
Great Things From Small Packages

"...from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel." (Micah 5:2).

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Micah 5:2

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.

I invite you to turn in your Bibles to the Old Testament book of Micah. The book of Micah is towards the end of the Old Testament, seven books from the end of the Old Testament, right between Jonah and Nahum. Our text this morning is found in just one verse, Micah 5:2. Put into context, what we find here is a prophecy concerning the coming Messiah. The prophet Micah wrote this about 725 years before Christ was born. Here he foretells the birth of Jesus Christ, giving us the actual location where Messiah would be born, in the small town, back-woods, sleepy little town of Bethlehem. Now Micah 5 covers more than just the Messiah's birth, this morning we will focus in on just verse 2, which stands as clear reference to the first advent, or the first coming of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Let me make a few comments as we begin about prophecy. Let us not take for granted the marvel and then blessing of God's foretelling of what is to come. In the Old Testament there are around 60 prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ. Those who are skeptical of the Bible are forced to give careful consideration to such prophecies before dismissing Jesus Christ as the long-awaited and

The Old Testament foretells, for example, that Christ would be born in the line of King David in Isaiah 11:1-5 and confirmed in Matthew 1:1, 6. The Old Testament foretells that the Christ would be born of a virgin in Isaiah 7:14 and fulfilled in Matthew 1:18-20. In Isaiah 53, some 700 years before Jesus was born, we read a prophecy that the Messiah would be rejected by His own people, by the Jews. This is demonstrated as coming to pass in the words of John 1:11 where the Bible says, "***He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.***"

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah, who wrote some 400 years before Jesus was born, prophesies in chapter 11:12 that the price of Christ's betrayal would be 30 pieces of silver; fulfilled by Judas in Matthew 26:15. In Psalm 22:16, David, around 1000 years before Jesus was born, prophesies that the Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. This was fulfilled in the crucifixion as recorded in Luke 23:33; 24:38-40. In Psalm 34:20, again written by David, we have the prophecy that none of Messiah's bones would be broken; something fulfilled in John 19:33-36. In Psalm 22:1 and 22:18, David, again some 1000 years before the birth of Jesus, records the final words Jesus would speak from the cross, "***ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?***" which is translated, "***MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?***" (Mark 15:34) as well as telling us that there would those who would gamble for His clothing, fulfilled in John 19:23-24. But one of the greatest Old Testament prophecies is found right here in our text of Micah 5:2, pinpointing 700 years before it would happen, the very location of Messiah's birth, in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:5). Let us read these two texts:

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Matthew 2:1-6

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 2 "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

My goal this morning is to enlarge our understanding of, and to deepen our appreciation for, the birth of Jesus Christ. I believe that far too many people who profess to be Christians are no more than people merely enamored with the moral teachings of a carpenter from Nazareth than they are convinced and captivated by the fact that this Jesus truly was and is God in the flesh. He is God in the flesh!

Consider how convinced the wise men from the east were of this fact, traveling some 900 miles for the singular purpose of worshipping Jesus. They clearly understood that there was something different about this young child—something extraordinarily different about Him. So, let us travel back some 2,000 years and enter into that first Nativity scene so that we might behold afresh the Christ of the cradle, the Messiah of the manger, and worship Christ for Who He is. This one verse, Micah 5:2, reminds us of the wonder of the One that Mary wrapped in swaddling cloths.

Our approach to this verse will be straightforward. Let us observe together the simple truths or facts that emerge as we take this text line by line. By doing this, there is naturally reveals three truths about this coming Christ; three truths that are fulfilled with the first coming of God in the flesh; three revelations of the wonder and power of Christ. So look at the manger with me and let us worship Christ foretold and Christ fulfilled. First, as we look down into the manger we see:

I. The Wonder of Christ's Humility (5:2a)

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah...

Let me remind you that what we have in this verses is God the Father speaking through the prophet Micah and foretelling of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. The word "**Ephrathah**" there is the old name for Bethlehem. You read it sometimes in the Old Testament. It is used interchangeably with Bethlehem.

Notice the description here of Bethlehem; it is described as "**too little among to be among the clans of Judah.**" It is this little town of Bethlehem that God freely determines that His Messiah, His Son, will be born in the flesh. He chooses the small obscure town of Bethlehem as the site of His divine favor. "*Though you are so little and remote among the thousands of Judah, though you are so little among the clans and tribes of Judah, yet, in spite of this, you will be the place where history will record the birth of the Messiah.*" Why Bethlehem? Beloved, it is a humble town and thus the perfect place for the birth of the humble Savior. That God should choose this small town of Bethlehem illustrates for us the humility of Christ.

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When we speak of the humility of Christ, we are referring to the fact that God humbled Himself, lowered Himself, in comparison to His divinity, He made himself as nothing, by coming to us in the flesh. The eternal Son of God left the beauty, the glory, the wonder, and the splendor of the throne room of heaven and condescended, came down, in His coming to us by being born of a virgin in this insignificant town of Bethlehem. So awe-inspiring is this humility of Christ that the apostle Paul would have to make note of it. In Philippians 2:6-7, Paul informs his readers that Jesus Christ, ***"...although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."*** This is an eloquent way of saying that Christ humbled Himself by leaving the glory of heaven and, in the incarnation, the taking upon Himself flesh, the taking up of humanity as He is born there in the lowliest of places, a crude feed trough in the small and insignificant town of Bethlehem.

We could imagine Christ being born in a far nobler place. If you or I were God, we might have chosen the biggest, flashiest, city on the entire planet. After all, when you are God, you can do things big. And God has done some big, flashy things, calling this world into existence by just a word; by leading His people safely through the Red Sea on dry ground; you get the picture. But here God chooses Bethlehem, a small "nothing" of a town. Why? Why does God act so differently than we might expect? In 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, the Holy Spirit gives an explanation to us, reminding us, ***"27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God."***

Christ is born in the small town of Bethlehem so no man could boast in His presence. Imagine the boasting of men should the Messiah have been born in Jerusalem saying something like, *"Isn't this wonderful that the Messiah should be born here in this great city of kings and human achievement, born here in this fine golden palace we have built with our own hands, the babe placed right here in this beautiful bed of silk and fine linen!"* Rather, we find the eternal Son of God being born in Bethlehem and this serves as an illustration of His humility. He is powerful enough to have been born in the richest and most royal of cities, yet He restrains His power and humbles Himself by choosing to be born in the small inconsequential village town of unknown shepherds and bread makers so that no man can boast before Him. This is a God thing! And I submit to you that this is the wonder of His humility as He holds back His power and glory, choosing to be born in the small town of Bethlehem.

Let us see the eternal Son of God there in the manger. Let us consider Him and realize that this is the One who left the glories of heaven for you and me. Let us ponder Him leaving the glorious splendor and grandeur of the eternal heavens where He had been face to face with God for eternity past. Then, some 2,000 years ago, our great God rises from the heavenly throne; perhaps as the angelic hosts bows with a holy hush realizing the journey He is about to make on behalf of fallen, sinful humanity. The Son of God begins the downward journey, treading some heavenly walkway as multitudes of angels go before and behind Him, escorting the glorious second Person of the Trinity to earth for His divine assignment. Consider the angels as they beheld the Son of God in His pre-incarnate form for the last time; seeing Him next as the God-Man. The Son of God descends, down, down, down in wondrous humility; down into the womb of a previously unknown young Jewish virgin named Mary; down to be born in the small, ambiguous, unassuming town of Bethlehem; down to be born so that He might die. This is our

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God; God in the flesh whom Paul described as, ***"Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross"*** (Philippians 2:8) Oh the wonder of such humility. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, let our hearts be moved to worship Him as our Lord and our God in the flesh. Micah 5:2 reminds us of the power and wonder that Mary wrapped in those swaddling cloths. This is the wonder of Christ's humility; secondly, as we worship Christ, we see:

II. The Wonder of Christ's Majesty

...from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.

Remember that God the Father is the One Who is speaking in in our text and He says to Bethlehem, ***...from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.*** In effect God says, ***"Yet out of you, Bethlehem, is coming the One who will carry out My divine assignment, the One who will be the Sovereign, Majestic Ruler in Israel..."*** Let me pause and draw your attention down to verse 4 of Micah 5 where we learn that this Ruler would not be just over Israel but also over the entire world. In Micah 5:4 we read of the greater reign and rule of the Messiah: ***"And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. and they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth."*** So this little back-woods town of Bethlehem would not only be the birth-place of the ruler of Israel, but also of Him who will rule over ***"the ends of the earth."***

Sadly, yet by God's design, Israel presently remains blind to the Messiah who has come, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes of this blindness of Israel in Romans 11:25-26 saying, ***25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."*** At current, according to God's Word, Israel is experiencing a hardness of heart until a great number of Gentiles are saved. Then the veil will be removed and they will recognize Jesus Christ as Messiah and bow before Him as their Sovereign, Majestic Ruler.

When Christ came the first time He came as the Suffering Servant; to give His life for the lives of those who would believe. He came to be the defeater of sin. Jesus came to take care of humanity's sin problem. So Jesus says in Mark 10:45, ***For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*** This is why Christ came: to give His life as a ransom for many. He came to die for us, to rule over sin in the wonder of His majesty.

But when Christ comes the second time, He will return as the Conquering King. The first time Christ came to redeem us; to pay for our sins. This is why, in large part, the Jews missed His first coming. They were expecting a political messiah to come as Conquering King. He will so return, but He came the first time to take care of our greatest problem, the problem of sin. And here we are to be reminded that the Bible teaches that all humankind has a problem called "sin." Everyone has this problem. Romans 3:23 tells us plainly, ***for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*** Sin can be both active and passive. Sin is active when we do things we know are wrong. And sin is passive when we do not do things we know are right. We all have this problem. The Scripture here says, ***"all have sinned"*** meaning clearly from the context that every single person, without exception has missed the mark of God's intended perfection for humanity.

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[There is a story that is told of three preachers who were on an unproductive fishing trip when they began to discuss various topics to pass the time. One preacher said he thought it would be nice if they confessed their biggest sins to each other and then prayed for each other. They all agreed, and the first preacher said that his biggest sin was that he liked to sit at the beach now and then and watch the ladies walk by. The second preacher confessed that his biggest sin was that he went to the horse racing track every so often and put a small bet on a horse. They both turned to the third preacher and asked: “Brother, what is your biggest sin?” The third preacher smiled and said, “My biggest sin is gossiping.”]

Indeed, we all know very well how short we measure up to God’s glory. The standard is the holiness of God. He is without sin. And we are unholy in the sense that we are sinners. But not only is God a holy God, He is also a loving God and God loves humanity so much that He came to us in the power of majesty to rule over our sin. We read in the familiar words of John 3:16, ***For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*** The phrase, “***only begotten Son***” speaks of the uniqueness of Jesus. It tells us that Jesus is the “one and only of His kind” Son. Jesus is not in the “all” of Romans 3:23, for He came to us from outside of sin. In fact, according to 2 Corinthians 5:21, ***[God the Father] made [God the Son] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in [God the Son].*** This is why God sent His Son the first time. Christ came to die for our sins. He takes the punishment for our sin upon Himself so that we might take upon ourselves His righteousness. As the famous C.S. Lewis quote reminds us, “*The Son of God became the Son of Man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God.*” This beloved, is the greatest gift of Christmas—the gift of God’s eternal Son, Jesus—Jesus, whose very name means, “The LORD saves”—Jesus, Savior!

Do you see the wonder of Christ’s majesty as you look at the scene of the Babe lying in the manger? Do you see the King in the cradle? This King who came to suffer for your sin; to give His life so that you might have life? Do you know that Jesus came for you?

Hear again the words of John 3:16, ***For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*** There is a great call here, a great expectation packed into this great verse. Did you catch it? As God gives the gift of His Son, the gift of His salvation, the expectation is that there will be a response of belief, of a changed life, one that lives for and by the power of this unique, one of a kind, Son of God. For the one who believes in Him...what? “***shall not perish***” – will not die. Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior? Have you believed upon Him? Has your “belief” resulted in a continually changing life that lives for Christ? I ask this not because we are saved by a changed life; we are not saved by any good works; but we are saved for good works, a changed and changing life lived unto God is the evidence of your salvation. So I ask you, have you believed upon Him? John 3:36 equates believing in Christ with obedience to Christ. We read, ***He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.***

As we worship the Christ of the cradle, we see the wonder of His humility and the wonder of His majesty. Finally, as we look down at the Babe in the manger, we see:

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III. The Wonder of Christ's Eternality

His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.

Our text reminds us that the coming Savior has been around a lot longer than 2,000 years! We read at the end of Micah 5:2, *His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.* And thus we are remind that there was never a time the Son was not. He has always been. He is eternal. So we see here the wonder of the Son of God's eternity. He has always been. We read of His **“goings forth”** – a reference to His origin which is actually specified for us in in the phrase, **“from the days of eternity.”** We are being told that this coming Savior and Ruler is One whose, **goings forth are from long ago.** His origin is from old. We might ask, “How old, how long ago?” The answer is **“from the [very] days of eternity”** if indeed there are “days” in eternity. Beloved, this is the wonder of Christ's eternity.

Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. Jesus is the Son of God who humbled Himself and took on the addition of humanity. He took on, became flesh. Some 2,000 years ago the Son of God became the God-Man. But as we look at the Babe in the manger, we must remember that He has always been; that He has always been divine; that He has always been God.

In Colossians 1:15-17, an early hymn of the Church and a profound encapsulation of the supremacy of Christ, we read, **15 He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.**

As if this were not grand enough, the apostle John refers to Christ as **“the Word”** – “the Logos” – the great reality and truth; in fact God. We read in John 1:1-3, **“1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”**

The Son of God was with God the Father at creation. The Son of God is eternal, just as God the Father. The Son of God's **“goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”** According to Scripture, as God, the Son created all things. It was the Son of God who hung the sun and moon as well as setting the stars in their place. It was the Son of God who set the boundaries of the waters and breathed life into Adam and Eve.

And then in both a dramatic and mind-bending way, the apostle John informs us of yet another mystery, another miracle of miracles. We read in John 1:14, **And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.** There is that phrase again, “the only begotten”. This is the unique, one of a kind, Son of God. Do you behold His glory this morning? As you consider this week the Babe in the manger, do you see the **“image of the invisible God?”** Do you see the wonder of His eternity?

Jesus is... Jesus always is... Jesus always will be. This is what it means to be eternal. He is. This is why Jesus takes the descriptive name of Yahweh as the great, **“I Am”** because **“He was and is and is to come.”** Jesus is. So He is always there for you and for me regardless of what comes to pass. Jesus is. Remember the final words of Jesus recorded in the very last verse of Matthew? There Jesus says, **“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”** (Matthew 28:20). Jesus is. This is the wonder of His eternity!

Do you remember that account from John 8:56-58, when Jesus was talking with some Jews who did not believe He was the Son of God. Jesus said to them, **56 “Your father Abraham**

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rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." 57 So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Here is the wonder of His eternity.

As we worship the Christ of the cradle, we see the wonder of His humility, the wonder of His majesty, and wonder of His eternity. As I worked through this message this week, I heard a song that so aptly illustrates all we have been considering, the wonder of Jesus come to us as the Babe of Bethlehem. This song ponders what Mary might have been thinking as she held for the first time the little Baby of Bethlehem who was the fulfillment of Micah 5:2:

Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy would one day walk on water?
Did you know that your Baby Boy would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know that your Baby Boy has come to make you new?
This Child that you've delivered will soon deliver you.

Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy will give sight to a blind man?
Did you know that your Baby Boy will calm a storm with his hand?
Did you know that your Baby Boy has walked where angels trod?
And when you kiss your little Baby, you've kissed the face of God.

Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy is Lord of all creation?
Did you know that your Baby Boy will one day rule the nations?
Did you know that your Baby Boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
This sleeping child you're holding is the great "I AM!"

It is in once sense beyond our comprehension to consider that as Mary wrapped her little Baby in those swaddling cloths, she was wrapping the wonder of humility, majesty, and eternity. This Baby was the awesome Christ Child who is worthy of and demands nothing less than our total obedience and allegiance. Indeed, great things can come to us in small packages. However, will you bow to Him this morning, not as a Baby, but as Lord and Savior?

Soli Deo Gloria

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