

# CHAPTER 5

In this chapter we have,

- I.** A prediction of the troubles and distresses of the Jewish nation (v. 1).
- II.** A promise of the Messiah, and of his kingdom, to support the people of God in the day of these troubles.
  - 1.** Of the birth of the Messiah (v. 2, 3).
  - 2.** Of his advancement (v. 4).
  - 3.** Of his protection of his people, and his victory over his and their enemies (v. 5, 6).
  - 4.** Of the great world by it (v. 7).
  - 5.** Of the destruction of the enemies of the church, both those without, that attack it, and those within, that expose it (v. 8-15).

## ⌄ MICAH 5:1-6

### THE ABASEMENT AND DISTRESS OF ZION

Here, as before, we have,

**I.** The abasement and distress of Zion, v. 1. The Jewish nation, for many years before the captivity, dwindled, and fell into disgrace: *Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops!* It is either a summons to Zion's enemies, that had troops at their service, to come and do their worst against her (God will suffer them to do it), or a challenge to Zion's friends, that had troops too at command, to come and do their best for her; Let them *gather in troops*, yet it shall be to no purpose; for, says the prophet, in the name of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *He has laid siege against us;* the king of Assyria has, the king of Babylon has, and we know not which way to defend ourselves; so that the enemies shall gain their point, and prevail so far as *to smite the judge of Israel* — the king, the chief justice, and the other inferior judges — *with a rod upon the cheek*, in contempt of them and their dignity; having made them prisoners, they shall use them as shamefully as any of the common captives. Complaint had been made of

the judges of Israel (<sup><381></sup>Micah 3:11) that they were corrupt and took bribes, and this disgrace came justly upon them for abusing their power; yet it was a great calamity to Israel to have their judges treated thus ignominiously. Some make this the reason why the troops (that is, the Roman army) shall lay siege to Jerusalem, because the Jews *shall smite the judge of Israel upon the cheek*, because of the indignities they shall do to the Messiah, the Judge of Israel, whom they smote on the cheek, saying, *Prophesy, who smote thee*. But the former sense seems more probable, and that it is meant of the besieging of Jerusalem, not by the Romans, but the Chaldeans, and was fulfilled in the indignities done to king Zedekiah and the princes of the house of David.

**II.** The advancement of Zion's King. Having shown how low the house of David should be brought, and how vilely the shield of that mighty family should be cast away, as though it had not been anointed with oil, to encourage the faith of God's people, who might be tempted now to think that his covenant with David and his house was abrogated (according to the psalmist's complaint, <sup><388></sup>Psalm 89:38, 39), he adds an illustrious prediction of the Messiah and his kingdom, in whom that covenant should be established, and the honours of that house should be revived, advanced, and perpetuated. Now let us see,

**1.** How the Messiah is here described. It is he that is to be *ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, from the days of eternity*, as the word is. Here we have,

**(1.)** His existence from eternity, as God: *his goings forth, or emanations*, as the going forth of the beams from the sun, were, or have been, *of old, from everlasting*, which (says Dr. Pocock) is so signal a description of Christ's eternal generation, or his going forth as the Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, that this prophecy must belong only to him, and could never be verified of any other. It certainly speaks of a going forth that was now past, when the prophet spoke, and cannot but be read, as we read it, *his outgoings have been*; and the putting of both these words together, which severally are used to denote eternity, plainly shows that they must here be taken in the strictest sense (the same with <sup><390></sup>Psalm 90:2, *From everlasting to everlasting thou are God*), and can be applied to no other than to him who was able to say, *Before Abraham was, I am*, <sup><385></sup>John 8:58. Dr. Pocock observes that the *going forth* is used (<sup><383></sup>Deuteronomy 8:3) for a *word which proceeds out of the mouth*, and is

therefore very fitly used to signify the eternal generation of him who is called the *Word of God*, that was *in the beginning with God*, <sup><411></sup>John 1:1, 2.

(2.) His office as Mediator; he was to be *ruler in Israel*, king of his church; he was to *reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, <sup><413></sup>Luke 1:32, 33. The Jews object that our Lord Jesus could not be the Messiah, for he was so far from being ruler in Israel that Israel ruled over him, and put him to death, and would not have him to reign over them; but he answered that himself when he said, *My kingdom is not of this world*, <sup><436></sup>John 18:36. And it is a spiritual Israel that he reigns over, the children of promise, all the followers of believing Abraham and praying Jacob. In the hearts of these he reigns by his Spirit and grace, and in the society of these by his word and ordinances. And was not he *ruler in Israel* whom winds and seas obeyed, to whom legions of devils were forced to submit, and who commanded away diseases from the sick and called the dead out of their graves? None but he whose *goings forth were from of old, from everlasting*, was fit to be *ruler in Israel*, to be head of the church, and *head over all things to the church*.

2. What is here foretold concerning him.

(1.) That Bethlehem should be the place of his nativity, v. 2. This was the scripture which the scribes went upon when with the greatest assurance they told Herod *where Christ should be born* (<sup><416></sup>Matthew 2:6), and hence it was universally known among the Jews that *Christ should come out of the town of Bethlehem where David was*, <sup><472></sup>John 7:42. *Beth-lehem* signifies *the house of bread*, the fittest place for him to be born in who is *the bread of life*. And, because it was the city of David, by a special providence it was ordered that he should be born there who was to be the *Son of David*, and his heir and successor for ever. It is called *Bethlehem-Ephratah*, both names of the same city, as appears <sup><159></sup>Genesis 35:19. It was *little among the thousands of Judah*, not considerable either for the number of the inhabitants or the figure they made; it had nothing in it worthy to have this honour put upon it; but God in that, as in other instances, chose to *exalt those of low degree*, <sup><415></sup>Luke 1:52. Christ would give honour to the place of his birth, and not derive honour from it: *Though thou be little*, yet this shall make thee great, and, as St. Matthew reads it, *Thou art not the least among the princes of Judah*, but upon this

account art really honourable above any of them. A relation to Christ will magnify those that are little in the world.

(2.) That in the fulness of time he should be born of a woman (v. 3): *Therefore will he give them up*; he will give up his people Israel to distress and trouble, and will defer their salvation, which has been so long promised and expected, *until the time*, the set time, *that she who travails has brought forth*, or (as it should be read) *that she who shall bring forth shall have brought forth*, that the blessed virgin, who was to be the mother of the Messiah, shall have brought him forth at Bethlehem, the place appointed. This Dr. Pocock thinks to be the most genuine sense of the words. Though the out-goings of the Messiah were *from everlasting*, yet the *redemption in Jerusalem*, the *consolation of Israel*, must be waited for (<sup>4025</sup>Luke 2:25-38) until the time that *she who should bring forth* (so the virgin Mary is called, as Christ is himself called, *He that shall come*) shall *bring forth*; and in the mean time *he will give them up*. Divine salvations must be waited for until the time fixed for the bringing of them forth.

(3.) That *the remnant of his brethren shall then return to the children of Israel*. The remnant of the Jewish nation shall return to the spirit of the true genuine children of Israel, a people in covenant with God; the hearts of the children shall be turned to the fathers, <sup>3046</sup>Malachi 4:6. Some understand it of all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews; they shall all be incorporated into the commonwealth of Israel; and, as they are all brethren to one another, so *he is not ashamed to call them brethren*, <sup>3021</sup>Hebrews 2:11.

(4.) That he shall be a glorious prince, and his subjects shall be happy under his government (v. 4): *He shall stand and feed*, that is, he shall both teach and rule, and continue to do so, as a good shepherd, with wisdom, and care, and love. So it was foretold. *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*, shall provide green pastures for them, and under-shepherds to lead them into these pastures. He is the *good shepherd* that *goes before the sheep*, and presides among them. He shall do this, not as an ordinary man, but *in the strength of the Lord*, as one clothed with a divine power to go through his work, and break through the difficulties in his way, so as not to *fail*, or be *discouraged*; he shall do it *in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God*, so as plainly to evidence that *God's name was in him* (<sup>4023</sup>Exodus 23:21) the majesty of his name, for *he taught as one having authority and not as the scribes*. The prophets prefaced their messages

with, *Thus saith the Lord*; but Christ spoke, not as a servant, but as a Son — *Verily, verily, I say unto you*. This was feeding *in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God*. All power was given him *in heaven and in earth*, a power over all flesh, by virtue of which he still rules *in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God*, a name above every name. Christ's government shall be,

[1.] Very happy for his subjects, for *they shall abide*; they shall be safe and easy, and continue so for ever. *Because he lives, they shall live also*. They shall lie down in the green pastures to which he shall lead them, *shall abide in God's tabernacle for ever*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 61:4. His church shall abide, and he in it, and with it, always, even to the end of the world.

[2.] It shall be very glorious to himself: *Now shall he be great to the ends of the earth*. Now that he stands and feeds his flock, *now shall he be great*. For Christ reckons it his greatness to do good. Now he shall be *great to the ends of the earth*, for the uttermost parts of the earth shall be given him for his possession, and the ends of the world shall see his salvation.

(5.) That he shall secure the peace and welfare of his church and people against all the attempts of his and their enemies (v. 5, 6): *This man, as king and ruler, shall be the peace when the Assyrians shall come into our land*. This refers to the deliverance of Hezekiah and his kingdom from the power of Sennacherib, who invaded them, in the type; but, under the shadow of that, it is a promise of the safety of the gospel-church and of all believers from the designs and attempts of the powers of darkness, Satan and all his instruments, the dragon and his angels, that seek to devour the church of the first-born and all that belong to it. Observe,

[1.] The peril and danger which Christ's subjects are supposed to be in. The Assyrian, a potent enemy, *comes into their land* (v. 5, 6), *treads within their borders*, nay, prevails so far as to *tread in their palaces*; it was a time of *treading down and of perplexity* when Sennacherib made a descent upon Judah, took all the defenced cities, and laid siege to Jerusalem, ~~Isaiah~~ Isaiah 36:1; 37:3. This represented the gates of hell fighting against the kingdom of Christ, *encompassing the camp of the saints and of the holy city*, and threatening to bear down all before them. When the terrors of the law set themselves in array against a convinced soul, when the temptations of Satan assault the people of God, and the troubles of the world threaten to rob them of all their comforts, then the *Assyrian comes*

into their land and treads in their palaces. *Without are fightings, within are fears.*

[2.] The protection and defence which his subjects are then sure to be under. *First*, Christ will himself be *their peace*. When the Assyrian comes with such a force into a land, can there be any other peace than a tame submission and an unresisted desolation? Yes, even then the church's King will be the conservator of the church's peace, will be *for a hiding-place*, ~~2311~~ Isaiah 32:1, 2. Christ is our peace as a priest, making atonement for sin, and reconciling us to God; and he is our peace as a king, conquering our enemies and commanding down disquieting fears and passions; he *creates the fruit of the lips, peace*. Even when the Assyrian comes into the land, when we are in the greatest distress and danger and have received a sentence of death within ourselves, yet *this man may be the peace*. *In me*, says Christ, *you shall have peace*, when *in the world you have tribulation*; at such a time our souls may dwell at ease in him. *Secondly*, He will find out proper instruments to be employed for their protection and deliverance, and the defeat of their enemies: *Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men*, that is, a competent number of persons, proper to oppose the enemy, and make head against him, and protect the church of God in peace, men that shall have the care and tenderness of shepherds and the courage and authority of *principal men*, or *princes of men*. *Seven* and *eight* are a certain number for an uncertain. Note, When God has work to do he will not want fitting instruments to do it with; and when he pleases he can do it by a few; he needs not raise thousands, but seven or eight principal men may serve the turn if God be with them. Magistrates and ministers are shepherds and principal men, raised in defence of religion's righteous cause against the powers of sin and Satan in the world. *Thirdly*, The opposition given to the church shall be got over, and the opposers brought down. This is represented by the laying of Assyria and Chaldea waste, which two nations were the most formidable enemies to the Israel of God of any, and the destruction of them signified the making of Christ's enemies his footstool: *They shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof*; they shall make inroads upon the land, and put to the sword all that they find in arms. Note, Those that threaten ruin to the church of God hasten ruin to themselves; and their destruction is the church's salvation: *Thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian*. When *Satan fell as lightning from heaven* before the preaching of the gospel, and

Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them, were *slain before him*, then this was fulfilled.

## ~~<317>~~ MICAH 5:7-15

### THE INCREASE OF THE CHURCH

Glorious things are here spoken of *the remnant of Jacob*, that remnant which was raised of *her that halted* (~~<317>~~ Micah 4:7), and it seems to be that *remnant which the Lord our God shall call* (~~<317>~~ Joel 2:32), on whom the Spirit shall be poured out, the remnant that shall be saved, ~~<417>~~ Romans 9:27. Note, God's people are but a remnant, a small number in comparison with the many that are left to perish, a *little flock*; but they are *the remnant of Jacob*, a people in covenant with God, and in his favour. Now concerning this remnant it is here promised,

**I.** That they shall be *as a dew* in the midst of the nations, v. 7. God's church is dispersed all the world over; it is *in the midst of many people*, as gold in the ore, wheat in the heap. Israel according to the flesh dwelt alone, and was not numbered among the nations; but the spiritual Israel lies scattered *in the midst of many people*, as the *salt of the earth*, or as seed sown in the ground, here a grain and there a grain, ~~<317>~~ Hosea 2:23. Now this remnant shall be *as dew from the Lord*.

**1.** They shall be of a heavenly extraction; as *dew from the Lord*, who is the *Father of the rain*, and has *begotten the drops of the dew*, ~~<417>~~ Job 38:28. They are *born from above*, and are not of the earth, savouring the things of the earth.

**2.** They shall be numerous as the drops of dew in a summer's morning. ~~<417>~~ Psalm 110:3, *Thou hast the dew of thy youth*.

**3.** They shall be pure and clear, not muddy and corrupt, but crystal drops, as the *water of life*.

**4.** They shall be produced silently and without noise, as the dew that distils insensibly, we know not how; such is the way of the Spirit.

**5.** They shall live in a continual dependence upon God, and be still deriving from him, as the dew, which *tarries not for man*, not *waits for the*

*sons of men*; they shall not rely upon human aids and powers, but on divine grace, for they are, and own that they are, no more than what the free grace of God makes them every day.

6. They shall be great blessings to those among whom they live, as the dew and the showers are to the grass, to make it grow without the help of man, or the sons of men. Their doctrine, example, and prayers, shall make them as dew, to soften and moisten others, and make them fruitful. Their speech shall *distil as the dew* (<sup>4510</sup>Deuteronomy 32:2), and all about them shall *wait for them as for the rain*, <sup>4323</sup>Job 29:23. The people among whom they live shall be as the grass, which flourishes only by the blessing of God, and not by the art and care of man; they shall be beneficial to those about them by drawing down God's blessings on them, as Jacob on Laban's house, and by cooling and mitigating God's wrath, which otherwise would burn them up, as the dew preserves the grass from being scorched by the sun; so Dr. Pocock; they shall be mild and gentle in their behaviour, like their Master, who comes down *like rain upon the new-mown grass*, <sup>4216</sup>Psalms 72:6.

II. That they shall be *as a lion among the beasts of the forest, that treads down and tears in pieces*, v. 8. As they shall be silent, and gentle, and communicative of all good, to those that receive the truth in the love of it, so they shall be bold as a lion in witnessing against the corruptions of the times and places they live in, and strong as a lion, in the strength of God, to resist and overcome their spiritual enemies. The *weapons of their warfare are mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds*, <sup>4704</sup>2 Corinthians 10:4, 5. They shall have *courage which all their adversaries shall not be able to resist* (<sup>4215</sup>Luke 21:15), as when the lion tears none can deliver. When infidelity is silenced, and all iniquity made *to stop her mouth*, when sinners are convinced and converted by the power of the gospel, in the doctrine of its ministers and the conversation of its professors, then the remnant of Jacob is like a lion. This is explained, v. 9, *Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thy adversaries*; the church shall have the upper hand at last of all that oppose her. Her *enemies shall be cut off*; they shall cease to be enemies; their enmity shall be cut off. Christ's arrows of conviction shall be sharp in their hearts, so that they shall fall under him; they shall yield themselves subjects to him (<sup>4295</sup>Psalms 45:5) and be happily conquered and subdued, <sup>4310</sup>Psalms 110:2.



**III.** That they shall be brought off from all carnal confidences, which they have relied on, that by the providence of God they shall enjoy such a security that they shall not need them, and by the grace of God they shall be brought to see the folly of them and come off from them. It was the sin of Israel that they furnished themselves extravagantly with *horses and chariots*, and were *soothsayers* and *idolaters*; see <sup><2116></sup>Isaiah 2:6-8. But here it is promised that they shall not regard them any more. The tranquillity of the kingdom of Christ is intended in that promise, which explains this, <sup><300></sup>Zechariah 9:10, *I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem*. Note, It is a great mercy to be deprived of those things in which we have reposed a confidence in competition with God, which we have made our arm, and after which we have gone a whoring from God. Let us observe the particulars: —

- 1.** They had trusted in chariots and horses, and multiplied them (<sup><307></sup>Psalm 20:7); but now God will *cut off their horses*, and *destroy their chariots* (v. 10), as *David houghed the chariot-horses*, <sup><1084></sup>2 Samuel 8:4. They shall not have them, lest they should be tempted to trust in them.
- 2.** They depended upon their strongholds, and fortified cities, for their security; but God will take care that they be demolished (v. 11): *I will cut off the cities of thy land*; *I will throw down thy strongholds*. They shall have them for habitations, but not for garrisons, for God will be their only place of defence, their *high tower*, and *their deliverer*.
- 3.** Many of them depended much upon the conduct and advice of their conjurors, diviners, and fortune-tellers; and those God will cut off, not only as weak things, and insufficient to relieve them, but as wicked things, and sufficient to ruin them (v. 12): “*I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy hand*, that thou shalt no more take hold of them, and stay thyself upon them, and *thou shalt have no more soothsayers*, for thou shalt be convinced that all their pretensions are a cheat.” The justice of the nation shall cut them off according to law, <sup><617></sup>Leviticus 20:27. the preaching of the gospel brought men off from using curious arts, <sup><408></sup>Acts 19:19.
- 4.** Many of them had said to the work of their hands, *You are our gods*; but now idolatry shall be abolished and abandoned (v. 13): “*Thy graven images will I cut off*, and *thy standing images*, both those that were movable and those that were fixed; they shall be destroyed by the power of the law of Moses and deserted by the power of the gospel of Christ, so that

*thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands, but be ashamed that ever thou hast been so deluded. Among other monuments of idolatry, I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee,"* v. 14. These were planted and preserved in honour of their idols, and used in the worship of them; these they were ordered to burn (~~GENE~~ Deuteronomy 12:2, 3), and, if they do not, God will, so that they shall not have them to trust to. And so *will I destroy their cities*, meaning the cities that were dedicated to the idols, to some dunghill-deity or other, which they confided in for their protection.

**IV.** That those who stand it out against the gospel of Christ, and continue in league with their idolatries and witchcrafts, shall fall under the wrath of God, and be consumed by it (v. 15): *I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen* (that is, upon heathenism), *such as they have not heard*; idolatries shall be done away, and idolaters put to shame. I will execute vengeance upon the heathen *who have not heard* (so some read it), or who would not hear and receive the doctrine of Christ. God will give his Son either the hearts or the necks of his enemies, and make them either his friends or his footstool.