Micah 5:2-5 “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.” **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. **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; **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.

We’re in the book of Micah tonight. Micah – meaning Who Is Like God – is one of the minor prophets. He prophesied during the same time as Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. From about 737 BC until 696 BC, Micah would have seen the impending attack of the Assyrians. Many of his prophecies were rebukes for idolatry and worshipping other gods. He prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem about 150 years before it happened. But his greatest prophecy was the birthplace of Jesus Christ – Bethelehem – more than 700 years before Jesus was born. As we start the holiday season and look forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, we remember the manger and we recall the town – Bethlehem, little town, lying still, as the greatest event to ever happen – happens just as Micah described.

Looking at 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.” Luke 2:4 verifies that Jesus was born in Bethlehem - Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David. In Luke 2:6, we read - So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.

Bethlehem – meaning house of Bread - has a rich history. Rachel, Jacobs beloved wife, died and was buried in Bethlehem. Ruth and Boaz lived there. King David was anointed there. Even now, population is less than 3000 people. In the time of Jesus, it was much smaller. So, this town that had so many sacred things happen in it and was held in high esteem by the Jews, was to host the birth of the Savior.

In verse 2 - Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting. John 1:1 says - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:14 says And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Jesus, the Word, was with God from the beginning and became flesh and dwelt among us. He was with God and He was God.

Verse 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. Referring to the enemies of His people, God will give them up to their idolatry and sinfulness. He’ll allow Assyria, Babylon, Medes, Greece, and the Romans to rule. They wanted to be shut of God and He is allowing it. This will be to punish and bring them into humility. He will stay silent, and indeed we know that God was silent for more than 400 years, with no word from the prophets, until the time of Christ.

Even today, God allows those who want to walk away from Him to walk away. He does not force anyone to believe. Through Christ, He offers, but Jew and Gentile alike must choose to believe. We see America and the world rejecting God and He is allowing it. In the end, there will be only a few who walk the narrow way. Many are called, but few are chosen. Everyone is welcome, but few enter in.

Verse 4 **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. Christ is seen as the good shepherd here. John 10:14 says I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. The Hebrew words used for stand and feed have the idea of a King ruling over His flock. The picture here isn’t that of a dirty tattered shepherd boy, but a mighty King. Christ walked a sinless life while here depending on the strength of the Lord. He preached, taught, and performed miracles in the name of the Lord. Jesus makes it clear that we are to abide in Him – John 15:4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. Finally, Micah says - For now He shall be great To the ends of the earth. Luke 1:32-33 bears this prophecy out - 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. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” These same verses confirm verse 2 and Christ being the One Ruler of Israel.

Verse 5 - **5**And this *One* shall be peace. Isaiah 9:6 calls Jesus the Prince of Peace. We know, when we are fully in Christ, we have a sense of Peace that passes all understanding.

The verse continues - 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. We know that the Assyrians tried to invade in 701 BC. 2 Chronicles 32:20 confirms that God answered the prayers of Hezekiah and sent an angel that killed all the mighty men of Assyria and stopped the attack. It was only through the Grace of God that the attack failed and Assyria was turned back. There is a strong suggestion in history that the seven shepherds and eight princely men referred to the Medes and the Babylonians who would later overthrow Assyria.

As we approach this time of the holidays, it’s tempting to think of the presents or the food, the family or the trips. It’s tempting to get distracted by the events and gatherings. Let’s remind ourselves of the Truth that is this season. We celebrate a Savior, foretold and confirmed. We celebrate the Promise to come based on the Promise kept in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. Our trust is not blind, but rooted in Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in New Testament times.

We praise God for the promises, but we also remember our priorities. He won’t come again as nursing Baby or suffering Servant. He will come as Matthew 24 tells - Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. He will come again as Lord of lords and King of kings – every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord of all.