

# Out of Exile

## The Promise of Christmas

12.3.23

Christmas 2023

Message 2

Introduction: “No Little People, No Little Places.”

A. Francis Schaeffer once said, “No Little People, No Little Places.”

1. From the world’s perspective, that isn’t true.
2. We dismiss and despise small beginnings and small places.
3. In a world where bigger is better, starting off in a small town with an unknown family is a negative.

B. Even though Benjamin was the smallest of the tribes, Bethlehem was a small village, and David was the youngest and smallest of his family, God used this small place and small person to usher in the presence of the incarnational God.

1. Micah had prophesied that it would be Bethlehem where the Messiah would be born.
2. It was King David's hometown.
3. But in Micah’s and Jesus’ day, it was a town considered “too small” to belong.
4. It was viewed as weak, insignificant, and rural.
5. Surely, only good can come from the cities and the wealthy!

C. Time and again, God chooses the least of these to advance His kingdom.

1. And **God’s choosing rarely takes place in easy times.**

2. Jesus' birth happened during a time of Roman occupation and a tyrannical king named Herod whom we will talk more about next week.
3. The prophecy Matthew references in Matthew 2 also occurred during a time of stress, danger, and threats.
4. Jesus' arrival has always been Good News in turbulent times.

D. If this Christmas Season his harder than it should be, I want to share the true meaning of Christmas:

1. Good News in troubling times.
2. Out of exile, we receive the Promise of Christmas.

### Why does Pastor Paul share so much Scripture?

1. Most Scripture we hear all week.
2. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.
3. Keeps me accountable to Scripture through context.
4. Keeps me accountable to you through context.
5. Preaching and teaching are the primary ways I practice pastoral care and pastoral leadership. To share and exposit Scripture with you is, to me, a form of love.

Matthew 2:1-12 (CSB)

**2** After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star at its rising and have come to worship him."

<sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was deeply disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup>So he assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people and asked them where the Messiah would be born.

<sup>5</sup>“In Bethlehem of Judea,” they told him, “because this is what was written by the prophet:

**<sup>6</sup>And you, Bethlehem,** in the land of Judah,  
are by no means **least among the rulers of Judah:**  
**Because out of you will come a ruler**  
**who will shepherd my people Israel.”**

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly summoned the wise men and asked them the exact time the star appeared. <sup>8</sup>He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report back to me so that I too can go and worship him.”

<sup>9</sup>After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen at its rising. It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

Micah 5 (CSB)

**FROM DEFEATED RULER TO CONQUERING KING**

**5** Now, daughter who is under attack,  
you slash yourself in grief;  
a siege is set against us!  
They are striking the judge of Israel  
on the cheek with a rod.  
<sup>2</sup>Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
you are small among the clans of Judah;

one will come from you  
to be ruler over Israel for me.

His origin is from antiquity,  
from ancient times.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore, Israel will be abandoned until the time  
when she who is in labor has given birth;  
then the rest of the ruler's brothers will return  
to the people of Israel.

<sup>4</sup>He will stand and shepherd them  
in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majestic name of the LORD his God.

They will live securely,  
for then his greatness will extend  
to the ends of the earth.

<sup>5</sup>He will be their peace.  
When Assyria invades our land,  
when it marches against our fortresses,  
we will raise against it seven shepherds,  
even eight leaders of men.

<sup>6</sup>They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword,  
the land of Nimrod with a drawn blade.  
So he will rescue us from Assyria  
when it invades our land,  
when it marches against our territory.

## THE GLORIOUS AND PURIFIED REMNANT

<sup>7</sup>Then the remnant of Jacob  
will be among many peoples  
like dew from the LORD,  
like showers on the grass,  
which do not wait for anyone  
or linger for mankind.

<sup>8</sup>Then the remnant of Jacob  
will be among the nations, among many peoples,  
like a lion among animals of the forest,  
like a young lion among flocks of sheep,  
which tramples and tears as it passes through,  
and there is no one to rescue them.

<sup>9</sup>Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries,  
and all your enemies will be destroyed.

<sup>10</sup>In that day—  
this is the LORD's declaration—

I will remove your horses from you  
and wreck your chariots.

<sup>11</sup>I will remove the cities of your land  
and tear down all your fortresses.

<sup>12</sup>I will remove sorceries from your hands,  
and you will not have any more fortune-tellers.

<sup>13</sup>I will remove your carved images

and sacred pillars from you  
so that you will no longer worship  
the work of your hands.

<sup>14</sup>I will pull up the Asherah poles from among you  
and demolish your cities.

<sup>15</sup>I will take vengeance in anger and wrath  
against the nations that have not obeyed me.

## 1. Jesus was born before the Magi arrived.

A. Jesus' age is not mentioned here.

1. He is likely less than two years old.
2. We believe this because King Herod targeted males two years or younger.

B. The number of wise men is not mentioned either.

1. Tradition attributes three because of the gifts, but we do not know how many traveled.
2. These magi were more than likely from Persia or Babylonia, and if so, it is fascinating that the ancient enemies of the Jewish people now come to worship the newly arrived King of the Jews.

C. The arrival of the Magi fulfills a prophecy by a wicked prophet named Balaam from Numbers 24 (during the days of Moses).

### **Numbers 24:17 (CSB)**

<sup>17</sup>I see him, but not now;  
I perceive him, but not near.  
A star will come from Jacob,  
and a scepter will arise from Israel.  
He will smash the forehead of Moab

and strike down all the Shethites.

1. The Advent of Jesus is one of the most prophesied events in biblical and human history.
2. The Advent of Jesus is the moment that changed the world.

## 2. A miraculous journey.

A. The star that led the Magi must be considered a miraculous sign.

1. Some have said it was Haley's comet.
2. Others have tried other explanations that intend to explain a supernatural occurrence naturally.
3. But the Magi were led by two things:
  - a. They were led by a guiding star.
  - b. But, just as importantly, they were led by a desire to discern the time.
  - c. They had been studying, seeking, and desiring to discover the true King of Israel.

B. The Jews had the knowledge, but the Magi had the desire.

1. When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem from their long journey, they asked, "Where is the King."
2. The Magi weren't automatically led to the house where Jesus was:
  - a. The Magi went to the Capital city, where you would expect to find a king.
  - b. They asked the people entrusted with the knowledge.
    1. What they found was a pretender, King Herod.
    2. A wicked and evil man.
    3. But the Magi were not looking for an earthly king, but a heavenly king.

c. The Jewish leaders knew the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but incredibly, they missed the sign.

d. What was evident to the foreign Magi was lost on the religious leaders.

3. We rarely find what we are not seeking.

C. The Magi came expecting to worship a king.

1. Their gifts were valuable expressions of worship fit for a king.

a. Notice they came WITH the gifts.

b. They didn't experiment or dabble.

c. This was not a test-drive.

d. They came EXPECTING to see and worship a king.

2. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were gifts fitting a king and expressed the value this child had in the eyes of these foreign magi.

3. But the gifts also had a practical function, as they were undoubtedly used by Joseph and Mary to provide for their exodus and flight from King Herod.

3. Matthew and his quotation of Micah 5.

A. The Jewish people would often quote a line from the OT as an allusion to the whole section.

1. In our culture, I may quote a line from a movie that brings to mind the whole story. EXAMPLES:

a. "The Best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear." Is from? Elf

b. "I dedicate this house to the Griswold Family Christmas." Christmas Vacation

c. "Every time a bell rings, an angel gets its wings." It's a Wonderful Life.



2. Matthew likely has the whole message of Micah 5 in view.

3. Backing up to Micah 4:9,

**B. Notice these first verses:**

Micah 4:9–5:1 (CSB)

**FROM EXILE TO VICTORY**

<sup>9</sup> Now, why are you shouting loudly?

Is there no king with you?

Has your counselor perished

so that anguish grips you like a woman in labor?

<sup>10</sup> Writhe and cry out, Daughter Zion,

like a woman in labor,

for now you will leave the city

and camp in the open fields.

You will go to Babylon;

there you will be rescued;

there the Lord will redeem you

from the grasp of your enemies!

<sup>11</sup> Many nations have now assembled against you;

they say, "Let her be defiled,

and let us feast our eyes on Zion."

<sup>12</sup> But they do not know the Lord's intentions

or understand his plan,

that he has gathered them

like sheaves to the threshing floor.

<sup>13</sup> Rise and thresh, Daughter Zion,  
for I will make your horns iron  
and your hooves bronze  
so you can crush many peoples.  
Then you will set apart their plunder  
for the Lord,  
their wealth for the Lord of the whole earth.

### **FROM DEFEATED RULER TO CONQUERING KING**

**5** Now, daughter who is under attack,  
you slash yourself in grief;  
a siege is set against us!  
They are striking the judge of Israel  
on the cheek with a rod.  
<sup>2</sup>Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
you are small among the clans of Judah;  
one will come from you  
to be ruler over Israel for me.  
His origin is from antiquity,  
from ancient times.

C. The Prophecy Matthew quotes is from a time of impending exile.

1. Surrounded by their enemies, hope seems lost.
2. The striking of the king in the jaw tells us that the king is captured, disrespected, and shamed
3. Exile is in the near future for God's people.

#### 4. But in the distance, behold a king!

##### A. Out of Exile comes Hope!

1. The Promise of a Savior is not separated from Exile but part of Exile.
2. Yes, Israel had sinned.
3. Yes, Israel was surrounded on every side.
4. Yes, pain and suffering had come.
5. BUT, the King was coming.
6. It was in Babylon, the destination of exile, that their redemption came to pass.

You will go to Babylon;

there you will be rescued;

there the Lord will redeem you

from the grasp of your enemies!

##### B. Jesus is the King who rescues us from exile.

1, Though Jesus, born of a virgin during the days of Caesar, has origins of antiquity.

a. He is "of old," without beginning or end.

b. And this King who was prophesied to "stand and shepherd them in the strength of the Lord" Vs. 4, now sits at the right hand of the Father.

2. Jesus is the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy and Matthew's hope.

a. He now shepherds us, guides us, leads us, and helps us.

b. He has conquered the sin, death, and hell.

3. Though His enemies at the bottom of Mt. Calvary struck Jesus in the jaw, trying to shame the King of Glory, His death was Sin's defeat.

C. Jesus' virgin birth and death made possible our rescue from sin's exile.

1. Even when it seems that all hope is lost, Jesus stands above it all.
2. His name is above every name.
3. And The Name is still good news during hard times.

## 5. Does this Christmas season seem extra hard?

A. For myself, this feels like a season of loss.

1. My mom is in very poor condition.
2. My dog is declining rapidly.
3. And if my truck runs away, I have the makings of a Country Song.

B. Several in this room are experiencing:

1. The first Christmas without a parent or sibling.
2. Financial stress and strain.
3. Loss of hope.

B. YET, even in seasons that feel too heavy to bear, there is Promised Hope!

1. J.R.R Tolkien said, **The birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus means that one day everything sad will come untrue.** Tolkien

2. When I look to Jesus, I'm looking upon the one:

- a. Who wipes tears from his people's eyes.
- b. Who raises up kings from small towns.
- c. That cause the Virgin to give birth,

d. And sets stars in motion across the night sky

e. Because of Jesus, Magi are led on journeys and shepherds welcome kings.

3. And when you and I look upon Jesus, we see the One who turns exiles into reunions.

C. This morning, I want to pray for a discovery of hope.

1. Are you begging God for some good news?

2. Are you desperate for some light in what seems like utter darkness?

3. Do you just need to be assured that you will make it?

D. Prayer for hope