



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Micah 5:1-2

"Israel's Kings: The One Discomfited, the One Discomfiting" TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege for the study of Thy word, and we are thankful to Thee for the study of this great prophecy of Micah that we have been studying together. We thank Thee for the prophet himself, and for the wonderful illustration of spiritual courage found in him and in his ministry in the difficult days in which we sought to be a servant of the most high God. We thank for the marvelous prophecies that have come to us through him. And we would particularly thank Thee for the one to which we turn tonight.

We thank Thee for the assurance now as we look back, of the word which he spoke in those very trying days, in the days when the Assyrians were knocking on the doors in the City of Jerusalem, and in which the people within the city and also in the environs round about were very much disturbed and worried over the progress of world affairs in their day. We recognize some of the same things in our own experience in the 20th Century. Enable us, Lord, to find the same hope, the same assurance, the same resting place that Micah recommended to the children of Israel in his day.

We commit this hour to Thee. We ask Thy blessing upon us. For Jesus' sake and in his name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we are looking at Micah chapter 5, verse 1 and verse 2, and our topic is "Israel's Kings: The One Discomfited, the One Discomfiting." We are living in days of religious disorder and spiritual chaos. The church, as you look about, is no longer the little flock that meets in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in order to worship the Father through the Scriptures. What is most characteristic, I guess, of the church today is the fact that the shepherds are no longer experienced and faithful shepherds.

Some time ago I remember reading some things that had to do with a prominent minister and some comments he made with reference to sin. He said, "We are living in a day of hazy standards of right and wrong; that the old lines of demarcation have disappeared from modern thinking." And he referred to another minister who said, "The delineation of sin has undergone a transformation somewhat similar to that which has taken place in the world of painting. The old clear cut lines have given way to an impressionistic indefiniteness. The black and white contrast, to low tone grays. The churches have adapted a hush policy on the doctrine of depravity and a Rotarian gospel takes the place of repentance."

He went on to say, "I like his reference to painting. There was a time when you could look at a picture and tell what it was. Today black and white have become gray. Someone has said, 'The religion of China is Confucian. The religion of America is Confusion.' A country school teacher who was applying for a job was asked, 'Do you teach that the world is round or do you teach that it is flat?' He said, 'Which way do you want it taught, I can teach it either way.'" Well, something like that is the attitude of many who stand in the pulpits today, because their idea of what they ought to preach is what others are saying that they ought to preach, and they do not go to the standard of the word of God.

When we turn to the word of God, of course, we have something that is so simple and lucid that even its prophecies are not hazy and vague. They are not prophecies like Jean Dixon's or any other modern prophets. The promise of the Redeemer, for example,

is a promise given in the Old Testament in many forms, and in each of these forms there is a narrowing down of the coming of the Redeemer. For example, in Genesis chapter 3, in verse 15 it was said by Moses, as he gave words that God gave after the sin of man that the Redeemer would come from mankind. Then later on in the 9th chapter it was further defined as the Redeemer will come from the Shemitic division of mankind. He will be of the division represented by Shem. And then in the 11th and 12th chapters when Abraham is called, we are told in the Scriptures that the Redeemer shall come in the line of Abraham. And then in the 49th chapter of the Book of Genesis we are told that the Redeemer will come from Judah's tribe, and in fact from David's family. Then we are told in Isaiah chapter 7 that this Redeemer who comes from mankind, from the Semitic division of mankind, from the line of Abraham, and from Judah's tribe, and David's family is going to be born of a virgin. And in the passage that we are looking at tonight, we read that he will also be born in the village of Bethlehem. So the Bible has carefully narrowed down its prophecies so that there would be no misunderstanding about the person to whom they referred.

Bethlehem was known in the Old Testament as the place where the first news of the temple was proclaimed. It was the scene of Rachel's death. It was the scene of the love story of Ruth and Boaz. It was the birth place of David. I think it's rather striking that it is the place where the first news of the temple was proclaimed, because the one who is the antitype of the temple, the Temple of God, is the Lord Jesus Christ. And so Bethlehem is the place where *the* Temple of God is also to be proclaimed. Now, Bethlehem means "the house of bread," but Bethlehem was never the house of bread until he came.

This oracle that we are looking at tonight in Micah chapter 5 begins in verse 1 of the English text and concludes with verse 6, but we're only going to look at the first two verses of it, or the first section of the oracle. This is the third of the oracles in the series. In verse 9 and 10 of chapter 4 we had the first of the three oracles. It begins with the

adverb "now" in verse 9 of chapter 4. And then in verse 11 through verse 13 we have the second of the oracles. It again begins with a "now." And finally, the third of the oracles, chapter 5, verse 1 through verse 6, and it, too, begins with a now. And each one of these oracles is marked by a contrast between present troubles and future greatness. If you go back and read those sections that we have studied, you notice that they begin with a reference to trouble, but then they conclude on the note of a future greatness; the prophet, linking the things that he is saying with the troubles that they are experiencing, and seeking to encourage them by the prospects of future greatness through the coming of the salvation of God.

Now, the one that we are looking at, which begins at verse 1 of chapter 5, contains a lament in verse 1. And then it contains a promise of a Savior-Shepherd in verse 2, verse 3, verse 4, and then in verse 5 verse 6 it contains a description of the fall of the enemies of Jerusalem, in this case, the fall of Assyria. So we are looking, first, at the lament of the beleaguered capital, and it is found in verse 1. And now let me read verse 1. This is a verse we don't often look at. We are particularly interested in verse 2, since it's a famous Messianic prophecy sited in the New Testament, but we overlook the connection often, and fail to notice the background against which Micah did give that marvelous prophecy of our Lord's birth in Bethlehem. He says, "Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops."

Now, when he says "O daughter of troops" he's referring to Jerusalem. "Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us." Now, "he" is a reference to the Assyrian king. "They shall smite the judge of Israel." The judge of Israel was the king of Israel, because the king did perform judge judging. He was responsible for justice in the land. "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek." Isn't it interesting that Isaiah is the first prophet sited in our New Testament, and in the first prophecy he says the Messiah is going to be born of a virgin? And the second prophecy sited in the New Testament is Micah, and this is the prophecy. And it is

stated here that the Messiah's place of birth will be Bethlehem. So the first two of the prophecies are prophecies from Isaiah, who prophesies of the virgin birth, and then of Micah who prophesies of his birth in Bethlehem.

George L. Robinson, who has written a helpful little book on the prophets, he wrote it some years ago, said, "Isaiah had foretold a virgin birth, but Micah foretold a village birth." It helps to remember the background of Micah, and particularly as you get on into the prophecy and read the verses. If you don't understand the background or have some idea of the background, the prophets frequently can become confusing. So, it's good to look back again at the first verse and remember that the prophet began by saying, "The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." So, Micah prophesied during the reigns of these men who were on the throne in the 8th century, B.C. And the occasion of the 5th chapter, most of the students of Micah feel, is the invasion by Sennacherib of the land of Israel.

Now, remember that Sennacherib came right to the gates of Jerusalem, but due to the work of a providential God, he was unable to take the city and finally had to leave. Now, all of that is described for us in some detail in 2 Kings chapter 18 and chapter 19. And it might be good for you to read that section as we next week, the Lord willing, consider the rest of this oracle, because the background will be helpful in understanding the things that Micah is speaking about here.

In some of the ancient Near Eastern texts that have been uncovered in relatively recent times, some of the statements of Sennacherib that he made concerning Hezekiah, are now historically known to us. He, for example, he laid siege to the city of Jerusalem and Hezekiah was in the city, and in some of the annals of the Assyrian kings, the statements of those kings are now found. And Sennacherib, for example, said, "I shut him up like a bird in a cage." That was one of the things that he said about Hezekiah. And then he also said, "I surrounded him with earthwork." That is, he laid siege against King

Hezekiah. So, the prophet is writing out of very difficult times when the children of Israel and the citizens of Judah were being besieged by the Assyrians who were very violent, very cruel, very brutal men.

And so he says, "Now gather thyself in troops." Now, this may be rendered in a different way. We can render it "Now gather thyself in troops." But this word also is a word that in certain contexts means "to gash oneself, to cut oneself." For example, it's the word that was used of the prophets of Baal when Elijah was having his contest with them on Mount Carmel. And you'll remember that when they could not get their God to respond they cut themselves. They danced all around the altar. They did all kinds of things and finally, remember, Elijah began to mock them by saying, "Well, perhaps he's gone on a trip. Perhaps he's sleeping. It's possible he's even gone to the restroom." Those are things that Elijah said. He was seeking to make mockery of the fact that the gods of those men did not really answer them. They were not living gods. And so, one of the things that they did in lament, and they did this when they were appealing to a deity, was to cut themselves. And furthermore, it was also a custom for individuals who lost loved ones and who wanted to express their grief in a very deep way, they too had the custom of cutting themselves.

Now, you will find that in the statements of the Pentateuch. For example, in Deuteronomy chapter 14, in verse 1, I believe it is; we have reference to this. "Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead." So, these heathen customs of cutting themselves when they appeal to the deity, or cutting themselves when they were mourning for the dead were things that they were not to do, because they were heathen practices.

Now, that verb is a verb that is found right here. The same verb found in 1 Kings chapter 18, and verse 28 and Deuteronomy chapter 14, verse 1 is found here. So it is possible to translate this "Now gash yourselves, O daughter of troops." Or it is possible, "Now you are gashing yourselves, daughter of troops." In other words, "You are, because

of the situation, and because of the fact that in your mind it is likely that you are going to be taken captive by the Assyrian. And that would be, of course, to become as if dead." He is, in irony, calling upon them to gash themselves like the heathen do, because they are going to be besieged by the Assyrians and perhaps taken captive by them. So, "Gash yourselves," or "Now you are gashing yourselves, O daughter of troops." I guess since the daughter is singular we probably should render it, "Gash yourself, O daughter of troops." But the idea is collective. He's talking about the city and the people of the land.

"He hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek." What a reversal was the slap in the face. This was an insult in those days, just as it is today. If one person slaps another one in the face that's an insult, it's occasion for a duel a couple of hundred years ago. And the slap referred to here, "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek" was an insulting thing that was performed by the Assyrians with reference to Hezekiah. So, what a reversal Micah refers to here. Here is a shadow of a king, the heir of the ancient royal throne of David himself, but he's cooped up in his city, cringing before the heathen king. And as Micah says, "They are going to smite Hezekiah with a rod upon the cheek," a complete reversal of the role that, of course, the Davidic king should have.

When we turn back to the prophecies made in the Psalms, with reference to the great Davidic king, what a difference there is between the Davidic king referred to by David, in Psalm 2, and this Davidic king now holed up in his city because of the Assyrians who are besieging that city. In Psalm 2 we read, God speaking, "I will declare the decree." Now the Son speaks, "The LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." So, here is the true Davidic king, the one who has been given authority over all of the earth, and here is Hezekiah in the line of the royal king cooped up by the heathen Sennacherib. What a reversal in the

role of the Davidic king, and what a far cry from what the Davidic king is ultimately going to be.

Now, against that background of the nation besieged by Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, in verse 2 the Prophet Micah gives the promise of Messianic salvation. "So within this drab frame of royal misfortune," someone has said, "a glorious picture of royal majesty is set out." "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." And he's not going to be like Hezekiah, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." The figure of the failure of Hezekiah, the king of Israel or Judah who should not be that kind of a king is a foil for the figure of the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One might wonder, "Can Bethlehem, that little village, breed a royal king who will have authority over the whole of the earth?" Now, Bethlehem was just a little village. And for those of you who have seen it, I don't imagine it was anything more than it is today, just a little village, inconsequential, but out of Bethlehem is to become the world ruler. I'm sure that they must have wondered over that. Is it possible for little Bethlehem to be the source of the world ruler? But God can make oaks out of acorns, and he can make a kind over the whole of the earth to come from the little village of Bethlehem. So amid the storm clouds of the advance of the Assyrians against the city, there is the bright ray of hope offered here in this forceful prophecy.

Now, I don't know whether you've been noticing or not, or whether you've noticed as you've read through this section. By the way, I hope you have been reading through it, it will help you a great deal in understanding the prophecy to do that, to notice that the prophet often speaks, and then occasionally God himself speaks. Now, God is speaking in the second verse, the prophet speaks in the first verse, and the prophet speaks in the remainder of the oracle, but here a word is introduced by God himself. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of

Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me." That's clear that it is not the prophet who is speaking here, but it is the Lord God himself, the prophet giving words as if they were coming from the mouth of the Lord.

Now, this is a very forceful address. It's very forceful first of all, because it's in the second person. He says, "Thou Bethlehem." Now, you don't ordinarily speak to a city that way. When you talk about Dallas, you talk about Dallas in the third person. You say, "Dallas is this. Dallas is that." You don't say, "Dallas do this or Dallas do that." That's a very vivid form of address. So here, this is vivid, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah." It's God speaking, and God speaking to the village. Now, a village cannot respond to an individual unless that individual has sovereign power. But this individual speaking has sovereign power. So the very fact that he addresses it in the second person indicates that this is a very forceful part of the prophetic word of Micah. In the second place, it's God not the prophet that speaks and that makes it even more forceful.

And finally, he's addressing an inanimate object. It would be forceful if God were to break in and if he were to speak in the second person and address Micah the Prophet, but to address an inanimate object makes it all the more forceful. And so this is designed to catch our attention. Now he had, in another place in his prophecy done that. I remember one in verse 8 of the preceding chapter, "And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion." There again you have an address to an inanimate object.

But now let's look at this prophecy that is so forcefully addressed by the Lord to the readers of the prophecy. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah," I've always taken a great deal of delight in that expression, because he does not say, "And thou Bethlehem, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah," but "Thou Bethlehem Ephratah." Now, why does he say Ephratah? Well now, of course we don't know exactly what Ephratah means, but it either refers to a section of the people who lived in the area of Bethlehem, that is a family or a clan, or it refers to a district, and I'm inclined to think that it does refer to a

district in which Bethlehem lay. In other words, Bethlehem was in the district of Ephratah, very much like we would say I guess that Dallas is in the county of Dallas. So, Bethlehem Ephratah, why not just say Bethlehem? Well, the prophecies of God are always exact prophecies.

Now, no doubt all of you have heard of the Delphic oracle. The Delphic oracle was something that I read about when I studied Latin and Greek long before I was a Christian. Delphi was an ancient town in Greece, Homer called it Pytho in his epic, and the famous oracle of Apollo was to be found there on the slopes of Mount Parnassus. A shepherd one day, so tradition says, saw smoke coming from a deep crack in the rocks of the mountain, and he went over and he breathed some of the yellow vapor that was coming out of the rocks and as a result of it he became something like a man drunk with whiskey. And while he was under the influence of this vapor he said some rather amazing and strange things, as is often the case when individuals imbibe too much of the spirits. They say things that they don't really like to have repeated. In fact, when I was growing up and going through high school and college, when some of the boys had a little too much to drink they would say the next morning, "Did I say anything embarrassing last night? What did I say?" Because they didn't remember; they said strange things when they were under the influence of the corn whiskey or whatever it was. Well, that's what we used to drink back in those days.

But anyway, this individual said some very strange things, and people thought that that smoke was the breath of Apollo and that he was functioning as a prophet. And so, out of that grew the Delphic Oracle. They appointed a priestess to sit on a tripod over the crack, and they called her the Pythia. And incidentally, you find reference to that in the New Testament, in the Book of Acts. And so, after breathing the vapor she would speak of unknown things in the future. The priests listened to her and then they told the people what she meant. They had a regular tongues session going on there, in which one person would pronounce the strange words and the others would have the gift of

interpretation and would give the interpretation. And the people gave gifts of gold and jewels to the temple in order that they might get some of their questions answered.

One of the most famous of the questions that was asked was asked by King Croesus of Sardis. He was thinking about going to war with Cyrus and so he sent to the oracle to ask if he should war against Cyrus. And so the Oracle said, "If he did start a war with Cyrus, a great empire would be ruined." And so thinking, of course, that that was a prophecy that it was fine for him to do that, he made war against Cyrus and discovered that the prophet or the priestess did not mean that Cyrus' kingdom would be destroyed, but that his would be destroyed. But you see it was worded in such a way that it could be interpreted either way. That's the way human prophets prophesy.

Now, it so happens that there was another Bethlehem in the land of Palestine. There was a Bethlehem in the northern part of the land. Now, the Holy Spirit is not like a human prophet. He might have said, "If I just say Bethlehem, I at least have got two chances of this prophecy coming to pass." But instead, he said, "Bethlehem Ephratah." I don't want you to misunderstand, it's not that Bethlehem in the north, it's the Bethlehem in the south from which the Messiah or the ruler shall come. I've always liked those definite prophecies of the word of God, because they are not like our human prophecies. Only the prophets and prophetesses that are human can survive who can give their prophecies out in ambiguous terms so that they might be fulfilled in many different ways. You can last as a prophet if you are able to do that, but if you become specific then, of course, men will learn that you are neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet as Amos says that he was.

So here, "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah," that specific place, the Bethlehem in the south, the Bethlehem near Jerusalem, from that place he says, "Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me." Now, I think there is also another important point here when he says that this is the definite place from which the King is to come. He also says, "Though you are little among the

thousands of Judah." In other words, you are an insignificant little place, but out of you as an insignificant little place the Messianic ruler is to come. Now, that is very characteristic of the activity of God. He does things in ways that magnify his power. So by pointing out that Bethlehem was just a little, insignificant village, and yet from this little, insignificant village the Messianic King would come. He was drawing attention to the fact that when God performs his acts we are to glorify him and not men.

Gideon is an illustration of this, too, because the very word that is used for little here is a word the Gideon used of himself. When God appeared to Gideon and said, "Gideon, I'm going to use you to deliver the children of Israel from the Mideonites." He said, "I'm the least of the members of my family. I'm little." But God likes to take the little things, the insignificant things, the things that don't count in men's eyes and make something great of them so that we will glorify God. That's the way he does things. So not many mighty, not many noble, not many well-born are called. He does things in that way. That's a principle, and that principle is found right here.

Now, one might say, does not Matthew say something quite the opposite? Well actually, Matthew, when he cites this prophecy, does say something different. You may have remembered that when the question was asked, "Where is he that was born King of the Jews?" The scribe said, "Well, the prophecy of the Old Testament is the prophecy of Micah, and it says there that the Messiah, or the King of the Jews, is going to be born in Bethlehem." "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people, Israel." Now, the reason that Matthew has reversed that is that by the time Matthew writes his gospel, it has become evident that the Messianic King has now come from Bethlehem, and Bethlehem is now not the least among the thousands of Judah, because out of Bethlehem the Messiah has come. Bethlehem has a name now that millions and millions and millions of people revere, because of what happened there. But long before that happened, it was, as the prophet said, little among the thousands of Judah.

By the way, they asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Do you know of anyone who was born king besides the Lord Jesus? Well, don't wreck your brain trying to think of someone, because it will probably be impossible for you to do it. And that's not a trivia question either. Where is anyone born King of the Jews? Well, if a person is born king today, he's usually born something like the Prince of Wales, or the son of the Prince of Wales. Now we have a son of the Prince of Wales, and of course his name is Prince William of Wales, or his name is William Arthur Phillip Louis. Now that last name, of course, saves him. Incidentally, that means "famous warrior." I know you thought it must mean something like that, because that was my name, and of course, you thought naturally of famous warrior when you thought of me. People are not born kings; they are born princes but not born kings. The Lord Jesus, so far as I know, is about the only person. I have not inducted all of the evidence, and so I cannot say I have a perfect induction, but he is one who is born King of the Jews, because he was a King long before he was born. So, where is he that is born King of the Jews? Well, the Lord Jesus is the only person like that. We call all of these other persons princes, but he is really the King.

Now, the description that is given is very interesting, too. He says, "Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." Ruler, what is involved in "ruler"? You might think, at first glance, that all that is involved is that he is going to be a king. But that involves other things as well, for the ruler was ideally an individual who served in other way and in particular the Messianic ruler. For remember, the Messianic ruler is to be a king-priest. And further, he is the one who is going to speak the word of God. He's the one ultimately responsible for the word of God. He's responsible for the sacrifice by which individuals are saved. And he's responsible also for the rule of his kingdom. In the realm of his humanity the Lord Jesus came as a Messianic prophet to lead in the way. In fact, in Luke chapter 1 it is stated that he has come to "guide our feet." So he is the ruler who will give guidance to us. He's the Messianic priest who will feed us. In fact, in this very prophecy in the 4th verse, which we will look at next week,

we read, "And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD." So he's the Messianic priest who will feed us. And then finally, he is the Messianic King who will guard in the way. Jeremiah in chapter 30, in verse 21 of his prophecy has something that is parallel with this, because he says in verse 21 of chapter 30, speaking about the Messiah, "And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD." So he's a Messianic prophet; he's a Messianic priest; he's a Messianic King, and all of that is bound up in the fact that he is going to shepherd the flock of Israel. Now, Matthew makes that plain, "Shepherd my people, Israel."

Now, in the light of this, what do you think about people who talk about "Dear Jesus, My Jesus"? Well, I think they don't have an adequate understanding of the person of our Lord. I remember some comments that were made by Horton Davies in a book entitled *Varieties of English Preaching*. And in it, he referred to one of the English preachers, who was an evangelical, who commenting on the Lord Jesus Christ around Christmas time was making some statements about the magi and the Christ child, and then he continued by saying, "I don't mean in the least to be irreverent," and I don't think he did. I know this man, he was a Christian man. "But did no one give him a soft, woolly, cuddly toy, the ancient equivalent of a teddy bear? Did no one give the Lord Jesus a rattle? Did no one treat him as a little baby thing?" Why, we don't have any of that in the New Testament, of course. And R.W. Dale, speaking in the same context, said in a rebuke, he said that "We are not to forget that Christ is King, and that he is not to be fondled but to be revered." And it's my opinion that that's how we should think of the Lord Jesus, too. It's possible somebody did give him a teddy bear, but the Bible is absolutely silent on that point. The Bible lays stress upon the fact that he is the majestic Messianic King. And while it is true he possessed a true human nature, nevertheless even

then he was a divine person. And I think it is proper for us not to think so much of fondling him as a little baby, but reverencing him as the Prophet, the Priest, and King.

Now, the last words, I have just a minute, remind me of Paul's statement, "Great is the mystery of Godliness," we read, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Now he says, "Out of you, Bethlehem, shall he come forth unto me." The Hebrew word that is used there is the Hebrew word *mowtsa'ah*, which means, it means something like "to go forth or come forth." It's a very common Old Testament Hebrew word, used often. Now, when he says, "Out of thee shall he come forth unto me," he's laying great stress upon the fact that the Messianic King, when he comes, will be related to the Davidic dynasty and also to the covenant that God made with David. So laying back of that is that. And in fact, the royal house of David is reduced here to its root. "Out of thee, Bethlehem," the Davidic covenant, "shall he come forth unto me." He will be a true son of David. But then he adds, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Now, the word translated "goings forth" is a noun derived from the same verb that is rendered "come forth." It's almost like "Out of thee shall he come forth unto me" in one historic moment, but he actually has been coming forth frequently in the intervening times, plural. "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Now, I wish that there were no debate among the commentators over the meaning of this expression. If this "from everlasting" does not mean "from everlasting" but simple "from ancient times," and usage tends to that view. Then he's saying, "From ancient times," that is from the times of David, "his goings forth have been from of old." In other words, since David's day we've looked back to David and the royal lineage and the royal blood, and as each of the men from David's line came forth, one thought this may be the Messianic King, so "Out of thee shall he come forth unto me, but his goings forth have been from David's time." And David's time was an olden time from the time of Micah, being several hundred years earlier than Micah's time. Many of the modern commentators feel that's all that is referred to here. On the other hand, it's possible that this expression

is an expression of eternity. In other words, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." A reference made, not so much now to his humanity, "Out of thee, Bethlehem" his humanity, "shall he come, but his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." He is not only a person who possesses true humanity; he also possesses full deity, and is the divine person.

Now, if that is the meaning, "Whose goings forth have been from of old." Then he refers to the work of the second person of the trinity before his incarnation. The work of creation, the work of fellowship with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the theophanies of the Old Testament, the appearances to Adam, the appearances to Hagar, the appearances to Abraham, the appearances to Jacob, the appearances to Joshua, the appearances to Gideon, the appearances in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, and the other of the Old Testament events in which the Messianic King, before his incarnation, appeared to men to carry out certain aspects of his ministry; to prepare them for the incarnation. It's difficult to know exactly what is meant. I would like to say this, however, if the primary reference is simply to the time of David, nevertheless even then David stands as a type of the Messianic King, and one looks on beyond David to the one of whom he is a type, to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so in a sense, the teaching is still, then, found in this text, but it is typical rather than directly Messianic and predictive. Well, you can see from this then that the Messianic King that Micah speaks about is going to be a great King. He's not going to be like Hezekiah cooped up in a city, like a bird in a cage, but he is the person who rules all of the affairs of our life.

Sir Bernard Lovell once spoke to the Scottish general assembly of the Church of Scotland, and when he sat down Principal Burley, who was Principal of New College when I was over in Edinburgh twenty or so years ago. Principal Burley got up after Sir Bernard Lovell, the famous astronomer, had given his message talking about the starry skies and the great wonders of God as a creator, and talking particularly about astronomy and what the astronomers were able to do. Did you all go out to look at the eclipse last

night? I went out at 12:30; I went out at 1:30; I went out at 2:00; I went out at 3:00. They don't really know what's happening in this universe. I went out there, there was no eclipse, I couldn't even see the moon. [Laughter] Well anyway, Sir Bernard Lovell gave his great talk, and Principal Burley got up afterwards and he said, "We'd like to thank you, Sir Bernard, for this wonderful talk that you have given in which you've reminded us again of the immensities of the astronomers, but we would like for you to remember this, that our God rules over all your worlds." Well, that's the one who came from Bethlehem so many hundreds of years ago. Let's close in a word of Prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this magnificent prophecy. We thank Thee for the greatness of the Son of God. We thank Thee that he will shepherd his people, Israel. And we thank Thee that he has become our Good Shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep, the great Shepherd who perfects the...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]