

**Advent 2025**  
**Session Two: Peace**  
**Commentary**

**Micah 5:1-4**

4:11–5:1 Judah’s oppressors did not know God’s ultimate wisdom or understand the purpose of his plan. Yahweh had actually gathered these oppressors to be threshed like sheaves of grain. His sovereign power will make his weak and frail people into a mighty army who will rise and thresh God’s enemies and glorify the Lord of the whole earth. But until that glorious day of deliverance, Jerusalem would suffer attack and siege and her ruler would be utterly humiliated. God always has a purpose for the seemingly random, difficult events of life (Gn 50:20; Rm 8:28). The Lord of all the earth never loses control and can always bring good from evil.

5:2–5a God would raise up another ruler from David’s hometown of Bethlehem Ephrathah (Ru 4:11) who would be his servant (for me; cp. 1Sm 16:1). This “ruler” will extend God’s kingdom to the ends of the earth (see Ps 2:8; 72:8) and bring God’s “wholeness” or peace (Hb shalom) with his righteous reign (Is 9:6). His people will live securely in his kingdom. His origin (lit “goings out”) will be from antiquity (miqedem), and from ancient times (miymey olam, lit “from days long ago”). Both terms can refer just to a very long time ago, perhaps the beginnings of messianic prophecy (Gn 3:15; 12:3; 49:10, etc.), or to eternity (Ps 74:12; Pr 8:23; Hab 1:12, etc.). God had not forgotten his promise of granting an eternal kingship to David (2Sm 7:4–17). This coming Davidic ruler would appear when she who is in labor has given birth. Varying interpretations of this woman include: (1) the mother of Messiah (i.e., Mary); (2) Bethlehem, the birthplace of Messiah; (3) a righteous remnant bringing forth salvation; and (4) a historical reference to the upcoming exile (4:10). The exiles would go forth as from the womb into captivity and return once more (v. 3). See Matthew’s application of these verses (and 2Sm 5:2) to Jesus in Mt 2:6.<sup>1</sup>

**Luke 2:1-7**

2:1–3. Luke changes the scene quickly and radically. We go from the isolated Jordan wilderness to the senate in Rome, from a young man waiting for his chance to perform to the Roman Emperor seeking taxes.

Luke shows his historical concerns by setting Jesus’ birth in a world history framework. The problem lies in the ability of modern historians to recreate his historical framework. We can list governors of Syria around the time of Jesus’ birth:

|                        |          |
|------------------------|----------|
| M. Titius              | 10 b.c.  |
| C. Sentius Saturnius   | 9–6 b.c. |
| P. Quintilius Varus    | 6–4 b.c. |
| * * * * *              |          |
| P. Sulpicius Quirinius | a.d. 6–7 |

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<sup>1</sup> CSB Study Bible: Notes (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Jesus was born at least by 4 b.c. How could Quirinius have been responsible for the census? Also, Luke claims the entire world participated. No other records show such an extensive Roman census. Records do show Augustus sought to reorganize the financial policies and procedures of the empire. The census was one means he used to gain financial resources. Records also show Quirinius carried out an important census (referred to obliquely in Acts 5:37) but a decade after Jesus' birth. Without further records, we cannot solve this historical problem. Such solving is not necessary, however, to maintain confidence in God's Word. It would answer human questions but would not provide new theological insights or new directions from God for life.

2:4–7. Joseph, barely introduced in 1:27, enters center stage. Taxation followed his lineage, so he obediently traveled the ninety miles to Bethlehem, David's home, where the Scriptures said Messiah would be born (Mic. 5:2). Finally, we see Joseph, too, can trace his family tree to David. Joseph did not make the trip alone. Mary, still only engaged, not married but pregnant, joined him. Perhaps, she, too, like Syrian women over age 12, had to register for the census and pay taxes. Luke surprises us with his next statement, just as the event must have surprised Mary and Joseph. Jesus' appearance time had come. Simply, Luke reports, she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

Following the practice of her day, Mary wrapped the baby in strips of cloth to keep his arms and legs straight. Jesus' first crib had usually served as a dining table for animals. Where they had eaten, he now slept. Why? Because all normal lodging places were full. Or perhaps because Joseph found a small one-room house with just enough room for him and his wife. The only available space for the child was in the animal trough attached to the wall that their room shared with the animals' quarters. The promised king came to his people but did not have enough power to secure a resting place for his birth. The descendants of David descended to a stable to find a place to lay the head of the King of kings. This is how God used earth's lowest to bring salvation from heaven's highest.<sup>2</sup>

### **Romans 5:1-8**

5:1 Commentators differ over whether chap. 5 belongs thematically to the first major section of Romans or to the Christian life section, chaps. 6–8. It has connections to both. Paul in 5:1–11 uses "we" and "us" as he explains the benefits that those who are justified possess. Justification is just one of many ways of speaking about salvation. In this division, Paul showed how justification involves reconciliation. Justification speaks to our sound legal status before God while reconciliation describes our repaired relationship to God in more personal terms. We were at war with God, relationally alienated from him, but he reconciled us by his Son (v. 10). We have peace in some manuscripts can be read as "let us grasp the fact that we have peace." This peace is an objective, settled fact because Jesus has accomplished it once and for all.

5:2 Access to God's grace is the privilege of all believers. We have the freedom to enter his presence at all times. His golden scepter is always extended (cp. Est 4:11–5:2).

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<sup>2</sup> Trent C. Butler, *Luke*, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000).

5:3–4 Believers can rejoice in tough circumstances and afflictions because we know that through such things the Father is disciplining us for greater holiness (Heb 12:10).

5:5 The Christian's hope is certain because God's love is assured to us by the Holy Spirit's ministry within the core of our being (our hearts).

5:6–8 We can be sure of God's love since he did so much for us when we were helpless. We were ungodly, we were still sinners, and we were his enemies (v. 10). Jesus died for that kind of person. The word translated "for" is the Greek preposition *hyper* used in substitution contexts. Jesus died in our place. God freely chooses to love us and by doing so confers worth on us through our faith in him.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *CSB Study Bible: Notes* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).