

TEXT: Micah 5:2

TITLE: CHRISTMAS SURPRISE THAT SURPASSES ALL EXPECTATIONS

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE COMING OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH BRINGS DIVINE DELIVERANCE AND RIGHTEOUS RULERSHIP FROM SURPRISING ORIGINS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Everybody likes surprises for Christmas. It seems like Christmas gifts hold the greatest excitement for children. They might have asked for a variety of toys – but their face as they unwrap each gift shows the delight in each surprising discovery. As we mature our joy shifts more to delight in giving rather than just receiving. In fact, the surprise factor dims as my wife Karen not only puts together her wish list but also makes certain purchases for me to wrap and give to her. I appreciate that help – but it definitely diminishes the surprise factor.

Our text this morning is a very specific prophecy of the ultimate **Christmas Surprise that Surpasses All Expectations**. But first we need a little background regarding the historical context.

Historical Context:

- Micah was a **younger contemporary** of Isaiah – prophesied during the reigns of a number of kings including Hezekiah (probably the greatest king of Judah after the division of the kingdom) – “*The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.*” 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

- **Big Idea** of the book of Micah: **WHO IS A GOD LIKE YAHWEH?**

**DESPITE PERVASIVE COVENANT DISLOYALTY WHICH BRINGS NECESSARY JUDGMENT, YAHWEH STANDS ALONE AS A GOD OF FORGIVENESS AND LOYAL LOVE WHO WILL YET DELIVER HIS PEOPLE AND PROVIDE THE SHEPHERD-KING TO REIGN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE**

- **immediate context** – (the middle of Micah’s 3 messages -- each beginning with the injunction, “*Hear*” -- 1:2, 3:1, 6:1 -- combining sense of impending doom with hope of deliverance; present trouble but future deliverance); “*muster yourselves in troops*” or “*gash yourselves*” in mourning over your desperate condition (debate over interpretation of this phrase) [S. Lewis Johnson: But this word also is a word that in certain contexts means “*to gash oneself, to cut oneself.*” For example, it’s the word that was used of the prophets of Baal when Elijah was having his contest with them on Mount Carmel. Appealing to their deity.]

“*They have laid siege against us; With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.*”

The King of Israel referenced here in his role as judge; Object humiliation – extreme low point for the nation

2 possibilities:

- the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib of Assyria – 2 Kings 18-19; looked like Jerusalem was going to fall for certain but the Lord intervened in providential way; remember it was Assyria that captured the northern 10 tribes and took them into captivity; Jerusalem was trembling in fear; certainly Assyria specifically referenced in later verses in this same chapter 5

- the siege by Nebuchadnezzar – 2 Kings 25 = lowest point in Israel’s history;

taken into captivity to Babylonia – probably this is the ultimate reference

## THE COMING OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH BRINGS DIVINE DELIVERANCE AND RIGHTEOUS RULERSHIP FROM SURPRISING ORIGINS

### I. SURPRISING ORIGINS

*“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
too little to be among the clans of Judah,”*

**Phil Johnson:** “*but*” – monumental conjunction – radical change of direction; introduces a new prophecy that is profound in its glory; Christmas represents turning point in human history;

Lord is the one speaking here – only one that can speak with authority about the subject of origins; the eternal one who has always existed

#### A. Surprising Origins in Terms of Expectations

Should have been the expected place of birth of the Messiah – Yet “*He came unto His own and His own received Him not*” – **John 1:11**; How could this be??

**John 7:25-31** shows it was the expected birthplace of the Messiah – but the religious leaders mistakenly thought Jesus was born in Nazareth where He grew up – **John 1:46** – Nathanael replied: “*Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*”; Jesus pointed out that ultimately He came from God – from heaven

Micah 5:2 = very specific prophecy:

**S. Lewis Johnson:** The promise of the Redeemer, for example, is a promise given in the Old Testament in many forms, and in each of these forms there is a narrowing down of the coming of the Redeemer. For example, in **Genesis chapter 3, in verse 15** it was said by Moses, as he gave words that God gave after the sin of man that the Redeemer would come from mankind. Then later on in the **9th chapter** it was further defined as the Redeemer will come from the Shemitic division of mankind. He will be of the division represented by Shem. And then in the **11th and 12th chapters** when Abraham is called, we are told in the Scriptures that the Redeemer shall come in the line of Abraham. And then in the **49th chapter** of the Book of Genesis we are told that the Redeemer will come from Judah's tribe, and in fact from David's family. Then we are told in **Isaiah chapter 7** that this Redeemer who comes from mankind, from the Semitic division of mankind, from the line of Abraham, and from Judah's tribe, and David's family is going to be born of a virgin. And in the passage that we are looking at tonight, we read that he will also be born in the village of Bethlehem. So the Bible has carefully narrowed down its prophecies so that there would be no misunderstanding about the person to whom they referred.

What do we know about **Bethlehem**?

- Bethlehem was in the district of Ephrathah -- the Bethlehem in the south, the Bethlehem near Jerusalem – not the other Bethlehem in the northern part of the land -- in the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:15) – very specific reference; “*fruitfulness*”
- **Gen. 35:19** – place of sorrow – burial of Rachel wife of Jacob – giving birth to Benjamin = “Son of my right hand” instead of “Son of Sorrow”; baby born in the manger was to become the Man of Sorrows
- setting for story of redemption revolving around Ruth and Boaz – the kinsman redeemer who was a huge type of Christ

- birthplace of David – 1 Sam. 17:12; the type of Christ who would come as the Son of David; called the city of David; man after God's own heart; great shepherd/ruler; 1 Sam. 16:1

**Spurgeon:** It was at Bethlehem that Ruth went forth to glean in the fields of Boaz; it was there that Boaz looked upon her, and she bowed herself before her lord; it was there her marriage was celebrated; and in the streets of Bethlehem did Boaz and Ruth receive a blessing which made them fruitful so that Boaz became the father of Obed, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David. That last fact gilds Bethlehem with glory—the fact that David was born there—the mighty hero who smote the Philistine giant, who led the discontented of his land away from the tyranny of their monarch, and who afterwards, by a full consent of a willing people, was crowned king of Israel and Judah. Bethlehem was a royal city, because the kings were there brought forth. Little as Bethlehem was, it was much to be esteemed

- means “*house of bread*” – Jesus came to be the **Bread of Life** – offer Himself as the provision for the needs of men; Hopefully we who know Him are feeding on Him daily – not just in this Christmas season, but every day; yet to those who reject Him, He responds with the other significance of the name Bethlehem = “*house of war*” – bringing a sword of division and the ultimate judgment of the wrath of God when He returns not as Savior but as Judge

We tend to put God into a box of our expectations – allow God to surprise you!  
Remember **Ephes. 3:20-21** “*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*”

God can make a way where it seems there is no way ..  
This Christmas, allow God to raise the level of your expectations concerning the **Bread of Life** and His provision for your every need

### **B. Surprising Origins in Terms of Significance**

**Martin:** The Messiah-Ruler, who will deliver His people, was born in an insignificant, **small** town (not even mentioned in the list of towns in Josh. 15 or Neh. 11) where **the clans of Judah** lived.

**S. Lewis Johnson:** **George L. Robinson**, who has written a helpful little book on the prophets, he wrote it some years ago, said, "Isaiah had foretold a virgin birth, but Micah foretold a village birth." . . .

Gideon is an illustration of this, too, because the very word that is used for little here is a word the Gideon used of himself. When God appeared to Gideon and said, "Gideon, I'm going to use you to deliver the children of Israel from the Mideonites." He said, "I'm the least of the members of my family. I'm little." But God likes to take the little things, the insignificant things, the things that don't count in men's eyes and make something great of them so that we will glorify God. That's the way he does things. So not many mighty, not many noble, not many well-born are called. He does things in that way. That's a principle, and that principle is found right here.

Now, one might say, does not Matthew 2 say something quite the opposite? Well actually, Matthew, when he cites this prophecy, does say something different. You may have

remembered that when the question was asked, "Where is he that was born King of the Jews?" The scribe said, "Well, the prophecy of the Old Testament is the prophecy of Micah, and it says there that the Messiah, or the King of the Jews, is going to be born in Bethlehem." "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people, Israel." Now, the reason that Matthew has reversed that is that by the time Matthew writes his gospel, it has become evident that the Messianic King has now come from Bethlehem, and Bethlehem is now not the least among the thousands of Judah, because out of Bethlehem the Messiah has come. Bethlehem has a name now that millions and millions and millions of people revere, because of what happened there. But long before that happened, it was, as the prophet said, little among the thousands of Judah.

**Goins:** The birthplace of the King was not in the great city of Jerusalem, but in the little village of Bethlehem, nestled in the hills southwest of Jerusalem, a village too small to attract the attention of foreign conquerors. As we know from the gospel stories, his birth was in the barren simplicity of a stable.

A land that seem so insignificant producing a ruler who is supremely significant

**1 Cor. 1:27-31** – this is how God chooses to operate; look at selection of David to be king  
**Psalms 118:22** "*the stone which the builders refused*"

**Piper:** God chose a stable so no innkeeper could boast, "He chose the comfort of my inn!" God chose a manger so that no wood worker could boast, "He chose the craftsmanship of my bed!" He chose Bethlehem so no one could boast, "The greatness of our city constrained the divine choice!" And he chose you and me, freely and unconditionally, to stop the mouth of all human boasting. . .

The deepest meaning of the littleness and insignificance of Bethlehem is that God does not bestow the blessings of the Messiah--the blessings of salvation--on the basis of our greatness or our merit or our achievement. He does not elect cities or people because of their prominence or grandeur or distinction. When he chooses he chooses freely, in order to magnify the glory of his own mercy, not the glory of our distinctions. So let us say with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest!" Not glory to us. We get the joy. He gets the glory.

**Spurgeon:** There is a passage in **Zechariah** which teaches us a lesson:—it is said that the man on the red horse stood among the myrtle-trees. Now the myrtle-trees grow at the bottom of the hill; and the man on the red horse always rides there. He does not ride on the mountain-top; he rides among the humble in heart. "With this man will I dwell, saith the Lord, with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word."

Humility of the Messiah is Key – remember Philippians chapter 2 – humbled himself by taking on a human nature – did not ever lose the attributes of deity but “emptied Himself” in terms of voluntarily not exercising them independently of faith in the Father for a season; lived a humble life; submitted to the most humiliating type of death – the most humble man that ever lived – yet the **most Significant!**

Surprising Origins in terms of Expectations and in terms of Significance, and now thirdly:

### **C. Surprising Origins in terms of God’s Providence**

even though Mary and Joseph were living in Nazareth when the Holy Spirit came upon her and made her pregnant with the Christ child, God in His providence brought them to Bethlehem for the birth;

Caesar Augustus issues a decree that they are to be taxed. – God controls all things  
There are no surprises with God – how comforting to us in this Christmas season – whatever our circumstances, the providence of God is working on our behalf –

**Rom. 8:28** “*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*” – Has that been your experience??

Moving now from the Surprising Origins of the Messiah to His Supreme Mission

## **II. SUPREME MISSION DERIVING FROM SUPREME COMMISSION**

*“From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.”*

### **A. Supreme Commission**

Representing God Almighty – invested Him with **Authority**

Came from the Father and returned to the Father

Many verses in Gospel of John stating that He came from heaven; sent by the Father

**Spurgeon:** (Dec. 23, 1855 message on same text) -- It is a sweet thought that Jesus Christ, did not come forth without his Father's permission, authority, consent, and assistance. He was sent of the Father, that he might be the Saviour of men. . . Oh! methinks the angels must have wept when they lost the company of Jesus—when the Sun of Heaven bereaved them of all its light. But they went after him. They descended with him; and when his spirit entered into flesh and he became a babe, he was attended by that mighty host of angels, who after they had been with him to Bethlehem's manger, and seen him safely, laid on his mother's breast, in their journey upwards appeared to the shepherds and told them that he was born king of the Jews. The Father sent him! Contemplate that subject. Let your soul get hold of it, and in every period of his life think that he suffered what the Father willed;

Came to do the will of my Father – to perform His work; set His face to go to Jerusalem

Think of the “Great Commission” which Jesus left for His disciples – to evangelize and communicate His teachings so as to make disciples throughout the world – yet that commission pales in comparison to the **Greater Commission** that Jesus had received from the Father – truly a Supreme Commission – paying the penalty on the cross for our sins; dying so we might live

### **B. Supreme Mission = Ruler in Israel – the ONE**

**Gen. 49:10** “*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh come*” = cryptic name for the Messiah =

*“the lion from the tribe of Judah”* – Rev. 5:5

**Is. 9:6-7** “*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.*”

Look at all the wicked kings that ruled over the northern kingdom – every single one was described as wicked; even in the south in Judah, they all had their failings

Look at all the wicked nations that oppressed Israel over various periods of her history; nations today still trying to stamp out of existence the Jewish people

- Desperate need for divine deliverance
- Desperate need for righteous rulership

The Messiah will reign in Millennial kingdom over all the earth  
 He Reigns right now over our hearts as we repent and trust Him – otherwise returns in judgment

### III. SUPERNATURAL PEDIGREE – CONSISTENT WITH DEITY

*“His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”*

#### A. Nature Consistent with Deity

Majestic Messiah King right from the outset – different than any other infant

Cf. **Prov. 8:22-23** – same words used to denote the eternity before creation of this world  
 His goings forth reach back into eternity past; days of immeasurable time  
 No beginning and no end; the alpha and omega

**McComiskey:** “*goings forth*” – *to conduct one’s activities*; **2 Kings 19:27**. Beyond that the phrase has a military connotation referring to the departure of an army for battle . . . and may speak of the kingly activities of the Messiah in terms of his might and power, a fitting contrast to the weakness and subjugation of the Israelite monarchy pictured in the preceding verse.

**S. Lewis Johnson:** [point made by Spurgeon] By the way, they asked, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” Do you know of anyone who was born king besides the Lord Jesus? Well, don’t wreck your brain trying to think of someone, because it will probably be impossible for you to do it . . . but he is one who is born King of the Jews, because he was a King long before he was born . . . We call all of these other persons **princes**, but he is really the **King**.

#### B. Appearances / Activities Consistent with Deity

His goings forth at the time of Creation – He already existed at that point of earthly beginnings:

**John 1** – the Logos – *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him”*

Theophanies in the OT – appearances of Jesus Christ

- Gen. 18 – appeared to Abraham
- Gen. 32:24 – Jacob
- Joshua 5:13 -- Joshua
- Daniel 3 -- Daniel

### CONCLUSION:

Look at how different ones responded to the surprising birth of the promised Messiah in the little insignificant village of Bethlehem of Ephrathah:

- Response of **King Herod** – fear – wants to find him and kill him – fear of accountability
- Response of **wise men and of angels** – worship – want to find him and give him gifts and worship him

- What is **your response** this Christmas season?
  - when we understand our lost condition in sin, we know we need **divine deliverance**
  - we certainly need the shepherding and nurturing guidance of His **righteous Rulership** – the Lordship of the one born King of the Jews is something to welcome rather than to resist

This Christmas season:

- Live with sense of Expectation of what Christ can do
- Live with sense of Divine Mission and Commission
- Live with focus on Eternity

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### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How could anyone desire to have Jesus as their Savior and yet not want Him as their majestic Lord and ruler?
- 2) Do you ever consider yourself to be too insignificant to be used in a powerful way by God?
- 3) Do you view yourself as sent by Jesus your Savior on a divine mission to accomplish His purposes?
- 4) What significance do you find in the eternity of Jesus?

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### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

#### **S. Lewis Johnson: Israel's Kings: The One Discomfited, the One Discomfiting**

Some time ago I remember reading some things that had to do with a prominent minister and some comments he made with reference to sin. He said, "We are living in a day of hazy standards of right and wrong; that the old lines of demarcation have disappeared from modern thinking." And he referred to another minister who said, "The delineation of sin has undergone a transformation somewhat similar to that which has taken place in the world of painting. The old clear cut lines have given way to an impressionistic indefiniteness. The black and white contrast, to low tone grays. The churches have adapted a hush policy on the doctrine of depravity and a Rotarian gospel takes the place of repentance."

He went on to say, "I like his reference to painting. There was a time when you could look at a picture and tell what it was. Today black and white have become gray. Someone has said, 'The religion of China is Confucian. The religion of America is Confusion.' A country school teacher who was applying for a job was asked, 'Do you teach that the world is round or do you teach that it is flat?' He said, 'Which way do you want it taught, I can teach it either way.'" Well, something like that is the attitude of many who stand in the pulpits today, because their idea of what they ought to preach is what others are saying that they ought to preach, and they do not go to the standard of the word of God . . . [look at how specific and clear the prophecies relating to the coming of the Messiah] . . .

This oracle that we are looking at tonight in Micah chapter 5 begins in verse 1 of the English text and concludes with verse 6, but we're only going to look at the first two verses of it, or the first section of the oracle. This is the third of the oracles in the series. In verse 9 and 10 of chapter 4 we had the first of the three oracles. It begins with the adverb "now" in verse 9 of chapter 4. And then in verse 11 through verse 13 we have the second of the oracles. It again begins with a "now." And finally, the third of the oracles, chapter 5, verse 1 through verse 6, and it, too, begins with a now. And each one of these oracles is marked by a contrast between present troubles and future greatness. If you go back and read those sections that we have studied, you notice that they begin with a reference to trouble, but then they conclude on the note of a future greatness; the prophet, linking the things that he is saying with the troubles that they are experiencing, and seeking to encourage them by the prospects of future greatness through the coming of the salvation of God. . .

One might wonder, "Can Bethlehem, that little village, breed a royal king who will have authority over the whole of the earth?" Now, Bethlehem was just a little village. And for those of you who have seen it, I don't imagine it was anything more than it is today, just a little village, inconsequential, but out of Bethlehem is to become the world ruler. I'm sure that they must have wondered over that. Is it possible for little Bethlehem to be the source of the world ruler? But God can make oaks out of acorns, and he can make a kind over the whole of the earth to come from the little village of Bethlehem. So amid the storm clouds of the advance of the Assyrians against the city, there is the bright ray of hope offered here in this forceful prophecy.

**Goins:** Micah of Morasheth was burdened with a prophetic gift of discernment from God. Almost in spite of himself, Micah saw God at work behind the dramatic changes on the national scene as well as the international scene, all of which affected his people deeply. Micah saw judgment coming, first on the northern kingdom of Israel. He foresaw the fall of that nation to Assyria in 722 BC. God warned him of the fall of Jerusalem and the southern kingdom which was going to come from the Babylonians in 586 BC. Micah tried to call his people, the Jewish nation, back to faithful worship and sincere, loving obedience to God and his covenant relationship with them. But the people refused to listen. We have seen how he pleaded for social justice. He asked his people to be more concerned about the poor and helpless among them, but the people wouldn't repent. They didn't pay any attention.

The book of Micah is organized around three messages that come from the Lord. Chapters 1 and 2 are a warning message: Divine judgment is coming on both Israel and Judah. Micah's second message, at the heart of the book in chapters 3-5, is a message of promise focusing on the nation's future. He announces hope—a deliverer is coming to captive Israel, and he will restore and reunite Judah and Israel. We come to the conclusion of that message today in chapter 5 as we look at "the once and future king." Chapters 6 and 7 contain Micah's final message. That final message is one of challenge to us. Are we going to do something with this incredible vision that God has given us for the future? Can we trust God? Can that trust in him then lead us in obedience to live the lives he has called us to live now?

**K & D:** At the time of Zion's deepest degradation the ruler in Israel will arise out of Bethlehem, who will not only secure for His people deliverance from their foes, but raise them into a beneficent and yet dreaded power to all nations, founding a kingdom of peace, and glorifying Israel into a holy nation.



### **Phil Johnson: The One**

OT put stress on the deity of Christ in all the Messianic prophecies of His birth; Jewish leaders of Herod's time quoted this verse when he asked religious leaders where Christ was expected to be born; amazingly full text; only a couple of times when Jesus outright identified himself as the promised Messiah – basically in private declarations; on numerous occasions He instructed others not to reveal His identity; Matt. 26 – put under oath to declare whether He was the Christ; everybody knew He came from Nazareth in Galilee as His home town; Nathaniel's reply: "*Can anything good come out of Nazarene?*" **John 7** – they challenge legitimacy of His claim to be Messiah; popular superstition: "No one would know where the Messiah came from;" Testified that He came from God; Works of Jesus were proof enough for many of the common people to believe in Him; **vs. 41** contingent probably led by Pharisees that used prophecy of Micah 5:2 to refute claims of Christ; thought He did not meet that qualification; Recognized as important Messianic prophecy even before birth of Christ; providential decree from Caesar Augustus forced Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem at that time

Micah was a younger contemporary of Isaiah; Hezekiah was best king on throne of Judah after division of the kingdom; even good kings from Judah sometimes did bad things; **Jer. 26:18** – Jeremiah summarizing message of Micah as judgment against Jerusalem; Nebuchadnezzar left Jerusalem as a plowed field and took people captive to Babylonia; interspersing threats of judgment with promises of redemption; this prophecy looks beyond siege of Sennacherib to doom at hands of Nebuchadnezzar; when you strike someone on cheek with a rod you add insult to insult; **2 Kings 25** when Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar; total destruction – final catastrophic failure of earthly dynasty of David; low point in Israel's history followed up by glorious Messianic prophecy;

### **3 Pictures of Christ:**

Humbleness and insignificance of this town; had a long and interesting history;  
Special ruler – "*the one*" – clear note of eternity – "*of old*" – using language that is used for description of God;  
Progression in verse from insignificance to most significant ruler

#### **1. Christ in His Humility as a man**

His humanity is assumed here rather than explicitly stated; He didn't come to earth in exalted fashion; made himself a servant in family of working man; filthy feeding trough for cattle; humbled himself to the most humiliating death of all; humble man from his birth to His death

#### **2. Christ in His Power as a king – perfect, unconquerable ruler**

**Matt. 2:2** – *born king of the Jews* – point by Spurgeon; people born as princes usually; king of kings and lord of lords; He received heaven's honor and recognition; hosts of angels praising him; foreign dignitaries – the magi – bringing him gifts; used to being in the presence of royalty; eagerly gave Him the worship due to Him; He will reign in Millennial Kingdom; but don't let your eschatology diminish your view of His reign right now from the right hand of God in spiritual sense; His kingdom ultimately is not of this world; Jesus only temporarily laid aside the use of some of His divine attributes and power; didn't use them independently of His Father; exercises dominion over our hearts or will judge men

#### **3. Christ in His Majesty as God – the one who inhabits eternity**

Deity of Christ clearly expressed here; birth of Christ in Bethlehem was not His beginning; some

clear threads of Trinitarian fabric woven throughout this passage as God the Father is speaking; sending this eternal person to reign over all the earth; John 3:16; 10:36; Gal. 4:4; 1 John 4:9-10, 14; God the Son came to this earth on the behest of God the Father on mission of redemption and mercy; came to pay the penalty for our sins; supremely worthy of all our praise and worship

**Spurgeon:** Observe for a moment here, that each of these four great occurrences happened to the saints when they were engaged in very eminent duty, or when they were about to be engaged in it. Jesus Christ does not appear to his saints every day. He did not come to see Jacob till he was in affliction; he did not visit Joshua before he was about to be engaged in a righteous war. It is only in extraordinary seasons that Christ thus manifests himself to his people. When Abraham interceded for Sodom, Jesus was with him, for one of the highest and noblest employments of a Christian is that of intercession, and it is when he is so engaged that he will be likely to obtain a sight of Christ. Jacob was engaged in wrestling, and that is a part of a Christian's duty to which some of you never did attain; consequently, you do not have many visits from Jesus. It was when Joshua was exercising bravery that the Lord met him. So with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: they were in the high places of persecution, on account of their adherence to duty, when he came to them, and said, "*I will be with you, passing through the fire.*" There are certain peculiar places we must enter, to meet with the Lord. We must be in great trouble, like Jacob; we must be in great labour, like Joshua; we must have great intercessory faith, like Abraham; we must be firm in the performance of duty, like Shadrach Meshach, and Abednego; or else we shall not know him "*whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting;*" or, if we know him, we shall not be able to "*comprehend with all the saints what is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,*"