

Message Nine

Christ's "Goings Forth" from the Days of Eternity

Scripture Reading: Micah 5:2-5a; John 1:1, 3, 14, 29, 32-42, 51

I. "You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, / So little to be among the thousands of Judah, / From you there will come forth to Me / He who is to be Ruler in Israel; / And His goings forth are from ancient times, / From the days of eternity"—Micah 5:2:

- A. This verse prophesies concerning the incarnation of Christ in Bethlehem—Matt. 2:4-6; Luke 2:4-7.
- B. Although Christ came forth from Bethlehem, His goings forth were from ancient times, from the days of eternity; this refers to Christ's eternal origin and indicates that in eternity, before the creation of the earth, Christ was preparing to come forth.
- C. Christ's appearing, His manifestation, began in eternity; from ancient times, from the days of eternity, the Triune God was preparing to come forth out of eternity into time, to come with His divinity into humanity by being born in Bethlehem as a man.
- D. His creating of all things was His preparation for Him to come out of eternity into time; this was the purpose of creation.
- E. Then, while the "locusts" were operating to consume Israel (Joel 1:4; 2:25), Christ came forth.
- F. Christ's going forth, His appearing, is a continuous matter:
 - 1. At the time of His incarnation He began to come forth.
 - 2. He continued to go forth through His human living, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His outpouring of the consummated Spirit (who is the reality of Christ Himself), and His spreading through the preaching of the gospel to the whole inhabited earth; all these are great steps in Christ's going forth.
 - 3. Christ's going forth, His manifestation, will consummate when He comes back to defeat Antichrist and cast him into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:19-20), when Satan is cast into the abyss (20:2-3), and when Christ sets up His throne to reign as King (Matt. 25:31, 34, 40); at that time His appearing will be complete.
- G. While Christ is on the way, He is taking care of the scattered Jews; on the one hand, Israel is under God's chastisement; on the other hand, Israel is also under God's shepherding care; this shepherding is God's preservation of Israel.
- H. In the restoration Christ will be the Ruler, the Shepherd, and the peace to His elect, Israel (Micah 5:2-5a); today, as our Ruler, Christ keeps us; as our Shepherd, He nourishes and cherishes us; and as our peace, He controls our environment so that we may enjoy Him.

II. Christ's goings forth from the days of eternity are also seen in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, which unveils Christ as the Word of God in the two sections of eternity with the bridge of time—cf. Psalms 90:1:

- A. The Word of God in John 1:1 refers to Christ, the only begotten Son of God (v. 18), in eternity past as the definition, explanation, and expression of God:
 - 1. He is the great "I Am," self-existing and ever-existing—Exo. 3:14-15; John 8:24, 28, 58.
 - 2. He is eternal, without beginning or ending—Heb. 7:3.
- B. John 1 is the introduction to the whole Gospel of John, and the main stress of this introduction is that Christ is the Word of God—the definition, explanation, and expression

of the mysterious and invisible God; it refers to Christ and His goings forth from the days of eternity in the five greatest events in the history of the universe:

1. John 1 reveals Christ in the creation of all things in the beginning of time—v. 3.
 2. Christ is also seen in the incarnation of the invisible God to be a visible man (v. 14), partaking of man's flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), for the redemption of the lost universe to bring in the New Testament age.
 3. Christ is also revealed in His becoming the Lamb to take away the sin of the world (mankind) judicially for the New Testament—John 1:29, 36:
 - a. Christ was “delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God”—Acts 2:23a.
 - b. This counsel must have been determined in a council held by the Divine Trinity before the foundation of the world, indicating that the Lord's crucifixion was not an accident in human history but a purposeful fulfillment of the divine counsel determined by the Triune God—1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8.
 - c. The redeeming Christ was “foreknown before the foundation of the world”—1 Pet. 1:20.
 - d. Christ was crucified on the cross for our judicial redemption according to God's eternal purpose and plan; it did not happen accidentally.
 - e. Hence, in the eternal view of God, from the foundation of the world, that is, from the fall of man as part of the world, Christ was slain—Rev. 13:8.
 4. Christ is revealed in His becoming the Spirit for the transformation of God's redeemed people into stones (John 1:32-42) for the building of God's house (Bethel—v. 51) organically for the New Testament.
 5. Finally, Christ is referred to in His being the heavenly ladder to bring heaven to earth and join earth to heaven at Bethel, the house of God, from His coming back to eternity future—v. 51; Gen. 28:11-22.
 6. These five great historical events, which include Christ's goings forth from the days of eternity, can be summed up in five words: *creation, incarnation, Lamb, Spirit, and ladder*.
- C. In all these five universal, historical events, Christ, the Word of God (as: 1. the Creator in creation; 2. the man in incarnation; 3. the Lamb in redemption; 4. the Spirit in transformation; and 5. the ladder in joining earth to heaven), defines, explains, and expresses the invisible God:
1. In His creation “the heavens are telling of the glory of God; / And their expanse [firmament] is declaring the work of His hands. / Day to day pours forth speech, / And night to night reveals knowledge. / There is no speech, nor are there words; / Their voice is not heard” (Psa. 19:1-3, NASB), and the invisible things of God, “both His eternal power and divine characteristics, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world” (Rom. 1:20); what is referred to in Acts 14:15-17 and 17:24-29 serves the same purpose of revealing Christ's creation.
 2. In His incarnation He unveils that the Creator has become one of His creatures (Col. 1:15), bringing God into man, mingling divinity with humanity as one, and in His human living He expresses God in the divine attributes through His human virtues.
 3. In His becoming the Lamb for the redemption of the lost world, Christ speaks to us how God accomplished His redemption judicially through His death as the procedure according to His righteousness.

4. In His becoming the Spirit for life-giving and transforming (1 Cor. 15:45), Christ speaks to us further how God carries out His economy organically by His divine life for His divine purpose according to His heart's desire.
 5. Christ, in His being the heavenly ladder at Bethel, also speaks to us how God desires to have a house on the earth constituted with His redeemed and transformed elect, that He may bring heaven to earth and join earth to heaven, to make the two as one for eternity.
 6. In addition to all the above items, John, in his last writing, Revelation, tells us that even in the warfare for the kingdom of God, Christ is the Word of God speaking for God's purpose—19:13.
- D. Christ's goings forth from the days of eternity usher in God's eternal building, the New Jerusalem, which will be the ultimate fulfillment of God's eternal plan as the mutual abode of God and man—21:3, 22; cf. Psa. 90:1:
1. By Christ's goings forth from the days of eternity, Christ as the Word of God in eternity past becomes (united, mingled, and incorporated with His chosen ones) the New Jerusalem in eternity future.
 2. This eternal building, the New Jerusalem, will terminate the bridge of time and usher in the blessed eternity in the future—cf. Eccl. 3:11.
 3. We must be for that building, and we must be that building—John 1:51; Gen. 28:11-22; 1 Cor. 3:9, 12a, 16-17.