wonderful!
 - Something incomprehensible—but yet clearly declared.
 - Something that makes Him suited to perform wonders among us—even to be all that we could ever need...

- Look at what Micah says of Him at the end of verse 2!

C. His “goings forth are from of old, from everlasting”

1. Such language pertains only to the self-existing God who created us...
 - He has been going forth—going about His business—engaged in His works—
 - from all eternity!
 - There is never been a time when He was not.
 - He is prior to all things, without beginning and without end.
 - He is the uncreated God through whom all things created have their being.
 - He is the One who made the world by the breath of His power.
 - He is the great “I am.”

2. This One who has been going forth from eternity is going to come forth from lowly Bethlehem!
 - The angle announced the Virgin Mary that the One she had conceived was non other than the Son of the Highest...
 - **Luke 1:31-33: behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."**

 - What a shocking thing that the very Son of God Himself should come to the fallen house of David to take David’s throne forever—when David’s house was in ruins!
 - When He was born, the curtain of heaven is pulled back to reveal the angels response from heaven!
 - “Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”
 - This was the one before whose eternal throne these glorious angles had stood with their faces covered, before the glory of His holy majesty!
 - This was the One before whom they sang “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God almighty, the whole earth is full of His glory.”

- And now they see that He is born of a young and simple virgin in a manger.
 - What marvellous things God must have planned for His elect that such a one should come in such a state!
 - The One who upholds the universe and who flung the stars into their places is nursing at His mother's breast in a cattle trough!
 - What great things God is about to do for His people!
 - All the stops have been pulled out—nothing has been spared!
 - There is unlimited potential—
 - There is incredible hope!
 - The very Son of God Himself has come forth from Bethlehem.
 - What a surprising, marvellous thing it is!
 - There is no end to what God shall do now through Him!

III. Just look at what this mighty Son of God does for His people!

- His work is summarised in verse 4
 - **Micah 5:4: He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the LORD.**
 - The word *feed* is also *shepherd*.
 - All of that divine power in this one who is from everlasting is exerted and exercised to shepherd His people.
 - The shepherd is totally devoted to take care of the sheep.
 - What great things this calls to mind about our dear Lord Jesus!
- A. As our shepherd prophet, He comes to call His sheep to Himself.
1. A shepherd calls his sheep together and they hear his voice and follow him.
 - a. In John 10:27, Jesus says,
 - **Jn 10:27: My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.**
 - b. This is what Micah says at the end of verse 3...
 - **Micah 5:3: Then the remnant of His brethren Shall return to [literally upon or together with] the children of Israel.**
 2. Jesus Himself is the Word of God.
 - He is the light who breaks into our darkness to show us the truth.
 - He reveals the living God to us in all His majesty and beauty so that we are awakened and drawn to Him whom we have ignored so long.
 - We are humbled to the dust because we see how short we have come of His glory...how ungrateful we have been...
 - But then He brings home to us all the promises of God to give us a future and a hope...

- He makes clear to us that our gracious God has sent Him to lead us back to our God.
 - He guides us and leads us back to our home in the Lord—into the way of peace.
3. And this guidance of our shepherd is no ordinary giving of counsel or pointing in the right direction.
- He is the Son of God.
 - Therefore, His call is accompanied by amazing power that sanctifies us and strengthens us so that we are enabled to respond to the call... even though we are dead in trespasses and sins.
 - He leads us into green pastures and feeds us with His word—
 - He actually causes us to be nourished by His word—to obtain life from it through faith.
 - He gives His Holy Spirit along with the prophetic word and the Holy Spirit enables us not only to understand the word,
 - but also to believe and obey the word!
 - This is something that Jesus is able to do as our shepherd prophet because He is the One whose goings forth are from everlasting.
 - Everyone of His sheep hears His voice and comes to Him.
 - As our shepherd prophet, He gathers us all together as one and leads us to green pastures.
 - Not one of those that were given to Him by the Father is lost.
 - By divine power, He gathers them all.
 - Indeed, it is the shepherd's task to keep the sheep, not the task of the sheep to keep their shepherd!

TRANS> That is the role of our shepherd prophet.

B. But He is also our shepherd priest.

1. As Jesus describes Himself in John 10, He is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep.
 - This one who is the very Son of God actually came in order that He might give His life as a ransom for us!
 - Just think of it and marvel!
 - Just think! The very Son of God—dying for sinful straying sheep.
2. But why must He give us life for us?
 - You know why...
 - He must give His life if we are to be saved from our sin.

- We are loaded with sin and guilt, justly under the wrath of God, justly deserving the worst that He can give us!
 - The curse of God is hurled at us like a javelin, ready to strike...
 - But this gracious shepherd actually comes and jumps in front of us to shield us from the penetrating shaft.
 - He sees the spear ready to strike and He steps in front of us to receive it in His own heart—
 - It strikes Him, it penetrates, it wounds, it brings such pains as surpass our ability to understand, it cuts off, it kills...
 - The full weight of the curse lays heavy upon Him.
 - But with power and in true righteousness, He arises from the dead...
 - He arises with full forgiveness for all His sheep!
 - He has taken the curse for every one of them.
 - He has paid the full penalty for all their sins.
3. How this changes everything for us if we are His sheep!
- His sheep, as we saw before, hear His call and come to Him...
 - And as soon as they do, how things are changed for them!
 - Immediately they are forgiven!
 - The curse is completely taken away and it will never come upon them again.
 - The javelin of the curse has entered His flesh and will never strike His sheep.
 - They will enter into His sufferings, but they will never be cursed again.
 - Their sufferings will only draw them into deeper fellowship with Him until at last they are raised in immortality never to suffer again or shed another tear.
 - By His suffering and death, they are reconciled to God, never to be condemned again,
 - But always to live in joyful fellowship and communion with Him.
 - Beholding more and more His beauty and being conformed more and more to His house until the last day when they behold Him face to face.

TRANS> What an amazing One this is who comes from Bethlehem!

- What a good shepherd He is—everything is given for His sheep...even His very life as our shepherd priest.
 - But that is not all He is...

C. He is also our shepherd-king.

1. All through His ministry, He declared that He had come to rule and we have already seen this in verse 2—that He comes to be ruler in Israel.

- He declared that with His coming, the kingdom of God comes!
 - And the great promise is that He will reign until He has put all of our enemies under His feet.
 - Sin, Satan, and death will all be destroyed so as never to disturb His sheep again.
 - And of course in saying that Satan will be destroyed, it is not just Satan,
 - it is Satan and all who are in league with him—
 - all who try to entice us away from our God by deception,
 - as well as all who try to drive us away by persecution.
 - The One who is the Son of God is able to destroy this enemy and He will do it.
 - And likewise in referring to of Shepherd-king's destroying of death,
 - we speak not only of death itself,
 - but of all sickness and physical infirmity and famine and pestilence and destructive storms that go along with death.
 - Jesus showed that He was Lord over all of these enemies while He was on earth,
 - commanding them to leave His people alone—
 - and so demons and diseases immediately departed...
 - even death departed as His command.
 - Nevertheless, it was not His will to utterly put an end to death and sickness at that time.
 - It was rather His will to show that He has authority over these enemies and will destroy them—
 - which He promises to do at the resurrection on the last day.

2. But that is not all God's shepherd King does...

- He also is responsible for leading in the worship of God...
 - And we are told that Jesus leads His church as Lord of the Church.
 - Like David, He directs us into worship as God ordained it to be.
 - Now that Jesus has come, He directs our worship, having appointed preaching and prayers and praise and the sacraments all in His name.
 - He calls us together to hear His word proclaimed and He leads us in the singing of psalms in the midst of the congregation.
 - This is also His work as our shepherd king.

- He restores us to become the true worshippers of God!
- How excellent is that

Conclusion> Oh brothers and sisters!

- What a Great One this is who has come from Bethlehem!
 - We live in the glorious days that come after His coming forth from that little town.
 - We get to see that God truly did send His only Son, the very Son of God Himself,
 - and that He who dwelt in eternity truly did also come forth from Bethlehem for us.
 - His goings forth are from everlasting, but He has come to feed His sheep.
 - To shepherd them.
 - To give them all that they need.
 - Have you heard His voice?
 - Have you come to Him as your shepherd?
 - It is only here that you can find what you truly need.
- There are many Jerusalems—great cities that we expect to be the place from which our salvation will come...
 - But we must give up on our Jerusalems, whatever they may be.
 - Salvation comes from Bethlehem—
 - It comes not from man’s resources—from his greatness or skill or wisdom or righteousness...
 - It comes from the One God brings forth at Bethlehem whose goings forth are from of old—even from everlasting.
 - Don’t go to the great places in the earth—come to the One who came forth at Bethlehem.
 - He is the One who has eternal life for sinners.
 - He is the only One because He is the Son of God.
 - Nothing that we can produce measures up—only He measures up.
 - He is the bread that comes down from heaven to give life to the world.
 - Bethlehem is the house of bread.
 - Come and partake and you will live forever.

I. The Advent of Christ at Bethlehem teaches you to take heart when times are hard for us as the people of God.

A. It teaches you to take heart because God delights in bringing His salvation and blessing out of obscurity!

1. The scripture is full of examples of God's blessing of the weak and helpless—and of His blessing coming from obscurity

a. It was to a bunch of lowly slaves in Egypt that God raised up a people to worship Him in this world.

b. It was to Gideon and his little band of 300 that God gave victory over the Mideanites so that everyone might know that it was God who had saved them.

2. I Cor 1:26-28 teaches us that God intentionally chooses what is weak and foolish to bring His salvation.

- “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are”

- And then in v. 29, God tells us why He does it this way:

- “that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

3. That is our great problem ever since the fall!

- We glory in the flesh—

- in what we are and what we can do...

- as if we are what we are and can do what we do without God!

- Because God blesses us and makes us strong, we forget that we are God's creatures!

TRANS> Consequently...

B. All our life long, God has to teach us to be humble

- He has to remind us that we are mere creatures who must find our sustenance in Him and live by His word alone.

1. That is why our fallen world is filled with war and poverty and sickness and storms...

- And that is why our life ends in death.
 - God is teaching us that we are but flesh and that our destiny is not in our own hands.

2. God teaches you to trust in Him by reducing you to great weakness in this world.

a. That is what Bethlehem is all about in Micah's prophecy.

- By telling His people that the Messiah is to come from Bethlehem instead of Jerusalem, God is telling them that the Monarchy will fail for a time!
 - They can not trust in it.
- There will **not** be a natural succession of kings at Jerusalem as there had been up until the day of Micah's prophecy!
 - The Messiah will arise out of obscurity and weakness.
 - He will come from tiny little Bethlehem because there will be no true king of David's line in Jerusalem.

b. The context makes it clear that the degradation of the kingdom is what is in view.

- Verse 1 pictures the "daughter of troops" gathered together in the time of a siege...
 - huddled together in fear behind the walls of their city!
- And it says that Israel's enemies will "strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek."
 - That speaks of the highest possible insult to a king or judge as he is here called...
 - A king can only be struck on the cheek by his enemies when his kingdom has fallen into their hands.

c. With these words, Micah tells of the fall of Jerusalem into the hands of the Babylonians...

- And he speaks of that terrible time to follow for five and half centuries when there would be no king on David's throne.
- Verse 3 ties in with this when it says that the Lord will “**give them [Israel] up** until the time that she who is in labour has given birth--”
 - Until the Messiah promised in verse 2 of course.
 - The kingdom will be in bad shape when the Messiah comes.
- And we see that when Christ did come,
 - the kingdom was in such a lowly condition that they themselves struck their own judge on the cheek, even leading Him to that deepest humiliation of all—
 - The cursed death of the cross!
- Now brothers and sisters,
 - there is nothing that should humble us more than to see that our Lord Jesus who came from Heaven was crucified because of our sin!
 - Our sin was so great that our ruler, our Saviour, our Messiah Himself had to be struck on the cheek...
 - It is all because of our pride that He had to die on the cross.
 - And He is still struck on the cheek whenever His people are brought to weakness at the hands of their enemies!
 - Over and over, God must teach us the way of the cross that we might learn to look to Him for salvation!
 - It is from His death that resurrection life was brought to the church...
 - And it is through the blood of the martyrs that the church continues to grow.
 - God has to bring us down in order that He might raise us up!!!
 - Our salvation comes from Bethlehem—
 - It comes from the cross and from obscurity after a time of great labour pains.
 - Do you see how all this ties in with verse 9 and 10 of chapter 4?
 - **Micah 4:9-10: Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished? For pangs have seized you like a woman in labor. Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, Like a woman in birth pangs. For now you shall go forth from the city, You shall dwell in the field, And to Babylon you**

shall go. There you shall be delivered; There the LORD will redeem you From the hand of your enemies.

- Israel could no more bring forth her Messiah in those days than Abraham could bring forth Isaac.
 - It was something that only God could do.
3. And even when this salvation comes, Micah tells us that only a remnant will return.
- a. As it says at the end of verse 3:
 - **Micah 5:3: “Then the remnant of His brethren shall return to (or better, together with) the children of Israel”**
 - All of Israel did not return when Messiah came...
 - it was only a remnant, only some of the people.
 - b. Thus, even after the Messiah appeared, the faithful were still in obscurity, suffering reproach from their own countrymen for the sake of their Lord and Saviour.
 - Here were the eleven disciples, a weak, uneducated, cowardly group of men lacking riches, respect and organisational ability...
 - And yet it is from these lowly disciples that the gospel has spread into all the world and has endured for nearly 2000 years.
 - c. You see, it all comes out of Bethlehem—out of the lowly because it is God’s doing!
 - Who would have thought that God would use the cross to save the world?
 - Who would have thought that He would use fishermen to be His chief representatives?
 - Let Bethlehem teach you to take heart when you are small and obscure and weak and lowly....
 - It is then that God’s salvation appears!
 - God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.
 - He saves no one but the one who comes to see that he cannot save himself and who therefore runs to God for mercy in Jesus Christ—
 - Salvation is for the One who comes with the painful awareness that he is covered with sin, and who looks to Jesus to wash that sin away by His blood that was shed to atone for sin.
 - He cries to the Saviour—
 - “Foul I to the fountain fly,
 - Wash me Saviour or I die!”

II. And oh how blessed you are when you come to this lowly prince who began His life in Bethlehem and ended it on a cross—

- who, because of our sins, was brought to the deepest humiliation that He might raise us up to the highest heaven!
- What a blessed Saviour He is, and how happy are His people!
 - It is from this humble Saviour that God's richest blessing comes to us!
 - Look at all the blessings that come from Him.

A. In verse 4, Micah says that He stands and feeds you...

- Look at verse 4:
 - **Micah 5:4: And He shall stand and feed His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; And they shall abide, For now He shall be great To the ends of the earth**

1. The word **feed** that is used here also means **shepherd**. It's often translated that way.

- a. A shepherd is one, of course, who looks out for all the needs of His sheep!
 - Whatever they need is His responsibility to provide.
- b. How great are our needs!
 - We need Him as a prophet to enlighten our minds about God's salvation and about how we are to live—
 - to bring home to us God's promises and His warnings so that our souls might be nourished by His words.
 - He guides us into the pastures of truth.
 - We need Him as a priest to wash away our guilt,
 - to intercede for us as our advocate as the One who died in our place.
 - The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.
 - We need Him as a king to bring us into submission to Himself,
 - to rule and defend us, and restrain and conquer all His and our enemies, for we are helpless when it comes to governing ourselves and defending ourselves.

TRANS> Any other shepherd would grow weary if His sheep had all these needs—

- He would have given up long ago in despair and frustration...
- But not our Shepherd!

2. He shepherds us in the unlimited strength of His divinity!

- a. He does not grow weary or faint in His ministry to us!

- Who else but He would be able to
 - nourish our souls when we were blind,
 - to atone for our sins when it required an eternity in Hell,
 - or bring us under God's rule when we were so stubborn and difficult?
- b. This requires nothing less than the powerful working of Jehovah, the self existing One, who inhabits eternity and for whom nothing is impossible!
 - Do you consider this strength, dear Christian, when you feel your weakness?
 - He shows you your weakness because He wants you to learn to live in His strength—the way you were created to live!
 - Do not be discouraged because life is hard!
 - We have a Shepherd who can handle the hardness, and His strength appears at Bethlehem—it appears where there is smallness and obscurity and weakness!
- 3. He is further said to Shepherd us “in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God.”
 - a. His Majesty is seen...
 - When He speaks:
 - Not as the prophets who say “Thus says the Lord,”
 - but rather as God who says, “I say to you...”
 - When He says to the dead, “Arise”
 - and they arise...
 - When He says to the unrepentant sinner,
 - “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:” and their destiny is forever sealed...
 - And when He says to the chief of sinners who turns to Him for mercy:
 - “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” and our destiny of blessing is forever sealed.
 - b. This is the sovereign majesty that comes to you not from Jerusalem, but from Bethlehem!
 - That power that is yours in weakness.
- B. What a blessing it is for you to have such a Saviour!
 - 1. As our Shepherd, He is the One who causes us to **abide...**
 - as v. 4 continues:

- “And they shall **abide**”
 - The word **abide** means **to sit**, in a condition of undisturbed peace and tranquillity!
 - It is to live in perfect, undisturbed peace under His pastoral care.
 - The same word is used in Micah 4:4 where it says:
 - **“But everyone shall *sit* (abide) under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.”**
2. Such a Saviour is your peace, even in the most tumultuous times!
- a. Thus we are told in verse 5, “This One shall be peace!”
 - This is better illustrated than described...
- 1) Micah gives us such an illustration in verse 5-6 when He says:
 - **Micah 5:5-6: And this One shall be peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land, And when he treads in our palaces, Then we will raise against him Seven shepherds and eight princely men. They shall waste with the sword the land of Assyria, And the land of Nimrod at its entrances; Thus He shall deliver us from the Assyrian, When he comes into our land And when he treads within our borders.**
 - 2) This refers to that great event when the Assyrians came with their mighty army to take Jerusalem...
 - They had already mowed down city after city in Judah until only Jerusalem was left.
 - As Isaiah put it, the river had risen to the neck so that only Jerusalem, the head, was above the water...
 - Sennacherib, the Assyrian leader, was so confident that he wrote in his journal:
 - “I have Hezekiah like a bird in a cage at Jerusalem—all I have to do is reach in my hand and gather the eggs.”
 - 3) But do you know what happened?
 - The mighty Assyrian army boasted and threatened,
 - but Hezekiah and the people of God prayed and trusted in the Lord their God.
 - They were utterly helpless but for God’s intervention!
 - And when Sennacherib awoke in the morning, 186,000 of his men were dead!

- b. What I want you to see in this wonderful account is the **peace** that Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem had!
 - It was the peace of Christ that kept them from surrendering—
 - from giving up when everything seemed helplessly lost!
 - They knew that they served a Saviour who was mighty to save,
 - and even though there was no way to see how He could save them,
 - they waited for His salvation and it came and it came powerfully!
 - This is the peace that you have when you understand that Jesus came from Bethlehem!
 - It is the peace that enables you to continue serving the Lord when everything you trust in (apart from the LORD) has been destroyed and you have nothing to trust in but God!
 - It is the peace that makes you confident and tranquil when you are small and obscure and weak because you know that the One whose goings forth are from everlasting is the One who came out of Bethlehem.
3. This is the peace that makes you a mighty influence in this sinful world for Jesus Christ!
- As verse 7 and 8 show, it makes us like dew and like a lion in the midst of many peoples.
 - **Micah 5:7-8: Then the remnant of Jacob Shall be in the midst of many peoples, Like dew from the LORD, Like showers on the grass, That tarry for no man Nor wait for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob Shall be among the Gentiles, In the midst of many peoples, Like a lion among the beasts of the forest, Like a young lion among flocks of sheep, Who, if he passes through, Both treads down and tears in pieces, And none can deliver.**
- a. When you have the peace that Jesus gives in weakness and obscurity,
 - it makes you like the dew that produces life...
 - and, at the same time, like a lion that destroys!
 - b. To put it in New Testament language...
 - to those who are being saved, you are a savour of life unto life,
 - but to those who are perishing, we are a savour of death unto death.
 - We are said to be as the dew *that waits for no man*
 - because God sends us and withholds us according to His own good pleasure as He does the rain and the dew.
 - He makes us a source of salvation whenever He pleases, but He uses us to harden others when He pleases.

- As Christ was, so are we in the world—
 - Some are drawn to our heavenly Father as we serve Him...
 - And some are hardened in their unbelief as they resist the light more and more as it shines to expose their error.
- c. Do you see how this works?
- 1) To those who are being saved, those whom God is drawing to Himself, there is nothing better for them than to see a believer who is resting peacefully in Jesus Christ—confidently serving Him in the midst of many enemies.
 - You show such a one that Christ is a wonderful resting place.
 - Not a place to go to sleep, but a place to live and labour in spite of whatever opposition may come.
 - What a testimony it was when 2000 Waldensians were banished from the city in the dead of winter unless they renounced their faith...
 - All 2000 of them left the city in a trail of blood through the ice and snow—not one of them stayed behind!
 - They showed that they had far better riches in Jesus Christ than could be found in this world!
 - They were a saviour of life to those who were seeking true life!
 - 2) But how their enemies were agitated by all this!
 - To them, the Waldensians were a terrible roaring lion, breathing out threats and death and destruction.
 - Every step they took as those resting in Christ brought more terrible conviction and guilt to their souls.
 - The more the persecutors saw what the Waldensians had in Christ, the more they saw what they themselves did not have!
 - The holiest men are the most loved and the most hated of men—
 - They are loved by those who are seeking Christ and they are hated by those who are not.
 - 3) So the people of Christ are a tremendous source of blessing at the same time they are tremendous source of cursing among the nations,
 - even when they are but a small remnant.

C. But God forbid that I should stop here!

1. It is true that Christ gives us great peace when we are but a small, obscure, and weak remnant...

- but one of the reasons for that peace is because we know that we will not always be small and obscure!
 - Bethlehem was small and obscure, but Bethlehem would become great!
- a. We have already seen at the end of verse 4 that “His name (the name of Christ) shall be great to the ends of the earth.”
 - The gospel has gone out into all the earth and Christ has His people from all over the world.
- b. But verse 9 takes it even farther!
 - There we are told that all our enemies will be cut off!
 - The gospel will have its powerful effect!
 - Satan and all who are in league with him will be cut off.
- 2. The result will be that Christ, by His blessing, will abolish all the things we have trusted in instead of Him...
 - all the things that have made His hand of mercy obscure to us instead of clear...
 - all the things that have hindered us from knowing Him as well as we might.
 - a. Here is the list:
 - 1) Verse 10 says that our horses and chariots will be cut off.
 - These, of course, represent the engines of war that we tend to trust in instead of the Lord.
 - 2) Verse 11 says our fortresses will be overthrown
 - This has to do with our defences that we erect to keep ourselves safe.
 - 3) Verse 12 says that our reliance on witchcraft will be abolished
 - This includes things like reading tea leaves or astrology that we think help us get along better in life...
 - It includes formulas and methods that Christians come up with to cast out demons...
 - Or reliance on worldly philosophy to cure our souls and our addictions.
 - 4) Verse 13-14 say that we will stop relying on idols
 - This essentially refers to things we do in worship that we think draw us closer to God,
 - Unscriptural rituals we practice that obscure Him rather than making Him known to us.

- b. You will observe that this list in vs 10-14 includes both things lawful and things unlawful.
- It speaks of idols and witchcraft which are strictly forbidden;
 - but it also speaks of city walls which God has often commanded His people to build, and assisted them to build as in the days of Nehemiah.
 - Yes, we have our fortresses today in the church...
 - We are right to build creeds and to organise our churches,
 - but it is our folly is to think we are safe because we have sound creeds or good organisation.
 - We are not safe in these things—
 - Our Creeds are no good unless they teach us to rely on the Lord.
 - Our organisation is no good unless it is organisation that facilitates the will of God.
- c. Our folly is when we **think** the strong city is where salvation is to be found when in fact it is found in Bethlehem—
- But do you see the point?
 - The point is: **Everything** in this world is Bethlehem.
 - We think we are safe because we have powerful military weapons in North America—
 - We have planes that can blow up tanks from altitudes that cannot even be seen by the tanks!
 - But what we don't see is that our planes are no better than those tanks before God.
 - They are just little puny things that God can blow right out of the sky with the breath of His mouth.
 - We think we have a Jerusalem, but it is only a Bethlehem.
 - The same can be said about all our methods to solve man's problems and all our defences to prevent problems....
 - They are all Bethlehems before Almighty God.
 - They are all weak and obscure...
 - God sends His salvation to Bethlehem...
 - The sooner we see that everything in this world is Bethlehem, the sooner we will look for **His** salvation instead of our own.

3. But until then, He will continue to humble us by raising up Jerusalems that we think are so strong and then showing us that they are really weak.
 - a. God will get letting us set up our Jersusalems and He will keep taking them down until we learn...
 - But after He has taken down all these Jerusalems—all the things in verses 10-14 that we rely on...
 - Then the day will come when He will destroy our enemies.
 - b. As verse 15 says, He will judge our enemies...
 - **Micah 5:15: And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard.**
 - We won't need our enemies any more to show us our weakness and our dependence on God.
 - We will be free from the threat of these enemies, Christ will cut off everything that might disturb our peace and tranquillity.
 - c. And when will all this be?
 - Not in all its fullness until Christ returns to judge the world and establish a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells...
 - But God calls you to seek to obtain this blessing piece by piece as the gospel and it's glorious influence spreads in your heart—in your home—in your church—in your nation—and throughout the whole world.
 - Christ has given us a mandate to make disciples of all nations, and we must make ourselves busy with this task.
 - All authority has been given to Him, and we need not despair or lose heart because we are weak—because we are Bethlehem...
 - Bethlehem is where His strength appears!
 - Our job is to learn for ourselves and then to teach the world that we are all weak and that we can't get along on our own...
 - We've got to stop thinking there is any real strength to be found in this world,
 - Strength is only to be found in Jesus Christ.
 - You will never find true peace until you come to terms with that.
 - Peace is not found in building your own Jerusalem—
 - It is found in Christ at Bethlehem.

From Bethlehem
Micah 5:1-15
Halifax: 25 December 2011

NOTE that Micah roughly corresponds to the time of Isaiah when the Assyrians were the chief threat, and when disobedience was great in the nation.

At the time of Israel's deepest degradation, the Messiah will rise out of Bethlehem to secure His people's deliverance. His government will lead Israel to attain to their divine calling.

CALVIN points out that this is designed to encourage the faithful to patience. We need both the threat and the promise, the judgement and the blessing, to sustain us. Without the judgement we grow careless and lax, without the promise, we would be overwhelmed and discouraged so as to give up.

1 ¶ Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops; He has laid siege against us; They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.

larvy jps ta yxl:h-le wky jbs:b wn:yle Mv rwum dwdg-tb
yddgtt hte <4:14> 1

now—

- KEIL ties together with the now in 4:9 (4:11 being a supplemental “and now”)

Possible translation:

- “Strengthen your walls, O walled city.”

daughter of troops- dwdg-tb

- JFB says this is of Jerusalem
- KEIL says that the Hebrew here refers not to a gathering together as one ready to fight, but rather as one who is afraid and facing a siege: “the thought of a crowd of people pressing anxiously together, not as an invading troop.”
- CALVIN likewise, “You will now be collected, that is, you will not send forth your troops, but enemies shall assemble yourself together by a severe siege, so that you will contract yourself like a bundle.
 - Isaiah 33:1: “Woe to you who plunder, though you *have not been* plundered; And you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt treacherously with you! When you cease plundering, You will be plundered; When you make an end of dealing treacherously, They will deal treacherously with you.
- GILL, NGSB> Perhaps a reference to Babylon, who, according to the previous prophecies was assured of success against Israel.

- Micah 4:10 “to Babylon you shall go. There you shall be delivered; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.”
- However, it may refer to the Persians, or the Romans. (GILL)

strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek

- suggests a great victory over Israel by the Babylonians or the Romans
- JFB> they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek —the greatest of insults to an Oriental. Zedekiah, the judge (or *king*, # Am 2:3) of Israel, was loaded with insults by the Chaldeans; so also the other princes and judges (# La 3:30). HENGSTENBERG thinks the expression, "the judge," marks a time when no king of the house of David reigned. The smiting on the cheek of other judges of Israel was a type of the same indignity offered to Him who nevertheless is the Judge, not only of Israel, but also of the world, and who is "from everlasting" (# Mic 5:2 Isa 50:6 Mt 26:67 27:30).
- GILL> that is, either they, the besiegers, the king of Babylon and his army, when they shall have taken Jerusalem, besieged by them, shall use Zedekiah the king of Judah, and judge of Israel, and his princes and nobles, very ill, signified by this phrase; yea, in a very cruel and barbarous manner; first slaying his sons and his princes before his eyes, then putting his eyes out, binding him in chains, and carrying him to Babylon, and there laying him in a prison, # Jer 52:10 , 11; or else they, the besieged, would use the Messiah, the King, Judge, and Ruler in Israel, in such a spiteful and scandalous manner; and so the Messiah was to be used by them, who according to prophecy gave his cheek to them that plucked off the hair, and hid not his face from shame and spitting; and so Jesus, the true Messiah, was smitten, both with rods, and with the palms of men’s hands, and buffeted and spit upon, # Isa 50:6 Mt 26:67; and this is mentioned as a reason why Jerusalem would be encompassed with the Roman armies, and besieged by their troops and legions, and become desolate, even for their rejection and ill usage of the Messiah. Aben Ezra says, it is right in my eyes that the judge of Israel is the Messiah, or Zerubbabel; not the latter, who never was so used, but the former.

CALVIN notes that after humbling them to bear the cross, he then turns to console them with the promise of great blessing.

2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."

Mlwe ymy:m Mdq:m w:ytauwm:w larvy:b lswm twyh:l auy y:l
K:m:m hdwhy ypla:b twyh:l ryeu htrpa Mxl-tyb hta:w <5:1>2

Bethlehem

- GILL> One of their chronologers *{k}* affirms that Jesus the Nazarene was born at Bethlehem Judah, a parsā and a half from Jerusalem; that is, about six miles from it, which was the distance between them: and even the author of a blasphemous book *{l}*, pretending to give the life of Jesus, owns that Bethlehem Judah was the place of his nativity:
 - {k}* R. David Ganz, Tzemach David, par. 2. fol. 14. 2.
 - {l}* Toldos Jesu, p. 7. Ed. Wagenseil.

Ephrathah

- This was the name of the region and means “the fertile ones” or the fruit-fields.

though you are little-

- *Too* little to be among the clans of Judah...
 - NAS translates this way—others agree.
 - GENEVA> suggests that they had less than the thousand required to be a clan (not enough to have ruler of a thousand).
 - KEIL> “too small to be among the thousands of Judah.
- JFB # Mt 2:6 seems to contradict Micah, "thou art *not* the least," But really he, by an independent testimony of the Spirit, confirms the prophet, Little in *worldly* importance, thou art not least (that is, far from least, yea, *the very greatest*) among the thousands, of princes of Judah, in the spiritual significance of being the birthplace of Messiah (# Joh 7:42). God chooses the little things of the world to eclipse in glory its greatest things (# Jud 6:15 Joh 1:46 1Co 1:27 , 28). The low state of David’s line when Messiah was born is also implied here.
- Who could have thought that God would raise a kingdom and a king from such a small, insignificant hamlet? What is it but the grace of God that delights to use the weak things to confound the mighty? Do not despair if we are small or weak, what matters is that God is at work in us. He will not forsake us. Out of the ashes He raises up cities, from a nation of slaves, he raises up princes, from the dead he raises to everlasting life. Here was David, in this small place of a pastoral family, the least among his brothers—and yet, God took him from the sheepfold and made him the shepherd of His people.

thousands--ypla

- This numbering system was used as early as Numbers 1:16 and Ex 18:25.

unto me

- KEIL> to the Lord, his coming forth being subservient to God’s plans.
 - Like 1 Sam 16:1 “I have provided me a king among his sons.”
- JFB> unto God the Father (# Lu 1:32): to fulfil all the Father’s will and purpose from eternity. So the Son declares (# Ps 2:7 40:7 , 8 Joh 4:34); and the Father confirms it (#

Mt 3:17 12:18, compare with # Isa 42:1). God's glory is hereby made the ultimate end of redemption.

- Lu 1:32: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David."
- Isa 42:1 ¶ "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

ruler in Israel: 1v̄m mashaḥ maw-shal'

- Should be, *ruler over Israel* (KEIL)
- This word has a variety of usages in the Bible:
 - but always means to have dominion over—to rule
 - It is used of Eve's desire to rule over Adam and sin's desire to master Cain.

whose goings forth are from the days of old:

- KEIL> His exits or goings forth, not from a place, but the act of going out.
- JFB> —The plain antithesis of this clause, to "come forth out of thee" (*from Beth-lehem*), shows that the eternal generation of the Son is meant. The terms convey the strongest assertion of infinite duration of which the *Hebrew* language is capable (compare # Ps 90:2 Pr 8:22, 23 Joh 1:1). Messiah's generation as man coming forth unto God to do His will on earth is *from Beth-lehem*; but as Son of God, His goings forth are *from everlasting*. The promise of the Redeemer at first was vaguely general (# Ge 3:15). Then the Shemitic division of mankind is declared as the quarter in which He was to be looked for (# Ge 9:26, 27); then it grows clearer, defining the race and nation whence the Deliverer should come, namely, the seed of Abraham, the Jews (# Ge 12:3); then the particular tribe, Judah (# Ge 49:10); then the family, that of David (# Ps 89:19, 20); then the very town of His birth, here. And as His coming drew nigh, the very parentage (Mt 1:1-17 Lu 1:26-35 2:1-7); and then all the scattered rays of prophecy concentrate in Jesus, as their focus (# Heb 1:1, 2).
- GENEVA> the meaning is, the goings forth of the family of that ruler are from the days of old; that is, from the seed of David, and a rod from the stem of Jesse, who was of Bethlehem Judah."
- SHISKO—from of old is Literally "from the days of eternity.
- GILL> whose goings forth [have been] of old, from everlasting; which is said of him, not because his extraction was from David, who lived many ages before him; for admitting he was "in [him], in his loins", as to his human nature, so long ago, yet his "goings forth" were not from thence: nor because he was prophesied of and promised very early, as he was from the beginning of the world; but neither a prophecy nor promise of him can be called his "going forth"; which was only foretold and spoken of, but not in actual being; nor because it was decreed from eternity that he should come forth from Bethlehem, or be born there in time; for this is saying no more than what might be said of everyone that was to be born in Bethlehem, and was born there: nor is this to be understood of his manifestations or appearances in a human form to

the patriarchs, in the several ages of time; since to these, as to other of the above things, the phrase "from everlasting" cannot be ascribed: but either of his going forth in a way of grace towards his people, in acts of love to them, delighting in those sons of men before the world was; in applying to his Father on their account, asking them of him, and betrothing them to himself; in becoming their surety, entering into a covenant with his Father for them, and being the head of election to them, receiving all blessings and promises of grace for them: or else of his eternal generation and sonship, as commonly interpreted; who the only begotten of the Father, of the same nature with him, and a distinct person from him; the eternal Word that went forth from him, and was with him from eternity, and is truly God. The phrases are expressive of the eternity of his divine nature and person; Jarchi compares them with # Ps 72:17; "before the sun was, his name was Jinnon"; that is, the Son, the Son of God; so as the former part of the text sets forth his human birth, this his divine generation; which, cause of the excellency and ineffableness of it, is expressed in the plural number, "goings forth". So Eliezer ^{o}, along with the above mentioned passage in the Psalms, produces this to prove the name of the Messiah before the world was, whose "goings forth [were] from everlasting", when as yet the world was not created.

of old, from everlasting מלְוֶעַד יָמֵי־עוֹלָם ← from days of eternity, מִדְּקִדְמוֹת ← from of old.

- The combination of these Hebrew words either denotes from ancient times as in Isa 51:19, or from eternity preceding the creation of the world as in Prov. 8:22-23.
 - KEIL> The meaning must be determined by the context.
 - The ancient Jews attributed this verse to the Messiah
 - The Jews in the days of early church attributed it to Zerubbabel, but this has not been able to stand (too arbitrary)
 - KEIL argues that this verse does not refer to eternal generation, but to the acts of the logos in creation as History (and even eternity).

3 Therefore He shall give them up, Until the time *that* she who is in labor has given birth; Then the remnant of His brethren Shall return to the children of Israel.

לָרַבִּי יִנְבֹּלֶה נִבְּוֹסֵי וְיֵאֵרֵץ וְהִדְלִי הִדְלִי תֵּדֶה מִנְּתֵי נִכְלִי
<5:2> 3

Therefore—

- It follows that if Messiah is to come from Bethlehem of the seed of David, that the family of David must have been greatly degraded—else he would be born in Jerusalem. David must have lost the throne and also fallen into poverty which could only arise from the falling of Israel into enemy hands. Like David himself, he was to arise out of obscurity.

give them up—

- from 586 BC, there was no Davidic king to sit on the throne.

- KEIL “The principle fulfilment occurred in the Chaldean period; but the fulfilment was repeated in every succeeding siege of Jerusalem until the destruction of the city by the Romans. For according to v. 3, Israel will be given up to the power of the empire of the world until the coming of the Messiah; that is to say, not merely till His birth or public appearance, but till the nation shall accept Messiah, who has appeared as its own Redeemer.
- CALVIN> God will cut off the kingdom and the city; and yet he will afford relief to the miserable: when they shall think that they are given up to entire ruin, he will stretch forth his hand to them.
- See all the troubles:
 - Sennacherib in the time of Hezekiah
 - Babylonian Captivity
 - Opposition of the nations to the rebuilding of the temple and wall of Jerusalem
 - Antichus Epiphanies
 - Roman dominion

she that was in labour

- HENRY “until the time that she who shall bring forth shall have brought forth.”
 - The outgoings of the Messiah have been from everlasting, but the consolation of Israel must be waited for. (Lu 2:25-38). We must wait for time appointed for salvation.
- KEIL suggests that it is wrong to attribute this to the nation as a whole, but that it certainly pertains to a particular woman—the one mentioned already by Isaiah in 7:14. However, this seems to miss the covenant concept in which the nation is in travail till Messiah comes as a woman in labour which does not exclude the concept of a particular woman bringing him forth, but rather fills this specific event with meaning beyond the labour pains of Mary.
- What a huge promise this is to the covenant people!
 - CALVIN: In Isa 26:18, the people complain that their sorrows have produced nothing—“we have been in sorrow, we have been in travail, and we brought forth wind.” They felt that they had been deceived by a vain expectation because the issue did not prove what they had hoped.
- Jesus seems to interpret it of Israel in the labour of prayer and affliction waiting for their redemption, yet it also includes the labour of an individual woman in the actual birth of the Lord Jesus:
 - John 16:20-22: “Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”

remnant of his brethren-

- There will be a great turning to the Lord by Him.
- Those Jews that were converted, including the thousands at Pentecost (Acts 2:41-47) or both the Jews and Gentiles who believed:
 - Mt 12:49-50: “And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.’”
 - Heb 2:11: “For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,”

shall return to the children of Israel

- Jesus becomes a rallying point for Israel.
- KEIL> translates: *and the remnant of His brethren will return, together with the sons of Israel.*
 - le therefore means “together with” rather than “to”
 - supported by similar use of le in larvy ynb-le in Jer. 3:18 and Ex. 35:22
 - Jeremiah 3:18: “In those days the house of Judah shall walk **with** the house of Israel (wđxy waby:w larvy tyb-le hdwhy-tyb wkly hmh:h Mymy:b), and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers.”
 - Exodus 35:22: “They came, both men and women (Mysn:h-le Mysna:h waby:w), as many as had a willing heart, *and* brought earrings and nose rings, rings and necklaces, all jewelry of gold, that is, every man who *made* an offering of gold to the LORD.”
- This is not to suggest that they will conform to Israel, but that there will be a restoration so that those who believe in Judah will embrace the children of Israel into the covenant blessing and promise.
- To use the language of Romans 11, all Israel will be saved, grafted into the vine of which the brethren of the LORD are attached.

4 And He shall stand and feed His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; And they shall abide, For now He shall be great To the ends of the earth;

Ura-yopa-de ldgy hte-yk wbsy:w w:yhla hwhy Ms Nwag:b hwhy ze:b her:w dme:w <5:3> 4

HENRY> What a glorious prince He is and how happy his subjects are under his rule!

He shall stand and feed

- JFB> **he shall stand** —that is, persevere: implying the endurance of His kingdom [CALVIN]. Rather, His sedulous care and pastoral circumspection, as a shepherd *stands* erect to survey and guard His flock on every side (# Isa 61:5)
- CALVIN> Here is the gentleness of the shepherd who feeds and does not oppress his flock, ever seeking to do them good.
- GILL> He is both King and Shepherd, and to each of these the act of feeding is ascribed. The same word, in the Greek language, signifies both to rule and to feed and is used by Matthew, # Mt 2:6; and kings are often compared to shepherds. Christ feeds his people, his brethren, his flock, his sheep, and lambs all truly converted ones; and this takes in the whole office of a shepherd, and the care he has of his flock.
 - Discusses after this all that he does for them as their shepherd.
- *feed* h^{er} ra‘ah *raw-aw*’
 - The word means both to feed and to shepherd

in the strength of the LORD

- His ministry is a ministry that is exercised by divine power by which He commands the wind and waves and they obey him, and by which He directs the nations and all their affairs for the sake of His church.
- KEIL he is “invested with the strength of Jehovah”

in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God;

- JFB> possessing the majesty of all Jehovah’s *revealed attributes* ("name") (# Isa 11:2 Php 2:6 , 9 Heb 2:7 -9).
- HENRY> see here His great authority as one who says not, “Thus says the Lord,” but who says, “I say to you.”
- KEIL> the majesty of Jehovah is revealed in all that he does.
- CALVIN> With the same power as there is in God, so will He defend His flock.
- GILL> Jehovah the Father is the God of Christ, as is Mediator; and his name is in him, even the majesty of it; for, as a divine Person, he has the same nature and perfections with him; and as man, exalted at his right hand, has a name above every name in this world, or that to come; and it is by authority from him, in his office capacity, that he rules and feeds his people, having all judgment committed to him:

And they shall abide (or sit- wbsy)

- KEIL> to sit without being disturbed (Mic 4:4, Lev 26:5-6, 2 Sam 7:10). They will live in perfect, undisturbed peace, under His pastoral care.
 - Micah 4:4: “But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make *them* afraid; For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.”

- Lev 26:5-6: “Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make *you* afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land.”
- 2 Samuel 7:10: “Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously,”
- GENEVA: That is, Christ’s kingdom will be stable and everlasting, and his people, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, will dwell in safety.
- What assurance his people have as those that have been redeemed by His precious blood. How safe we are under the shadow of this almighty one who has ventured to save us and defend us. His church will abide forever

great to the ends of the earth

- There is no pocket of the earth that will not brought visibly under His dominion, the uttermost parts of the earth are given to Him as His possession.
- The world will be saved.
- KEIL> His authority will extend over the entire earth.
 - Luke 1:32: “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.”
 - Malachi 1:14: “‘But cursed *be* the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and takes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—for I *am* a great King,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘And My name *is to be* feared among the nations.’”

5 And this *One* shall be peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land, And when he treads in our palaces, Then we will raise against him Seven shepherds and eight princely men.

Mda ykyon hnms:w Myer hebs w:yle wnmqh:w wn:ytnmra:b Krdy yk:w wn:ura:b awby-yk rwsa Mwls hz hyh:w <5:4> 5

shall be peace

- Jesus is our peace (Eph. 2:14)
 - Not only does He have peace, but He is the one who brings peace, the one who ushers in peace.
 - Thus, He is called the “prince of peace” in Isa. 9:5.
- GILL> Jesus the true Messiah is called "our peace", # Eph 2:14; and is the cause and author of peace, not only between Jew and Gentile, but between God and men; which he has made by the blood of his cross, and speaks and gives peace to men; and he is the author of peace in his churches, whose kingdom is a kingdom of peace...

Assyrian

- Perhaps symbolic of whatever enemies are then present (so GENEVA, NGSB, NIVS, or...
- Actually referring to Assyria as an encouragement that God has plans for His people (still just as much in place) to bring the Messiah to them, and in view of this promise, they can be encouraged that Assyria will not prevail. It may look like they have, but they will not.
 - HENRY suggests that this indeed refers to Assyria in the days of Sennacherib when he attempted to destroy the covenant people and was hindered because Christ was their peace. But he also points out that this is but a type of the great peace of the gospel church that stands against all opposition and never destroyed!
 - See the danger when Sennacherib came into the land (Isa 36:1, 37:3).
 - “In Me,” says Christ, “you shall have peace.”

we will raise—

- Following a time of great trouble when there were no strong leaders, thus the leaders needed to be raised up.
- Note also that they themselves would raise them up, denoting freedom—rather than having leaders thrust upon them

seven or eight-

- More than enough leaders to expand Christ’s kingdom—a symbolic number (seven being complete, eight being more than enough!)—and to defend His kingdom.
 - Ec 11:2 Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, For you do not know what evil will be on the earth.
- During times of trouble, the prophet Isaiah told them that they would not be able to find anyone to govern them, but that children would rule over them.
- The prophecy identifies the enemy as “Assyria” because that was the prevailing threat at the time. And the idea conveyed is that the king will evoke a faithful response from His people. Rallying around him are “seven shepherd and eight leaders of men”, that is, others who will join with him in the fight. And they are pictured together as having dominion of the Assyrian territory just as the Assyrians had at one time had dominion over Israel.

princely men Kyon n@ciyk nes-EEK’

- These men will be gentle as shepherds, but possessing courage and authority as princes. The ideal kind of leaders.

6 They shall waste with the sword the land of Assyria, And the land of Nimrod at its entrances; Thus He shall deliver us from the Assyrian, When he comes into our land And when he treads within our borders.

wn:lwbg:b Krdy yk:w wn:ura:b awby-yk rwsa:m lyuh:w h:yxtp:b
drmn Ura-ta:w brx:b rwsa Ura-ta wer:w <5:5> 6

This is the great of illustration of how it will be in the time of the Messiah—that there will be victory.

- Note that in this verse, the sword is employed—and thus it is necessary to use both the sword and the Spirit.

7 ¶ Then the remnant of Jacob Shall be in the midst of many peoples, Like dew from the LORD, Like showers on the grass, That tarry for no man Nor wait for the sons of men.

Mda ynb:l lxyy al:w sya:l hwqy-al rsa bve-yle Mybybr:k hwhy
ta:m lj:k Mybr Myme brq:b bqey tyras hyh:w <5:6> 7

the remnant of Jacob

- NGSB> The remnant, the church, will become God’s instrument of life (v. 7) and death (v. 8) as fulfilled in 2 Cor 2:14-16.
 - The remnant is a small number taken out of the mass.

like dew and showers that wait for no man-

- perhaps that idea of its pervasiveness...
 - KEIL> producing and promoting new and vigorous life among them. Dew is here, as indeed everywhere else, a figurative expression for refreshing, stimulating, enlivening.
 - De 32:2: Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the [dew](#), As raindrops on the tender herb, And as showers on the grass.
 - Ps 133:3: *It is* like the [dew](#) of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing—Life forevermore.
 - Pr 19:12: The king’s wrath *is* like the roaring of a lion, But his favor *is* like [dew](#) on the grass. (NOTE that this verse has both figures)
 - Ho 14:5 I will be like the [dew](#) to Israel; He shall grow like the lily, And lengthen his roots like Lebanon.
- *that wait for no man:*
 - dew and showers do not wait for man’s command, help, or counsel—it is sent by God when God pleases and withheld by Him when He pleases.

- The spiritual dew, which Jacob will bring to the nations, comes from Jehovah, and falls in rich abundance without the co-operation of men.
- A gentleness as the Messiah who comes down like rain upon the new-mown grass (Ps. 72:6)

in the midst of many peoples

- This remnant is to be among *many peoples*- where Israel was among few.

8 And the remnant of Jacob Shall be among the Gentiles, In the midst of many peoples, Like a lion among the beasts of the forest, Like a young lion among flocks of sheep, Who, if he passes through, Both treads down and tears in pieces, And none can deliver.

lyum Nya:w Prj:w omr:w rbe Ma rsa Nau-yrde:b rypk:k rey
twnhb:b hyra:k Mybr Myme brq:b Mywg:b bqey tyras hyh:w
<5:7> 8

like a lion-

- NIVS- speaks of the inevitable progress of God’s people.
- Also speaks of the boldness and fierceness toward those who do not repent—bringing unrelenting conviction upon them!

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

wtrky K:ybya-lk:w K:yru-le K:dy Mrt <5:8> 9

NGSB suggests that this may well be a blessing “Let your hand etc...”

KEIL> “High be thy hand above thine oppressors”

Micah 5:10-14 show that during the time of the Messiah, the people will not depend on weapons of war or pagan idols.

- Yet, this may also be referring to the final consummation when the enemies are cut off and weapons are no longer needed—even the Millennium or Heaven (depending on your eschatology)
- KEIL definitely argues that prior to this great time (in 10-14) there will be weapons and it is only as a result of the unity of the world and subduing of the world to Christ that weapons cease as is prophesied elsewhere:
 - **Isa 2:4 “He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.”**

- **Joe 3:10** “Beat your plowshares into swords And your pruning hooks into spears; Let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’”
- **Mic 4:3** He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war any more.

10 "And it shall be in that day," says the LORD, "That I will cut off your horses from your midst And destroy your chariots.

K:ytkrm ytdbah:w K:brq:m K:yowo ytrkh:w hwhy-Man aw:h-Mwy:b hyh:w <5:9>

This is a true blessing! It does not mean that we are defenseless, but that we learn to rest in the place where true defenses are found!

- Israel erred in trusting horses and chariots (Ps. 20:7)

KEIL> “Only when the people of God shall have gained the supremacy over all their enemies, will the time have arrived for all the instruments of war to be destroyed. When the world shall be overcome, then will all war cease...

- But this does not seem to answer to the strong language of “cutting off”

11 I will cut off the cities of your land And throw down all your strongholds.

K:yrubm-lk ytorh:w K:ura yre ytrkh:w <5:10> 11

GILL> The meaning is, they should not dwell in fortified cities and walled towns; they should have none of these to trust to, nor should they stand in any need of them to defend them, their enemies being subdued; and besides, the Lord would be their strong hold and place of defence, a wall of fire round about them, but the glory in the midst of them, The phrases are expressive of the greatest tranquillity and safety, and of living in an open air, free and undisturbed; see # [Zec 2:4 , 5](#)

HENRY> They will have their cities to dwell in, but not as a garrison to defend them. God will be their fortress and their help, the high tower to which they run for safety.

12 I will cut off sorceries from your hand, And you shall have no soothsayers.

K:l-wyhy al Mynnwem:w K:dy:m Mypsk ytrkh:w <5:11> 12

It is a shame when covenant people rely on these things, for it is both foolish and wicked.

- These things are cut off by the nation for the sake of justice...
- And cut off by the preaching of the gospel when men turn from them as folly.

13 Your carved images I will also cut off, And your sacred pillars from your midst; You shall no more worship the work of your hands;

K:ydy hvem:l dwe hwxtst-al:w K:brq:m K:ytwbum:w K:ylyop
ytrkh:w <5:12> 3

and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands;

- GILL> as not to fall down to idols and worship them, so neither to trust in carnal privileges, ceremonial rites, observances of the traditions of the elders, or any works of righteousness done by them, which they had been prone unto.

14 I will pluck your wooden images from your midst; Thus I will destroy your cities.

K:yre ytdmsh:w K:brq:m K:yrysa ytstn:w <5:13> 14

The Targum,

“I will destroy thine enemies *{n}*.”

15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury On the nations that have not heard."

wems al rsa Mywg:h-ta Mqn hmx:b:w Pa:b ytyve:w <5:14> 15

HENRY: “God will give his Son either the hearts or the necks of his enemies, and make them either his friends or his footstool.”

KEIL> He will exterminate every ungodly power so that nothing will remain that will be able to disturb the peace of His people and kingdom again.

CONCLUSION:

CALVIN’s prayer:

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not to provoke thy wrath against us, and as it is needful for us to be often chastised by thy hand, that we may be humbled and learn to submit ourselves to thee in true and willing obedience,—O grant, that we faint not under thy scourges, but ever’ raise up our minds to the hope of deliverance, which thou givest to us through our Mediator, whom thou hast once for all sent into the world, that thou mightest through him reconcile us to thyself, and through whom also thou bringest help whenever we need it: and may we at the same time learn to rely on thy only-begotten Son, so that with courageous minds we may pass through all the miseries of this world, and never at any time grow weary, until having at length obtained the victory, we come to that blessed rest and enjoy the fruit of our victory, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

I. First, see here that true religion responds to God’s call.

A. True religion always begins with the call of God.