

The Ruler to Be Born in Bethlehem

The OT reading for this coming Sunday (Fourth Sunday in Advent) is Micah 5:2-5. In contrast to the dire prediction of v. 1 (being led into exile), Micah shifts to a positive note. The Lord addressed this wonderful promise of a future ruler to a people and king whose situation seemed hopeless.

Bethlehem had a notable history. Benjamin, the son of Jacob was born near the town; his mother Rachel was buried here. Ruth gleaned the fields of Boaz at Bethlehem; here King David was born. Yet Bethlehem had remained a small town, too small to be named among the more than 100 cities belonging to the clans of Judah (Joshua 15:20ff).

The physical kingdom of Israel would not be restored. This would be a spiritual kingdom. The Father's will and purpose from eternity was made manifest in the coming of the Prince of Peace.

The phrase *he shall stand and shepherd his flock* is a word picture of the shepherd standing and watching over his flock. There He stands leaning a bit on His staff, while quietly watching His sheep.

As the Good Shepherd he knows his sheep by name and gives his life for them. Because he is our shepherd we will have peace and security. We are the Lord's people and he knows our name. It never slips his mind. What's more, our shepherd has died for our sins. Jesus' atoning death has made peace between God and us guilty sinners.

The Lord has not promised us victory over all our earthly enemies, but He has given us victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil through Jesus, the Son of David, born at Bethlehem. We are spiritual victors.

Prayer: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 15:57). Alleluia! (TLSB)