

## **Christ Reigns in the Midst of His Enemies**

Micah 5:1-6; Psalm 110:1-2

July 25, 1999

Rev. Greg L. Price

Our Lord taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” For what do we pray when we plead with the Lord that He would hasten His kingdom? Question 102 of the Shorter Catechism asks, “What do we pray for in the second petition?” It answers, “In the second petition, (which is, ‘Thy kingdom come’), we pray, That Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.” You see, dear ones, Christ’s kingdom is not merely a future kingdom that will be manifested when He returns to judge the world and establish His eternal kingdom. Christ’s kingdom is manifested in history every day as He sets up His rule in the lives of poor helpless sinners who have been rescued from the kingdom of Satan through faith in Christ alone. Christ’s kingdom is moving forward in our lives every day as the Lord marches us into enemy territory to undergo trials so as to subdue this or that sin and to replace it with the grace of patience, faith, contentment, or thanksgiving. And what Christ is doing in the individual life of those who are more than conquerors through Him, He is likewise doing in His people collectively (whether Israel in the Old Testament or His church in the New Testament).

Dear ones, there is no doubt or uncertainty that Christ shall be victorious (Philippians 2:9-11). What the Spirit of God would have you know today is that Christ is already victorious and He rules even in the midst of His enemies (Psalm 110:1-2—the Lord will from His throne in heaven send forth His power to rule through His Church even though His people are besieged all around by enemies). Dear people of God, the Lord would have you know that the presence of sin, the presence of trial, the presence of death, the presence of divisions in families and in the church is no evidence that He does not reign supremely over all, for He has already told us that this aspect of His reign would be exercised in the presence of many enemies. But He will deliver us out of them all, whether immediately or by degrees, whether in this life or in death, whether miraculously or by ordinary means—we shall overcome by the power of His gracious kingdom (Philippians 4:10-13).

This Lord’s Day we shall consider the Word of the Lord as found in Micah 5:1-6. The main points are as follows: (1) The Captivity of Israel; (2) The Deliverer of Israel; and (3) The Victory of Israel.

### **I. The Captivity of Israel (Micah 5:1).**

A. The Lord having prepared His people Israel for the travail that was shortly to come upon them in Micah 4:9-11, continues that same theme in Micah 5:1. “Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops” appears to be a call for Israel and Judah to prepare itself against invading Assyrian and Babylonian troops that would besiege Samaria and Jerusalem. The northern kingdom of Israel was in fact led into Assyrian captivity in 732 B.C., while the southern kingdom of Judah was led into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. Why? Were not Israel and Judah God’s people? The Lord gives us the reason in 2 Chronicles 36:11-17. We, too, may expect that we as individuals or as a church will know even the severity of God’s loving discipline in our lives when our ears grow dull at the hearing of God’s Word, or apathy in the worship of the Lord, or unthankfulness for the ordinances of the Lord.

B. Israel’s king has been captured and humiliated by the Babylonians. The temple of the Lord has been burned and destroyed. The city of Zion now lies in desolation. The strong walls that once protected them from their enemies have been broken down and friend or foe alike has equal access into Zion (Lamentations 2:6-11). If there was just cause to weep for the desolation of Jerusalem of old, how much more for the desolation of spiritual Jerusalem?

C. Therefore, the judge or king of Israel was smitten upon the cheek which was an expression of utmost humiliation for a king. Zedekiah was smitten and humiliated, and if the king was so treated with contempt then all of the people themselves would likewise be so treated. How appropriate was the judgment given to Zedekiah, king of Judah. He had closed his eyes to the spiritual light given by the Lord through faithful prophets declaring to Him the will of God, so God took away from him all physical light as well.

## II. The Deliverer of Israel (Micah 5:2).

A. Do you see how God in the midst of such predictions of suffering does not leave His people without a promise to which to cling? Even when it seems as though circumstances couldn't get much worse and when we feel at our lowest point of discouragement, God sends forth His promise to comfort our hearts and to give us a certain hope of deliverance through Christ (some of my favorite promises to which I cling in the midst of trials that come my way are Isaiah 26:3,4; Isaiah 40:28-31; Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 11:28-29; 1Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:13).

B. Likewise in Micah 5:2, the Lord gives to his people a promise of a coming Ruler who will prevail over all their enemies and whose kingdom will never end. God removes Israel's king, but promises to them the King of kings. What the Lord takes away even in His fatherly anger and displeasure with us, He always replaces with that which is far more precious and enduring.

C. The King of kings would not be born in the royal city of Jerusalem, but in the humble, inconspicuous town of Bethlehem. Like David of old who arose from such a humble, lowly station in life as a common shepherd to become the king of Israel, so the Lord Jesus Christ would not come to earth with all the pomp and circumstance of an earthly king. His birth was not proclaimed in the palace of Herod, but by the angels of heaven to lowly shepherds feeding their flocks. His kingdom was not to have its origin or authority from the kings and kingdoms of this world, but rather from God who reigns in heaven above. Dear ones, the Lord would encourage you not to look upon yourself as having no significant service in God's kingdom due to your lowly station in life (Psalm 113:7-9). You may look in your hands and find only one talent to be used for the Lord, but use it to glorify Him and He will multiply it. Let us not show contempt for the Lord by belittling even the one talent He has given us and rather than using it for the benefit of the Lord and others, hide it. Such a servant will have even that one talent taken from him and given to one who is thankful to have talents to be used for Christ and is using them. The Lord has said, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10). Don't despise the day of small or inconspicuous things. Even the faith of a mustard seed is able by God's grace to move mountains.

D. This one who is to rule Israel is not a mere human being, but His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Here we have in this one verse a description of both the humanity and deity of the Lord Jesus Christ—He would be born in Bethlehem, but yet He is from eternity (Isaiah 9:6-7). He who is from eternity cannot be a created being, but must be the everlasting God the creator of all things (John 1:1-3). And yet when Christ declared himself to be the Great I AM of the Old Testament, the Jews took up stones to kill Him for blasphemy (John 8:58). A prophecy so clear was not believed by the greater part of the Jews who heard the gospel of Christ and saw the miracles He performed. They looked for a king who would first conquer all their political enemies rather than a king who would first conquer their greater enemies, namely the spiritual enemies of their soul. He came riding on a lowly donkey, but they wanted a king who would ride upon a conquering white stallion. What a deadly sin is unbelief. It calls God a liar (Psalm 78:19,22,41).

E. Here is a King who is invested with such power that it is impossible for Him not to prevail over all His and our enemies. If He prevailed over all sickness by healing all who came to Him, if He prevailed over Satan and demons by resisting the temptations of Satan and casting of demons, if He prevailed over the

rejection of loved ones by finding His approval not in men but in His Father in heaven, if He prevailed over hunger by multiplying the few fish and the scraps of bread to feed thousands, if He prevailed over the fury of the tempestuous storm by merely calling to the winds and the waves to be still, if He prevailed over the anguish of death by raising the poor widow's only son, then dear ones, how much more He has prevailed over sin, temptation, besetting sins, the sting of death, and the condemning wrath of God for all those who come unto Him with empty hands and embrace Him alone for their eternal salvation. Christ is the Lord Jehovah and nothing is impossible to Him. How big is your God? You can often hear how great a person believes His God to be by what He brings to the Lord by way of requests (not selfish, self-centered requests, but requests that call upon God to show forth His might and power in displaying His grace and His justice).

F. Finally, how this fulfillment of prophecy (some 700 years afterward it was made in regard to the birth of the Lord at Bethlehem) ought to build our faith and confidence that the Scriptures alone are the inspired and infallible Word of God. The almighty God who created all things speaks to us in the Bible.

### **III. The Victory of Israel (Micah 5:3-6).**

A. When will the King of kings bring this promised salvation and victory to Israel? According to Micah 5:3: "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." Therefore, because their King (though going forth from eternity) would be born in Bethlehem, He would give His people up to distress and trouble until the virgin should travail and give birth to their King. At that time, the King would bring in His promised salvation and not only unite the remnant of His brethren of Judah and Israel to Himself, but would even stand and feed as the Good Shepherd all those nations even unto the ends of the earth (Micah 5:4). This is the remnant (or lesser part) of Israel and Judah who are spoken of by Paul in Romans 11:5. Here we have a preview of the gospel of salvation going forth not only to Israel, but also to the Gentiles throughout the whole world.

B. How will the King of kings shepherd His sheep and feed them? Through faithful shepherds (Acts 20:28-31). Faithful shepherds lead the flock by their word and example into green pastures and beside the still waters. They don't drive them or beat them. They don't burden them with mere traditions of men to keep (as did the Pharisees whom Jesus likened to a stranger or hireling who flee at the first sign of trouble). Faithful shepherds pray that they might decrease (in their own estimation) in order that Christ might increase. Faithful shepherds know the voice of the Lord and they follow Him wherever He leads by His will. Faithful shepherds (like Christ) will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. The rod and staff of faithful shepherds should be a comfort, for they not only warn and defend the sheep against that which is dangerous to their souls, but also they use the staff when necessary to lovingly discipline when they go astray (1Corinthians 4:21). How we should continually cry out to God that He would send His Church faithful shepherds to feed His flock (Matthew 9:36-38)!

C. But notice in Micah 5:5-6 that Christ reigns in the midst of His enemies. He doesn't immediately destroy His enemies, but rather places His people in the very midst of their enemies in order to demonstrate His power to save and deliver them out of the snares, plots, and designs of their enemies. Although the Lord did indeed deliver Judah from the Assyrians when they came to destroy Jerusalem, yet this historical event takes on a much more broad application for God's people throughout history. For you see, the Assyrians never trampled the palaces of Jerusalem before they were destroyed by the Lord. Thus, this verse would seem to refer to a coming after the prophecy of Christ's birth and the gospel being taken to the Jews and. "Assyrian" then becomes another word for enemy. The King of kings would be the One who would bring peace to His people (by His death and resurrection), and when the enemy treads in the palaces (or courts) of the city of

Zion (His Church), then He would raise up seven shepherds (i.e. ministers) and eight principal men (i.e. magistrates) to drive the enemy from the palaces (or courts) of His Church. Here the Lord promises that He would not allow His Church to be destroyed. Although many false teachers may arise within her and trample upon the divine right of doctrine, worship, and church government, yet the Lord would send faithful pastors and faithful magistrates to defend and protect His Church. She may be trampled into the ground, and yet from the dust, yea from the grave, shall Christ raise up His faithful witnesses to stir up the hearts of God's people to war against the enemy until he is destroyed (Revelation 11 and the two witnesses).

D. But you ask, why does it appear that Christ is not reigning victoriously presently and that rather the enemy seems to be victorious?

1. The ways of the Lord are not always to manifest victory by a conspicuous defeat of the enemy for all to see. Many times we are victorious over our enemies through suffering. For through suffering, through temptations, through besetting sins, through financial losses, through chronic illnesses, God's grace is shown to be greater than our sin and greater than our weaknesses. The grace of God prevails through us and Christ is manifested to conquer His enemies through such weak vessels like you and me.

2. Victory does not come all at once, but most often comes slowly (almost imperceptibly) by degrees. That is why very often you may not be the most objective person to judge your own spiritual growth (any more than you can judge your physical growth). By fighting long and hard against our sins and against various false teachings, we will not forget what cruel enemies they really are and how we cry out to God to keep us from coming under their power.

3. Remember that God is preparing us to enjoy His victory when we suffer under the scourge of our enemies. If we would reign with Christ, we must first suffer with Christ.

4. When we fall before some enemy of our soul (whether it be pride, or lust, or unbelief, or disloyalty to Christ, or anger), the fall is not the end that Christ the King has in view. We fall so as to grow in our steadfast resolve to avoid that trap or snare next time. We fall as to learn the subtle and crafty schemes of the enemy so that we can also help others to avoid them and to overcome the enemy. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

5. Many times the Lord allows the enemy to temporarily prevail over us so as to demonstrate more gloriously His power when He subdues the enemy for all to see (e.g. God raised up Pharaoh to show forth His power and even the Canaanites knew of God's power and Pharaoh's fall as evidenced by the testimony of Rahab).

E. Finally, how may we be assured that Christ has established His rule in our hearts even in the midst of our enemies (the world, the flesh, and the devil)?

1. When we acknowledge our sins and weaknesses, and cast ourselves upon the mercy of Christ. When we are so weak and helpless and seem so overcome by a sinful passion or when we feel so apathetic to the things of God and we do not even know how to pray, yet we put ourselves in the way of God's mercy like blind Bartimeaus and simply lie at the threshold of His throne of mercy and grace, and cry out, "Christ be merciful to me a sinner."

2. When we struggle against the enemy. Although we may fall, do we struggle, do we fight, and do we resist (Romans 7)? There may be weakness where there is yet the kingdom of Christ reigning.

3. When we hate these enemies of our soul. Do we despise the very temptations to do evil? Or, do we rather love and embrace the wicked desires and temptation with all of our heart?

4. When we long to be forever set free from the enemies of our soul and from all temptation to follow the desires of the flesh. Do you earnestly long to be glorified with the Lord in heaven that you may forever be set free from the world, the flesh, and the devil?

(5) When we are willing to suffer the scorn and ridicule of men in order to receive the

approval of Christ. When His truth and His love mean more to us than life itself.

Copyright 1999.