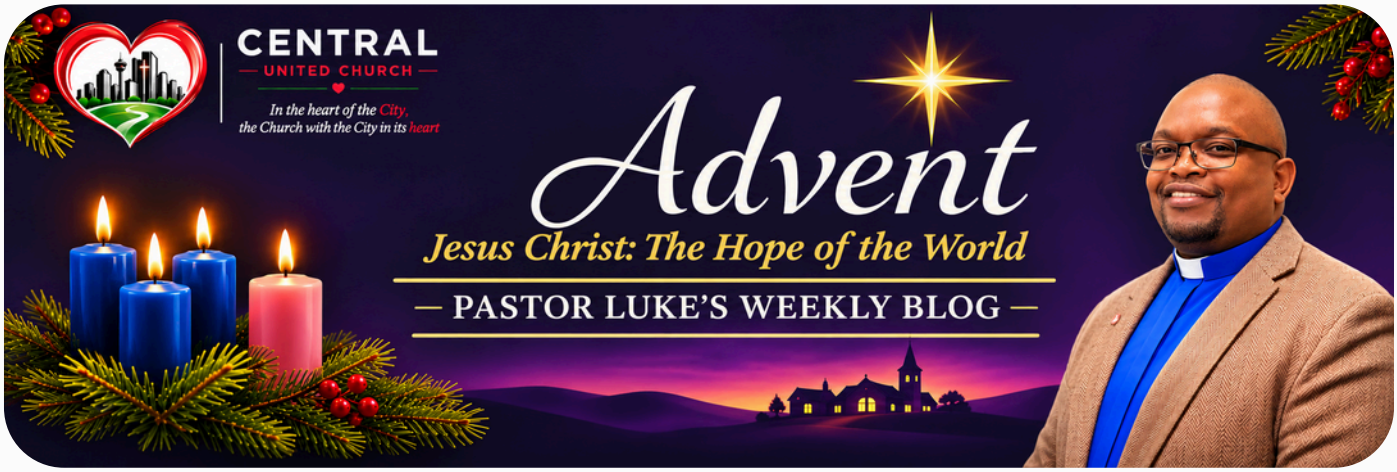


November 19, 2026

LITTLE BETHLEHEM AND THE COMING MESSENGER

MICAH 5:2

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

MICAH 3:1

Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple.



Isaiah told us who would come: Immanuel, the Mighty God, the righteous Branch of Jesse. Two other prophets add essential details. Micah tells us where the Ruler would be born. Malachi tells us that a messenger would go before Him to prepare the way. Then the prophetic voice falls silent for about four hundred years, until an angel appears in the temple and the story of the Gospels begins.

Micah spoke against leaders who ***hate good and love evil*** and who exploited the poor (Micah 3:1-3). He warned that Jerusalem would be besieged and its ruler struck ***with a rod on the cheek*** (Micah 5:1). Once again, the house of David appeared weak and humiliated.

Bethlehem Ephrathah was ***little among the thousands of Judah***, hardly worth mentioning on the tribe's list of towns. It was where Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz, and where Samuel anointed Jesse's youngest son, a shepherd boy named David. God said to Samuel, ***The LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart*** (1 Samuel 16:7). Micah declares that God will do it again. From this overlooked place will come ***the One to be Ruler in Israel.*** God consistently delights to work through small things. As Paul would later write, ***God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty*** (1 Corinthians 1:27).

His ***goings forth are from of old, from everlasting***. He has a birthplace, but He has no beginning. John opens his Gospel with the same truth: ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*** (John 1:1). Jesus Himself said, ***Before Abraham was, I AM*** (John 8:58). He is the Everlasting One.

He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the LORD... for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth; and this One shall be peace (Micah 5:4-5). Bethlehem was a shepherd country, and the Ruler born there would be a Shepherd-King. Jesus would one day say, ***I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep*** (John 10:11).

When the wise men arrived in Jerusalem asking about the newborn King, Herod gathered the chief priests and scribes, who answered immediately by quoting Micah 5:2 (Matthew 2:5-6). Even the religious experts who did not go to worship Him knew exactly where the Messiah should be born. Luke shows how God moved the machinery of the Roman Empire, through a census decreed by Caesar Augustus, to bring a carpenter from Nazareth and his pregnant wife to ***the city of David, which is called Bethlehem*** (Luke 2:1-4). The emperor thought he was counting his subjects; God was keeping His promise.

Malachi addressed a discouraged community back from exile. The temple had been rebuilt, but worship had grown careless, marriages were breaking, and the people complained, ***Where is the God of justice?*** (Malachi 2:17). God answered with a promise: Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. ... ***Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers*** (Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6).

Malachi's promise builds on an earlier word in Isaiah: ***The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'*** (Isaiah 40:3). In the ancient world, a herald went ahead of a king to announce his arrival and ensure the roads were ready. God promised that before He came to His people, a forerunner would call them to repentance and readiness.

The One who follows the messenger is the Lord Himself. When Jesus later identified John the Baptist as the fulfillment of this promise (Matthew 11:10, 14), He was revealing His own identity. John prepared the way for Jesus; Malachi said the messenger would prepare the way for God.

After Malachi, empires rose and fell. Persia gave way to Greece, and Greece to Rome. The faithful kept praying, reading the Scriptures, and waiting. People like Simeon waited ***for the consolation of Israel*** (Luke 2:25), and Anna spoke of Jesus ***to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem*** (Luke 2:38).

When the angel Gabriel finally broke the silence, he did so in the temple, just as Malachi foresaw, announcing to an elderly priest named Zacharias that his son would go ***before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children'*** (Luke 1:17).

Soli Deo Gloria – to God alone be the glory!
Rev. Luke Haisa