

**MICAH 5:2-5**  
**“WHOSE ORIGINS ARE FROM OLD”**

Have you heard this one?

“The only thing certain in life is uncertainty.”

What do you think? Is it true? Certainly, much is uncertain to us!

\* We face uncertainty about money. Our economy is prosperous, but we wonder about the housing market, gas prices, and jobs.

\* We face uncertainty about health. We are all certain to die, unless we see Jesus return first, but we are uncertain about when and how.

\* We face uncertainty about relationships. People move. People divorce. People betray. People die.

\* We face uncertainty about our world. We live in the so-called “global age of terror.” We hear of threats almost every day.

“The only thing certain in life is uncertainty.”

During the month of December, we are finishing our walk through the Old Testament by pondering words from Micah’s prophecy. Micah wrote during the 8th century before Christ, and he and his people lived with the same kinds of uncertainty. As well, if they listened to prophets like Micah, they faced the uncertainty of when God would bring judgment upon them for their unfaithfulness to him.

Last week, we learned about a ruler coming from the small, worthless, insignificant town of Bethlehem. This ruler is Jesus Christ, as we discover when we read Matthew’s gospel. But as we look at a few more of Micah’s words, we discover more about this ruler, and we find certainty in a world filled with uncertainty.

Micah writes that this ruler will come from Bethlehem, and he is one “whose origins are from old, from ancient times.”

This reveals, first, WHO HE IS. He is existing, and he is external.

What do I mean when I say, “HE IS EXISTING”?

As Micah writes, this person exists. This person lives.

The word translated “origins” is more commonly translated “goings forth.” In other words, this person has been “coming and going”, as we would say, from “times of old.”

He is not just a person who will come in the future. He has lived. He does live. He will live.

This is the doctrine of the “pre-existence” of Jesus Christ. When he was born in a manger in Bethlehem, he was beginning to live as a human being, but that was not the beginning of his life. He was existing before that time, as the Son of God, who was present with God the Father at the creation.

In Genesis 1, if you read the text carefully, you will see that more than one person was present at the creation. For example, we read that God’s Spirit was present. As well, God says, “Let us make man in our image...”

Paul later writes to the Colossians that “by him (Jesus) all things were created...all things were created by him and for him.”

But there is even more here. As Micah writes, this ruler is existing, because HE IS ETERNAL.

In English, we read these two phrases: “from old...from ancient times.”

The first phrase points back to events that Micah’s people would have known about. In the “old” days, as we would say, God chose Israel as his special people. Then he freed them from Egypt, provided for them in the desert, and blessed them with the land.

But the second phrase drives us back even further. “From ancient times” directs our minds to times before the times that people can remember. One student of these words wrote that these words mean “from days of eternity.”

Jesus Christ is not just “pre-existing.” He was not just present at the creation. He has lived “from days of eternity.” He is eternal.

Some have denied this. In the early church, a man named Arius taught that “there was a time when Christ was not.” But the church rejected such teaching, because it is not true to Scripture.

We read at the start of John’s gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” If he was present for the beginning, he was present before the beginning.

Then in John 8, Jesus declares, “Before Abraham was born, I am!” This is a claim that he exists eternally, just as God the Father does. His listeners know it, because they want to stone him for saying he is equal with God.

Who is he? This ruler named Jesus is existing, and eternal.

So what does this mean for us, in a world of uncertainty?

To start with, it means Jesus is God. Our Savior is not a mere human. He was truly human, but he was not a human with all of our failings. He was (and is) the externally existing God.

We believe the One God exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three are real persons, and all three are fully God. The Son is Jesus.

He is unlike any other “savior”. He is the only name by which men and women and children can be saved.

Only he has come from God the Father, as his eternally existing Son. Only he has lived perfectly. Only he has died, as a sacrifice to take away God’s anger against sinful people. Only he has defeated death, by rising from the dead. Only he has returned to heaven, where he rules. Only he will one day return in judgment.

Our culture rejects this. Many believe that at best, Jesus is one among many ways to God.

An acclaimed television writer once said, “I do believe in Jesus. I don’t necessarily know that all the myth surrounding him is true, but I read his teachings, and I think he was a great teacher and a wonderful philosopher.”

But if that’s all he is, then what is he? He is just another person.

We proclaim him as the existing, eternal Son of God, and the only Savior of sinners. Anything less, is nothing. Anyone less, is uncertain.

But “who Jesus is” also means this for us: Jesus is God-With-Us. He is the eternally existing Son of God, who has come to live among us. He has entered our suffering, so that he may give us grace, mercy and help in our time of need.

I am reminded of the words of a teacher, who taught children in the Bronx, and helped them bear unbearable burdens.

She said, with another crumpled tissue in her hand, “Their worries should be my worries.”

What do you face this holiday season?

Maybe it is the uncertainty of money. Maybe you have made foolish decisions, or maybe fools have made decisions for you.

Maybe it is the uncertainty of health. Maybe your burden is known by all, or known by none.

Maybe it is the uncertainty of relationships. Maybe you have broken trust, or maybe your trust has been broken.

Maybe it is the uncertainty of our world. Maybe you are gripped by fear, for yourself, or for the generations that follow you.

If you are trusting in Jesus, your worries are his worries. He helps us to survive and prosper in this world of uncertainty, for he is the One who has been eternally existing, and has come to Bethlehem to be God-With-Us.

Who he is: he is existing, and he is eternal. He is God, and God-With-Us.

Yet Micah’s words also direct us to WHAT HE DOES.

As the Son of God, in union with God the Father and God the Spirit, he purposes, and he performs.

HE PURPOSES. He has a purpose.

Think again of the word translated “origins”, and translated in other places “goings forth.” If you are “going forth”, you are doing something. You are active.

So what is the activity of the Son, in union with the Father and Spirit, in these ancient times? What is the purpose?

We call it “The Covenant of Redemption.” It is the eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, to redeem people. It is their purpose, to restore people to a right relationship with the Father, through the Son.

Now this is where it gets amazing. The Bible indicates that this covenant was established, even before creation.

Paul writes in Ephesians, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

Then he proclaims, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”

When? Before the creation! From before the creation, God the Father has purposed with Jesus to bring people back to himself, through Jesus!

My children are all creative, but my second son is purposefully creative. He will make or build something, and he will know exactly what he will do with what he has created.

In the same way, the creating, redeeming God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - have a purpose in their creation. So from even before the creation, they have purposed for this Ruler who has been “going forth” to “go forth” from heaven and be born in Bethlehem, so that he might live, die, rise, rule, and one day return.

He did it. And he is doing it. And he will do it. He purposes, and HE PERFORMS. This “ruler” of Micah will come “for God,” and he will rule over Israel and the nations.

This is captured best in Philippians 2. Paul writes that Jesus was truly God, but he made himself nothing, to come here. He humbled himself, to even death on a cross.

“Therefore,” Paul writes, “God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

In his life, in his death, in his resurrection, in his present rule and future return, Jesus is performing what has been purposed from eternity!

What does he do? He purposes, and he performs.

So what does that mean for us, in a world of uncertainty?

It means, first, that Jesus is ruling. He has ruled, and he does rule, and he will rule. His purposes are firm. His performance is sure.

That is rather different than most people, isn't it? We are surrounded with people who disappoint, frustrate and even betray us.

I have a saying that I picked up from a friend a few years ago, and I have repeated to some of you: "Underpromise and overdeliver." Do not promise too much. Deliver what you do promise, and even more.

But so many around us, and we ourselves, overpromise and underdeliver. We promise much, and deliver less. The result is hurt, anger, and bitterness.

This One who has been "going forth" from old, from ancient times, is not like that. He delivers what he promises. His purposes are as sure as eternity past, and his performance is as certain as the blood-stained cross.

If you are in relationship with Jesus Christ today by faith, you can be certain of his rule in your life and your world.

He has made you right with God, by giving himself for your sins.

He is making you holy before God, by giving you joys and struggles that are designed to remove sin from your heart, and renew goodness in your life.

From even before creation, from a time that we cannot even comprehend, he has purposed this for you. Now he is performing this in your life. He will not waver. He will not be distracted. He will not be stopped.

All about your life is from him, and your life is all about him.

He will never leave you or forsake you. He will continue his good work in you, as you look to the day of his return to you, or your homegoing to him.

And that day will come, because "what he does" not only means that Jesus is ruling, it means that Jesus is winning.

The missionary Henry Martyn translated a New Testament for the people of Persia, which is now Iran. When he was finished, he was forced to make a journey to Tehran that nearly killed him. He survived, but his next trip was over a thousand miles, and he soon realized he would not survive that.

Ten days before he died, he wrote in his journal. He had an unexpected rest, so "I sat in the orchard, and thought, with sweet comfort and peace, of my God; in solitude my company, my friend and comforter.

"Oh, when shall time give place to eternity? When shall appear the new heaven and new earth wherein dwells righteousness?"

Martyn's words reflect our longing for a place of certainty - a place of no more uncertainty about money, or health, or people, or the world itself. His longing reflects our longing.

But how can we be certain that our longing will be reality? We must remember that Jesus is winning.

The nations are in ferment. People frustrate. Health fails. Markets flounder.

But Jesus is eternally existing - from old, from ancient times.

Jesus has eternally purposed, and he has performed the deeds in space and time that assure us of his promise that he is winning.

The words of Micah are filled with military imagery. This Ruler is a Warrior who will defeat God's enemies. We can be certain that Jesus is "going forth" to ultimately gain a final victory over evil.

He has secured the victory on the cross. He will announce the victory at his Second Coming. Because of who he is, and because of what he does, we know this is certain.

Why do we love holidays? I have always wondered about that. I am one who tends to be overwhelmed by Christmas and New Year's celebrations.

I have thought a lot about that lately. It struck me this week that maybe we love holidays, because they are a reflection of our longing for heaven. We long for a day of joy, peace, rest, love...and certainty.

So we surround ourselves with the trinkets and traditions of holidays, in the hope of capturing even a taste of what heaven will be like.

Of course, holidays are not heaven, and they can disappoint us. But in our hearts, we still long for this certainty. Like Henry Martyn, we wonder when time and evil will be replaced with eternity and righteousness.

In Jesus, we receive certainty in a world of uncertainty.

Remember the saying? "The only thing certain in life is uncertainty." That is only true, if we forget or neglect the greatness of Jesus.

If we know he is existing and eternal, we know he is God, and God-With-Us, in all the uncertainties of this life. If we know he is purposeful and performing, we know he is ruling and winning, and we can rest in that certainty.

The only thing certain in life is...Jesus.