

See Christ in the Old Testament: From Hosea to Micah

LHC: Message Twenty-Three (970212WE)

Week 23: See Christ in the Old Testament

(From Hosea—Micah)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope as you see Christ in the Old Testament—from Hosea to Micah!¹

SUNDAY: Hosea Says to Worship Our God of Faithfulness

*Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just **like the love of the LORD** for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans.”*

—Hosea 3:1, emphasis added

Some contemporaries during the time Hosea (753–715 B.C.) prophesied were Jonah (793–753 B.C.), Amos (760–750 B.C.), Micah (742–687 B.C.), and Isaiah (740–681 B.C.). In all twelve minor prophetic books, from Hosea to Malachi, Christ is our “Promised Son of God.” Each prophet declares that **God is in control**. Indeed, they do more than merely declare it; the sovereign hand of God is visible everywhere. Overspreading the words of these twelve writers is the reality that God is the Sovereign Lord of History. They affirm that nothing happens, either to Israel or to the Gentile nations, that is not the result of His direct determination. The destruction by locusts, in Joel, was God’s doing. Nineveh’s ups (revival with Jonah) and downs (complete destruction in Nahum) were sent from the Lord. When Assyria decimated Israel, and Babylon wiped out Judah, it was God who did it. Any doubts over the precise purpose of God’s actions evaporated the moment they remembered that almighty God was in control.

All the Minor Prophets declare that **God is holy**. It was their comprehension of His utter holiness that was the impetus for their scathing indictments of sin. Wherever sin was found among God’s people or in foreign lands (Edom, as in Obadiah; Assyria, as in Nahum), it was still an affront to the Lord and had to be dealt with. As nowhere else in the Scriptures, sin is denounced and repentance is ardently and earnestly demanded. These prophets declared that without genuine repentance, the judgment of God is inescapable.

The twelve declared that **God is lovingly just**. His love and justice often appears harsh to some, which simply reveals a basic misunderstanding of the perfections of our Lord. The great love of God for His people (even His love for Nineveh) caused Him to send messengers to warn of coming judgment. At the appointed time, if there was no genuine repentance, judgment fell. Sin is always an affront to God; it always destroys and is always judged. But for His own, the purpose of judgment is to

turn the wayward from sin to their rightful Master. These truths must be emphasized as much today as they were 2,800 years ago. Individuals are still sinning and running away from God, just as Israel did. Nations are still offending the righteousness of a holy God, just as Israel did. But, as always, God will restore those who come to Him.

Hosea himself had a life of grief. His only beloved wife, Gomer, was persistently unfaithful to their marriage. This sorrow gave Hosea a unique perspective to speak about the parallel unfaithfulness of Israel for their Lord. The compassionate heart of God, with no diminishing of His holy standard, is seen in the book of Hosea, which paints a powerful portrait of the coming revelation of the love and holiness of God perfectly revealed in Christ. There is moral and spiritual bankruptcy in the nation; sin is unashamedly practiced, and God is abandoned. Worship of the true and living God is replaced by false and lifeless idols. Hosea depicts the inward decay of a collapsing nation. Ultimately, in 722 B.C., Assyria captured and deported the people of the northern kingdom to the area we would now call modern-day Iraq.

Hope helps us to clearly see God's faithfulness in Hosea. We can learn valuable lessons from how God related to His people, and how they responded. For instance, God faithfully warned His people, but Israel forgot their Maker (8:14). However, He never forgot them; rather, God wanted them to remember Him all through their lives. This teaches the value of listening to God. Because Israel faithlessly lived apart from God by their deeds (Hosea 7:2), we are reminded of the importance of following the Lord. Because Israel faithlessly neglected God's Word and stumbled into sin (4:5; 5:5), but didn't even know it (7:8–9) because she became satisfied and forgot God (8:14; 13:6), we are cautioned to not neglect feeding upon His Word.

Israel faithlessly compromised God's plan by mixing with the nations (7:8), which caused them to wander and rebel (7:13). This ultimately led to their going astray by a spirit of harlotry (4:12; 5:4). Yielding to the enticement of "a little compromise" usually leads to full-blown rebellion. We need to obey the Lord.

God faithfully disciplined His disobedient children when they stumbled into sin (4:1; 5:2). He had to chastise them because they transgressed His covenant (6:6–7; 8:1; 13:4). This is true of nations and people alike, and repentance is the only wise choice of action. Hosea thus urged Israel to acknowledge their guilt (5:15), return to the Lord (6:1), know Him (6:3), and wait for Him (12:6).

With that in mind, we should respond daily to God's Word, and never put off obedience until it is more convenient. Listen to God faithfully, follow Him, feed upon His Word, and then respond in loving obedience. If you do, He will bless you for it!

My Prayer for You This Week: *Thank You, dear Lord, for the privilege of looking at many individual books, and just lightly touching on them, but seeing You, Lord Jesus, operative in each one, guiding, guarding, blessing, and judging those who would not listen. We want to be blessed and we want Your protection because we want to obey You with all our heart. With our whole heart, may we seek You. Oh, let us not wander from Your commandments! We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

MONDAY: Joel Says to Worship Our God of Wrath

*Alas for the day! For **the day of the LORD is at hand**; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty.*

—Joel 1:15, emphasis added

Joel (835–796 B.C.) was a contemporary prophet with both Elisha (848–797 B.C.) and Jonah (793–753 B.C.). The book of Joel tells of a great plague of insects that came upon the land of Judah as God’s judgment against sin. In the law, God had promised material prosperity to His people for obedience, and adversity for disobedience. The period described in the opening prophecy was one of famine and suffering because an enormous hoard of insects had eaten much of the vegetation. The distress in Judah because of this judgment is seen as a foreshadowing of greater distress in a coming day of greater judgment. That yet-future period is described as “the day of Jehovah,” which may be considered as the theme of the book. “The day of Jehovah” is the time of God’s judgment on the earth in connection with the Second Coming of Christ.

A simple, basic overview of the book of Joel is as follows:

- **Chapter 1—God Seeks Repentance.** Joel was commissioned to declare the lesson needing to be learned from the locust plague. So often the scientific explanation neatly blinds the eyes of people to God’s hand behind the scenes—His ultimate goal being the repentance of His people, which always refers to a “turn about.”
- **Chapter 2—God Gives Revelation.** God alone knows and writes the future in advance. That is one of the exclusive features of the Bible that has set it apart from all other religious books on earth.
- **Chapter 3—God Plans Restoration.** Verses 1–17 are a portrait of universal judgment, moral declension, and physical disaster. Verses 18–21 are a picture of the eternal age—millennial blessing following the judgment of the day of the Lord, and the land, freed from wickedness, is again blessed of God.

Three Benefits of an Eschatological Study: *Eschatological* means “related to the end of the world or the events associated with it.”

1. **Eschatology points us to Christlike living:** *I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” . . . And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (Revelation 19:10; 1 John 3:3).*
2. **Eschatology produces hopeful living in us:** *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).*
3. **Eschatology promotes confident living in us:** *Abide in Him; that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at his coming. [For] we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has*

given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life (1 John 2:28; 5:19–20).

The Lord wants to use disasters and tragedies, such as the locust plague in Joel, to refocus hearts upon Him. As someone once said, “God whispers to us in our joys, but shouts to us in our sorrows.” Is there anything in particular in your life today where God is “shouting” to get your attention? In the Scriptures, repentance and forgiveness are always tightly bound together. It is as simple as this: if we repent, we will be forgiven; if we do not repent, we can’t be forgiven.

TUESDAY: Amos Says to Worship Our God of Justice

But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream.

—Amos 5:24, emphasis added

Some contemporaries with the prophet Amos (760–750 B.C.) were Jonah (793–753 B.C.) and Hosea (753–715 B.C.). Amos prophesied during a period of national optimism in Israel. Business was booming and boundaries were bulging. But below the surface, greed and injustice were festering. Hypocritical religious motions had replaced true worship, creating a false sense of security and a growing callousness to God’s disciplining hand. Neither famine, drought, plagues, death, nor destruction was forcing the people to their knees. As Amos (the farmer who became a prophet) visualized the nearness of God’s judgment, he unflinchingly lashed out at sin in an effort to mobilize the nation to repentance. The nation, like a basket of rotting fruit, stood ripe for judgment because of its hypocrisy and spiritual indifference.

The name *Amos* is derived from the Hebrew root *amas*, which means “to lift a burden, to carry.” Thus, his name means “Burden” or “Burden-Bearer.” And he lived up to the meaning of his name by bearing up under his divinely given burden of declaring judgment to rebellious Israel.

Amos ministered after the time of Obadiah, Joel, and Jonah—and just before Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah. At this time, Uzziah reigned over a prosperous and militarily successful Judah. He fortified Jerusalem and subdued the Philistines, the Ammonites, and the Edomites. In the north, Israel was ruled by the capable King Jeroboam II. Economic and military circumstances were almost ideal, but prosperity only increased the materialism, immorality, and injustice of the people (2:6–8; 3:10; 4:1; 5:10–12; 8:4–6). During this time period, Assyria, Babylon, Aram, and Egypt were relatively weak. Thus, the people of Israel found it hard to imagine the coming disaster predicted by Amos. However, it was only three decades until the downfall of Israel.

In Amos 1:1–2:16, God explains why He judged the various nations:

- **Damascus** (1:3–5) was judged for **cruelty** (sledges of torture—human rights violations).
- **Gaza** (1:6–8) was judged for **slavery** (slave trafficking—selling people for money).

- **Tyre** (1:9–10) was judged for **dishonesty** (severing a treaty—breaking promises).
- **Edom** (1:11–12) was judged for **vengefulness** (sword of terror—hated her brother).
- **Ammon** (1:13–15) was judged for **violence** (sadistic triumph—cruelty to defenseless).
- **Moab** (2:1–3) was judged for **disrespectfulness** (spoiling tombs—spiteful to the dead).
- **Judah** (2:4–5) was judged for **disobedience** (spurning the Torah—unfaithful to God).
- **Israel** (2:6–16) was judged for **hard-heartedness** (social transgressions—greed-prompted indifference).

In Amos 3:1–6:14 God explains the purpose of the judgment, 7:1–9:10 pictures the judgment, and 9:11–15 predicts the yet-future restoration of Israel and its prosperity. Seven practical lessons can be learned from understanding God’s judgment in this prophecy:

1. God patiently gives the nations time to repent before judgment falls. **The lesson:** Be careful to heed God’s warnings in your own life.
2. God is no respecter of nations; all will be judged for their sin. **The lesson:** Be patient during personal chastisement. A proper response will *yield “the peaceable fruit of righteousness”* (see Hebrews 12:3–11).
3. When the cup of sin within a nation is full, judgment will be irrevocable. **The lesson:** Be evangelistic while there is still time; point as many as will listen to Christ’s salvation.
4. God is sovereign over all nations, choosing the time of their rise and fall. **The lesson:** Be trusting God for His perfect timing.
5. Nations are held accountable for brutal abuse shown to countries captured in war. **The lesson:** Be praying!
6. God’s standards for judging nations are similar, but the results differ. **The lesson:** Be cautious in your responses to world events.
7. God brings judgment on leaders and nations who perpetrate fraud, oppression, and violence against their people. **The lesson:** Be righteous in all your dealings, and especially with the poor.

We live in somber times, and must seriously deal with sin lest our usefulness for Christ be hampered. Here is the key to lasting victory: *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil* (1 Thessalonians 5:16–22).

WEDNESDAY: Obadiah Says to Worship Our God of Humility

*“The pride of your heart has deceived you . . . ; You who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’ Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there **I will bring you down,**” says the LORD.”*

—Obadiah 3–4, emphasis added

Obadiah (853–840 B.C.) was a contemporary with Elijah (875–848 B.C.), Micah (865–830 B.C.), and Jehu (855–840 B.C.). As A. M. Hodgkin writes,

Between the Gulf of Akaba and the Dead Sea lies a range of precipitous red sandstone heights, known as Mount Seir. Here Esau settled after he had despised his birthright, and his descendants, having driven out the Horites (Gen. 15:6), occupied the whole of the mountain (Deut. 2:12). The capital city Selah, or Petra, ‘Rock,’ was a city unique in its kind amid the works of man. Perched like an eagle’s nest (ver. 4) amid inaccessible mountain fortresses, the dwellings were mostly caves, hewn out of the soft rock (ver. 3, 6), and placed where you could scarce imagine a human foot could climb.²

The story of Esau and Jacob is that of twin brothers, sons of Isaac and Rebekah. They were not identical twins; actually, they were opposites (see Genesis 25:24–34). Esau despised his birthright. The man who had the birthright was in contact with God; he was the priest of his family; he was the man who had a covenant from God; the man who had a relationship with God. In effect Esau said, “I would rather have a bowl of soup than have a relationship with God.”

Having seen Esau in the first book of the Old Testament, look now at the last book of the Old Testament and read this strange language: *“I have loved you,” says the LORD. “Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’ Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” says the LORD. “Yet Jacob I have loved; But Esau I have hated”* (Malachi 1:2–3a). This is a strange thing for God to say: “I loved Jacob and I hated Esau.” The explanation for that is in the little book of Obadiah where God said to Edom, *“The pride of your heart has deceived you”* (1:3).

Christ is the model of humility. James Boice points out, “But there is this to add. It is true that the sin of Edom, long indulged, worked itself into the very character of the people and therefore inevitably flowed on in history. But that same flow of history also brought One who lived by an entirely different standard.”³ There was a day in history when two kings confronted one another for the first time. One was an earthly king. He sat that day at the pinnacle of power. His name was Herod Antipas. Herod was a son of Herod the Great, who was an Edomite (or an Idumean, as the New Testament lists it). Herod the Great had slaughtered the babes of Bethlehem in his desire to exterminate Christ. His successor, Antipas, with whom we are concerned, was no better. He had beheaded John the Baptist and had been called *“that fox”* by Jesus (Luke 13:32). Antipas had everything he wanted. His income, expressed in American money in 2006, would be in excess of six million dollars a year. All the pleasures of life were his. If anyone stood in his way . . . well, the life of that person meant as little to him as the lives of the innocents of Bethlehem had meant to his father. The motto of his reign was: “What will it profit me?”

The other king was Jesus. He was the King of Kings, One who, according to the flesh, was the natural heir to David's throne and who, according to His divine nature, was the Supreme King over all the kings of this earth. But He did not look like a king. He stood in humble clothing. He had been rejected. Within hours He was to die a felon's death. If Jesus had wished, He could have called forth legions of angels who would have vindicated His cause instantly and have swept the usurper Herod from the throne. But Jesus did not want the throne in that way. He did not want the throne until you and I could share it with Him. To make that possible He would die.

Herod said, "What does it profit *me*?" Jesus said, "What can I do that will be the greatest possible benefit to My brethren?" God vindicated Jesus. Jesus went to the cross. He died. But His death was followed by a resurrection, and today He lives to enable those who believe in Him to behave as He did and bring a true, supernatural brotherhood to this world. For his part, Herod went on with his revelry but soon was banished to Lyons, France, where he died in misery.⁴

This is the choice before us: go Herod's way or Jesus' way. We cannot do both. God wants to break us of pride because pride competes with God for control and glory. He therefore offers us actions that promote the growth of humility in our lives. I call these the "Three R's of Spiritual Growth":

- **Refocus:** *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up* (James 4:10).
- **Remove:** *Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly . . . , looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works* (Titus 2:12–14).
- **Request God's humility:** *Younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time* (1 Peter 5:5–6).

Pride is the root of all sin, but humility is the root of all virtue. Pride leads to destruction (Proverbs 16:18), but humility brings blessings and honor from the Lord. Which category most represents your life's present testimony?

THURSDAY: Jonah Says to Worship Our God of Mercy

"Should I not pity Nineveh . . . in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?"

—Jonah 4:11, emphasis added

Jonah (793–753 B.C.) was a contemporary with Joel (853–796 B.C.) and Amos (760–750 B.C.). Our Lord God Almighty is both a chastening and a merciful seeking God (Jonah 1:1–2a). Out of the countless lives that have crossed the pages of time, we find two blips on the radar screen of eternity—seemingly insignificant to all but God.

Eight centuries before Christ, a great storm swirled around a nameless boat somewhere in the Mediterranean. By all counts, it should have swamped that boat and sent the nameless mariners to the black depth of the sea to await judgment day.

Amazingly, these sinking sailors did not perish. Rather, they were miraculously rescued from harm by the Master of the ocean, earth, and skies. Of all places—sleeping in the dark, creaking, hold was an evangelist. Shaken awake by the terrified captain, questioned by shouted words over the fury of the storm, he spoke. And in Jonah 1:9 the disobedient rebel showed his heart. Asked to go east, he turned west. Told to rescue inland Ninevah, he sought the sea route to the furthestmost western city known in his day—Tarshish, in western Spain.

In Jonah 1:3–9, we learn that there is folly in running from God, but power in speaking for God. It is almost humorous that, in spite of his persistence in disobeying the Lord and the breach of divine fellowship that it must have produced, Jonah gave a powerful testimony. Though Jonah's actions were wrong, his heart couldn't hide the Word of God for long—it just came out. And in all His power, God spoke to them. You see, the Scriptures are God speaking. When you share them, the voice of God is unleashed. The Bible is the unsheathed sword of the Spirit. So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land" (v. 9). *Nine words* that strike harder than the gale howling about them. It penetrates deeper than the cold sea spraying their faces and stinging their eyes. For you see, the Word can penetrate the very soul of mankind. He may have been endeavoring to resign his commission, but he could not change his heart, which remained that of a true prophet. So he pointed these mariners to the only Lord God.⁵

The God Who Will Not Let Go: After Jonah gave his testimony (1:9), the sailors were "*exceedingly afraid*" (1:10). We have already been told once that the men were frightened of the storm. But why were the men so frightened at this point—apparently more than they were of the storm itself? They knew about Jonah's God. These men had traveled from port to port around the Mediterranean Sea, hearing many stories of other people and their gods. Are we to think they had never heard of the Hebrew people, or of the Hebrew God, Jehovah? Of course, they had heard of Him!

The sailors had probably heard these reports: Jehovah was the God who brought down the plagues on Egypt so that His people might be led out. He parted the waters of the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to escape into the desert, and then closed the waters on the pursuing Egyptian forces. He led the Hebrews in the wilderness for forty years, protecting them by a cloud that spread out over their encampment. By day, that cloud gave them shade, but at night it turned into a pillar of fire to give them light and heat. He provided manna to eat and water to drink. Jehovah parted the waters of the Jordan River to enable the Israelites to cross over into Canaan, and He leveled the walls of Jericho for them. Amazingly, He also caused the sun to stand still at Gibeon so that Joshua would have time to achieve a full victory over the fleeing Amorites. On and on the stories could have gone . . . It is no wonder that these sailors feared Jonah's God!

The Great God of the Hebrews: A weak god was not pursuing this boat and its hapless mariners; it was the great God of the Hebrews, and for the sake of Jonah. Oh, how they were terrified! "*What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?*"—*for the sea was growing more tempestuous* (1:11). They were unable to escape the fury

of the storm, so they cried out to the Lord in fear: “*We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You*” (1:14). After the men threw Jonah into the sea, they feared [reverenced] *the LORD exceedingly and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows* (1:15–16). The mariners were gloriously converted by our merciful God.

What happened after that? After a whale of a journey (2:1–10), chapter 3 shows Jonah arriving in Nineveh, preaching God’s message. Then “*the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them*” (3:5). The king decreed that everyone was to turn from their evil ways in the hope that God would turn away His fierce anger, and He did (3:7–10). Jonah, however, was displeased with God’s mercy, and became angry.

The Danger of Anger and Hasty Decisions: When we get angry at God, we often make the same serious mistakes Jonah made. What were they? He quit; he made a private retreat and became a *spectator*. In 4:9–10, God rebuked Jonah for his lack of compassion for the people of Nineveh. Jonah 4:11 reveals the heights of God’s mercy when he had pity on that great city because of its 120,000 small children—those “*who cannot discern between their right hand and their left.*”

We need to understand this truth: what God is going to do, He will do. If He has determined to save Mary Jones, God will save Mary Jones. If He has determined to save John Smith, God will save John Smith. Moreover, those whom He saves will never perish; neither will anyone pluck them out of Christ’s hand (John 10:28). But note that God can do this through the obedience of His children, as He does later with Nineveh through Jonah, in which case they share in the blessing. Or He can do it through His children’s disobedience, as we see here through Jonah’s selfishness, in which case they miss the blessing. Either way, God blesses those whom He will bless, but the one case involves happiness for His people while the other involves misery.

Which represents your case? Are you resisting Him? Are you refusing His Great Commission? Or are you obeying Him in this and in all other matters?

Perhaps you are not yet a Christian. If not, learn from God’s wonderful grace to the sailors. You have not yet perished in your godless state because God, who made the sea around you and the dry land on which you walk, preserves you. But do not remain indifferent to Him; turn to Him on the basis of the perfect sacrifice for sin made once by His own Son, Jesus Christ. Then follow Him throughout your days.

FRIDAY: Micah Says to Worship Our God of Righteousness

*What does the LORD require of you but to **do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly** with your God?”*

—Micah 6:8, emphasis added

Micah (742–687 B.C.) was a contemporary with Hosea (753–715 B.C.) and Isaiah (740–681 B.C.). Although Micah was a contemporary with the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah was a court poet, but Micah was from a small village. Isaiah was a statesman, a herald to kings, but Micah was an evangelist and social reformer. He was God’s messenger to the misfortunate, oppressed common people. Micah’s message, however, like Isaiah’s, is one of hope. Both speak of the birth of the coming Messiah and the salvation He would

bring. And in two of the most remarkable passages in all Scripture, both speak, almost word for word, of Israel's future and the coming glorious earthly reign of the Messiah (Isaiah 2:2–4; Micah 4:1–3). Only seven chapters long, Micah's message contains some of the most familiar passages in all of Scripture. For example, the prophet announces the place of the Messiah's birth: "*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*" (5:2).

One deeply impactful truth Micah points out is that as the leaders go, so go the people. He says that Jerusalem's leaders *judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money* (3:11).

Micah points to Jesus Christ as the only answer to the world's problems. The poor, the oppressed, and the misfortunate have the "*One who breaks open [and] will come up before them*" (2:13). Christ the Messiah breaks through the obstacles in the path ahead. In the future He will do this for Israel, when the remnant is gathered into the fold. But today He helps us through our perplexing paths, as we trust in Him.

Messiah's kingdom will come (4:1–8), and Jerusalem will be its center (4:1–2). Peace will reign. Nations *shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore* (4:3). Prosperity will abound, each will *sit under his vine and . . . fig tree* (4:4). God will be central as *we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever* (4:5). The same God who brings heaven to earth can bring solutions to our problems today.

What does God want from us in exchange? Micah answers that we are *to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with [our] God* (6:8). No one is exempt. We are to be clothed with Christ, according to God's expectations of us. We are to live the truth and look to Jesus!

SATURDAY: The Promised Son

*"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."*

—Micah 5:2, emphasis added

Micah's reference to Bethlehem prompts us to reflect upon Isaiah's and Micah's prophecies concerning the Messiah and the salvation He would bring. Almost word for word, they spoke of Israel's future and the coming glorious earthly reign of the Messiah (Isaiah 2:2–4; Micah 4:1–3).

Just as Micah had prophesied around 700 years before Jesus came, the little town of Bethlehem was indeed the birth place of the Messiah—the One who would be "*Ruler in Israel*"—the One "*whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting*" (Micah 5:2)! At Christmas, we should therefore not only reflect upon the "eternal God's incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ" but also "His millennial reign as King of Kings (cf. Is. 9:6)."⁶

This Jesus Christ, the promised one, was foretold by Isaiah in language that has been heralded as one of the most beloved prophetic Christmas passages ever. In fact, Handel's "Messiah" so captures the beauty and heart of Isaiah 9:6–7 that I would not be surprised to hear this glorious music in the worship center of the universe! As you read through these words once more, worship the One of whom it speaks!

*“For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”*

From this prophetic passage, we can conclude: “The Son will rule the nations of the world (Rev. 2:27; 19:15). . . . The Messiah will be a Father to His people eternally. As Davidic King, He will compassionately care for and discipline them (Isaiah 40:11; 63:16; 64:8; Pss. 68:5,6; 103:13; Prov. 3:12). The government of Immanuel will procure and perpetuate peace among the nations of the world (Isaiah 2:4; 11:6–9; Mic. 4:3).”⁷ There is a glorious future in Christ that is yet to come, as our study in Revelation is revealing, but only if you personally grab hold of the eternal God's purpose for His incarnation, which is to “*save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21).

God had made a promise to David that one of his descendants would have an eternal reign, and God always remembers His oaths. When the perfect time had come, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and announced: “[Mary] *will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*” So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet [Isaiah], saying: “*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,*” which is translated “*God with us*” (Matthew 1:21–23).

What was foretold regarding the Messiah was also affirmed through the angel Gabriel, when he told Mary about the Son she was to miraculously bear: “*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. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end*” (Luke 1:32–33). So when the light of Christ burst forth upon the darkness of this world the night of His birth, a multitude of the heavenly host joyfully sang God's praises: “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward [all] men!*” (Luke 2:14). This is the gospel, which is meant for everyone.

Jesus Christ came to earth to bring “*liberty to the captives*” (Luke 4:18), and that was the message He preached at His hometown synagogue. Christ's salvation is offered to all who are in bondage to sin and death. We are powerless to set ourselves free; only

Jesus, the Lamb of God, could pay the price necessary for our redemption (Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18–21). As Warren Wiersbe has said, “When you trust Jesus as Savior, you are delivered from Satan’s power, moved into God’s kingdom, redeemed, and forgiven (Col. 1:12–14).”⁸

Make a choice to live in hope: Jesus’ birth was the dawning of a new day that knows no night, for our night was ended by His light: “*Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace*” (Luke 1:78–79).

Dayspring means “sunrise.” God’s Word sees lost people as those sitting in darkness, death, and distress. However, Christ’s birth brought light, life, and peace. Jesus came into a manger one dark night to bear away the sin of the world. If you will ask Him, He will take your penalty, your debt, your stain, your sin. The story of Christmas is that the Sunrise has come! And the story of Revelation is that this same Jesus is coming again, and soon! Are you ready? You can find living hope for the end of days by opening your heart today to Christ!

If you are already a child of God, read the words of this ancient Christmas hymn and worship your eternal God Incarnate through the wonderful titles ascribed to Him throughout the Old Testament: Wisdom, Emmanuel, The Lord of Might, The Rod of Jesse, Day Spring, and the Key of David!

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might who to Thy tribes, on Sinai’s height, in ancient times didst give the law in cloud and majesty and awe.

O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from Satan’s tyranny; from depths of hell Thy people save and give them vict’ry o’er the grave.

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spirits by Thine advent here; O drive away the shades of night and pierce the clouds and bring us light.

O come, Thou Key of David, come and open wide our heav’nly home where all Thy saints with Thee shall dwell—O come, O come, Emmanuel!

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

—Latin origin from around the twelfth century
Tr. by John M. Neale (1818–1866)

¹ For further reading, see *Wilmington’s Visualized Study Bible* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1984); J. Sidlow Baxter, *Baxter’s Explore the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); W. Graham Scroggi, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995); W. A. Criswell, ed. *The Criswell Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979); A. M. Hodgkin, *Christ in All the Scriptures* (London:

Pickering & Inglis, 1943); C. H. Mackintosh, "Notes on the Pentateuch," *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1989); John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), pp. 76–77; J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), pp. 129–36.

² A. M. Hodgkin, *Christ in All the Scriptures* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1943), pp. 17–41.

³ James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary: Volume 2: Micah—Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), p. 201.

⁴ I am indebted for this comparison to a small tract written years ago by Joseph Hoffman Cohn for the American Board of Missions to the Jews entitled "The Man from Petra," No. 65 in the series, "What Every Christian Should Know About the Jews" (1961).

⁵ Drawn from Frank E. Gabelein, *Four Minor Prophets: Obadiah, Jonah, Habakkuk, and Haggai* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970), p. 78.

⁶ The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1304.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 968.

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989), electronic edition, in loc.