

The Prince of Judah, from Bethlehem

Micah 5:2-3, Advent Evening III

December 19, 2007

Beloved of the Lord...Verse two of *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*, goes well with our text for this evening. It says, "Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ the EVERLASTING Lord, Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb, VEILED IN FLESH THE GODHEAD SEE, Hail the incarnate Deity! Pleased as Man with man to dwell; Jesus our Immanuel! Hark the herald angels sing, Glory to the new-born King!" Truly Christ the Everlasting Lord, was veiled in the flesh.....all His glory, all His power, all His beauty was hidden, as our newborn King lay there in the manger! His birth was indeed humble, lowly. Bethlehem itself is a lowly town or village, which no one would expect greatness from. Yet there in the manger, at Bethlehem Ephratah lay the Prince of Judah, the Everlasting Lord, whose goings forth have been of old!

I. His humble birth and origin. The prophet Micah describes first of all, the humble birth and origin of this Prince. "And thou Bethlehem, Ephratah"...In the history of the world, we often find great men who work their way up from lowly and humble beginnings. Often the town where they were born likewise becomes famous. The small town of Eisleben became famous because Luther was born there. So, but in a much greater fashion was Bethlehem, surnamed 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." Among the thousands of the families of Judah, Bethlehem was unknown until a certain shepherd boy from Bethlehem became king, King David. Yet even then Bethlehem remained relatively despised or unimportant. It always stood in the shadow of famous Jerusalem.

The Prince of Judah was not born in Jerusalem, but Bethlehem. In this way God indicated that His Holy and Most High Son would enter into the world with all lowliness, much like David. Bethlehem then symbolizes humility, lowliness, humble beginnings. In this way, our Prince of Judah teaches that all the wealth, glory, and riches of this world are of no importance to God, nor His children who trust in Him. This world's riches carry no weight in God's kingdom, for we are content to be rich in His grace.

His grace is sufficient for us.

This humble origin of Christ is also indicated in verse three. "Therefore will he give them up, until the time *that* she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." The prophet Micah here warns his own people there was misery and suffering to come. For Micah's audience, the people of Judah, by and large, had fallen into idolatry. The earthly princes of Judah would not repent of their sins, nor listen to the voice of the prophets. They coveted people's houses, people's wives. They wanted everything their neighbor had, and even when they had that, it was not enough. The people under the princes were no better. They prayed thoughtlessly to idols, did not mourn or feel bad about their sins, but continued in them. The travail or labor pains a woman experiences giving birth then symbolizes God's punishment which would soon come. As Micah forewarned, the Babylonians came and made the people of Judah slaves in a foreign land. When they returned it wasn't long before the Romans ruled over them. Shiloh would come when the sceptre departed from Israel. Micah prophesied that when Mary would give birth to the Prince of Judah, a remnant of the people would return to their brother to find peace. To this day the remnant, the Church, finds relief, in the birth of Christ Jesus. "The sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared to the glories which await us."

That's the way it is in God's kingdom of grace. Outwardly we suffer every sort of hardship, poverty, loneliness, despair, strong temptations, but inwardly, spiritually, we find peace with Jesus. Being born in Bethlehem Ephratah, the man Jesus was despised and looked down upon. Nazareth was even more despised than Bethlehem. Jesus said, "The foxes have holds, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head." Though He was their Prince, the Jews nailed him to the cross. If we desire His salvation, we must put up with and endure His disgrace, His lowliness. We know it leads to glory. By faith we begin in lowly Bethlehem. By faith we ascend into heavenly Jerusalem.

II. His divine majesty, hidden behind humility. And so we dare not be ashamed of this "lowly" Jesus of Nazareth. For though His birth and origin were indeed humble, lowly, His "goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting." Consider now that

when the baby Jesus was born, when His tiny little infant foot set foot upon the earth, God Almighty, had set His feet upon dry ground! Immanuel means "God with us!" And you could see God with your eyes, you could hear Him cry as a little child. Yet only those with faith were able to see and behold God, in the baby Jesus. The Savior of all flesh had come! Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and later the Wise men, were given the great honor of seeing their Lord with their own eyes, yet God was wrapped and cloaked, veiled, in true flesh and blood! What must it have been like? What was it to behold this *Seed of the Woman*, this *Shiloh*, this *I AM THAT I AM*, this *Prince of Judah*, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"?

This verse then, like many others, proves beyond all doubt the eternal and everlasting deity of Christ Jesus, the Lord! This verse teaches us that Jesus is from everlasting into the past! His person, He existed forever into the past, with no beginning. And if He is everlasting into the past, He is also everlasting into the future. And so this baby Jesus which lay before them was eternal with no beginning, no end, no set or confined existence in time, yea He was far above time, yea Jesus was there when God created Time itself. We who live in time, mark time by the rising and setting of the sun. Yet Jesus is "of old" "from everlasting. He created the sun Himself, and to those who trust in Him Jesus is called the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings! "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." There is healing in the wings of Christ, a perfect and complete cure for our disease of sin, which exists both in our body and in our soul. For in the body and in the soul of Christ, there was no sin, but only sinlessness. And Jesus gave both body and soul, holy body, holy soul, into death, as a clean and pure and holy sacrifice for all sin, our sins. If we only believe and trust in the power of His cleansing blood, there is no spot nor stain which will not be removed. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." By faith we are justified, made clean and righteous in God's sight. Jesus said, "Ye are clean through the Word, which I have spoken to you!"

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Now if the Word was made flesh, it was not flesh before, but existed before. And since in the beginning the Word was with God and the Word was

God, this Word Christ IS GOD! Jesus Himself testified to the Jews and said, "Before Abraham was, I AM", hence I AM Jehovah, I AM Yahweh, I AM He which spoke to Moses from the burning bush! I AM THAT I AM! Yet this great I AM, this eternal Christ of the Scriptures, in the fulness of time, was "made of a woman, made under the law." He cloaked and hid His divine majesty with Mary's womb, then as an infant, a child, a man, and on the cross. Few could see, few could understand that this was God incarnate in the flesh! As a Man, He fulfilled the law for all men, being made of a woman. And since He is eternal God, His singular righteous and holy life is freely given as a gift to all men. The Gospel offers to all men this wonderful gift of salvation! But it is to be received by faith. And so the apostle John writes as he witnessed, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name." You then, become sons of God, by faith alone in Christ Jesus, the eternal Word, who was made flesh for your sake!

Oh if only we could have been there that first and holy silent night! If only we could have gazed upon and looked into the eyes of the Child, the soft and lovely eyes of God's own Son. In Jesus, God Almighty lay in manger, veiled in the flesh! But it is enough for us now, to hear and believe His Word. It is enough for us now to rejoice and celebrate His birth. Therefore let us worship and adore Him as the angels and saints in heaven do daily. In His Word to I hope!

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the eternal Word, from everlasting to everlasting, whose goings forth have been of old. May His humble birth, humble us. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. Amen.