

JESUS: BORN TO RULE

SERIES: THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES OF JESUS

by Ron Ritchie

If you are a student of international politics, these can be exciting days to observe the shifting of the nations on the world stage. But if you are a student of international politics and a student of Biblical prophecy at the same time, these are most amazing days! Having the joy of being allowed to dip my toe in both pools, as perhaps you do, I have been very interested in the Biblical prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7 as they relate to the political and spiritual landscapes of Israel, Europe, and Russia in the end times.

As you know, Western Europe over the last few decades has been working on a project called the European Common Market, or EEC. The dream is to join ten to twelve nations together economically so that 350 million Europeans will form a collective block in order to become a competitive market with America and Japan. An EEC passport is now available, border checkpoints are closed, freedom to travel to all the countries is now possible, a single currency is on the drawing board, and the treaties have been signed in 1992, meaning that prosperity is just around the corner.

But what happened to the dream? The June 24, 1993 *International Herald Tribune* called the EEC a big bust. It said that Europe is in a deep recession and the jobless rate hangs around eleven percent or greater. The governments are all overseeing weak economies and have become insecure and passive. They are preoccupied with domestic troubles and have not provided much leadership on anything from the war in former Yugoslavia to the turmoil in Russia. All of Europe faces rising social pressures due to economic stagnation and big budget deficits. In that article and another one that I will share with you in a bit (and as in so many being written today), we find the nations crying out for a leader who will bring them prosperity and peace and save them from all this horrible, deadly confusion that goes on day after day.

When we read the words of the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles, we are amazed at how quickly the nations are preparing their minds and hearts to receive a world leader to bring them into social and economic peace. This world leader, Scripture informs us, will be the false messiah known as the antichrist who must come onto the world stage before the second coming of the true Messiah, Jesus Christ the Son of God.

The nation of Israel, even in these days of apparent peace with some of the Arab nations, is struggling to find a leader who will finally make all the wrongs right within that violent land before the Jews and Arabs can truly sit down together in peace. Some 2750 years ago God promised them a leader through the prophet Isaiah. His prophecy was fulfilled two thousand years ago when Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. And at that time the Jewish people were looking for their Messiah as they struggled under the heavy heel of Rome. However, when he arrived they rejected him.

But God's story of redemption is not over yet. And as we turn to Isaiah 9:6-7 we will be greatly encouraged by the love and grace of God toward the Jewish people as well as toward each one of us as we discover that Jesus, born of a virgin to save us from our sin, was also born to rule as the Son of God over not only the nations but the hearts of mankind in every generation.

The Promise of God

Isaiah 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.

By way of background, according to Isaiah 7, Isaiah the prophet was sent to Jerusalem in 741 BC to speak to King Ahaz when his city was surrounded by the armies of Syria and Israel. Isaiah told the king to ask God for a sign that would convince him and his people that the God of Israel still loved them and would protect them from their enemies. But Ahaz refused the offer, because he hoped that Assyria would protect him. So the Lord gave his own sign, telling them that a deliverer would come out of the house of David, and meanwhile Judah as well as Syria and Israel were marked off for destruction. Isaiah 8 predicted the downfall of the ten tribes by Assyria.

In Isaiah 9 the prophet foresaw the Assyrians invading Galilee in 722 BC and causing a great emotional and spiritual darkness to come over the people of God. At the same time he was given prophetic insight that sometime in the future God would place his Messiah in the land of Galilee as a great light. Then between verses 2 and 3 we have an ellipsis, so to speak, and verse 3 bring us to the end of the great tribulation and the redemption of Israel. It is at this point that Israel and then the world will see in the second coming of Christ who he was in his first coming. They will finally realize as they look back into their history that God gave them in the form of a small child their Immanuel and Savior and that they missed him. So with joyful hearts they will give him the divine titles he so fully deserves.

(If you have ever wondered why the Jewish people have problems with understanding that Isaiah 9:6 [in the Hebrew text] is speaking about the coming Messiah Jesus, here are two reasons: [1] The Septuagint [an ancient translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek] says, "and his name is called the messenger of great counsel, for I will bring peace upon the princes, and health to him." [2] The 1936 Hebrew Publishing Company translation is close to ours, but the Jewish Publication Society's English translation [1917-1952] says, "...And his name is called *Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom* , which has left millions of Jews since 1917 confused because they did not understand Hebrew.)

Meanwhile the Christian community is presently enjoying all the spiritual blessings that God wants to give to his people Israel, and will give to them once they recognize him as their Immanuel.

Let's look now at God's promise of the first coming of Messiah in Isaiah 9:6a.

The First Coming of Messiah

"For a child will be born to us...." This speaks of Messiah's humanity and refers to the child already spoken of by Isaiah when he wrote in 7:14, "Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." This child who would one day become our great High Priest would be born of a virgin, symbolizing ceremonial purity, freedom from defilement (see Leviticus 21), and sinlessness. The virgin Mary was told by the angel Gabriel to name the baby Jesus ("The Lord Saves"). The name Jesus describes his ministry: He would save us from our sin and the power of Satan (see John 1:29). The name Immanuel ("God with us"; see Matthew 1:23) describes his consistent presence. Therefore, Jesus, Immanuel, is the divine Presence who delivers and saves.

"...A son will be given to us...." This describes Messiah's deity. Our minds race across the Scriptures when we see that phrase. Paul wrote to the Galatians (4:4-5), "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." Some eight days after Jesus' birth, his parents took him to the temple in Jerusalem to be circumcised. Simeon, a righteous and devout Jew who had been looking for "the consolation of Israel," saw them and in the power of the Holy Spirit he took the baby Jesus in his arms,

blessed God, and said:

"For my eyes have seen Thy salvation,
Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,
A light of revelation to the Gentiles [see Isaiah 42:6],
And the glory of Thy people Israel."
(Luke 2:30-32.)

Luke further wrote in 2:40, "And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." Jesus was not just any son, but as the heavenly Father spoke out of heaven to John the Baptist and all who were present at his baptism, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus was God incarnate, the very Son of God. John wrote (3:16), "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

But believing that Jesus is God's Son is such a struggle for so many people in this generation, certainly for the Jewish community. Remember Rabbi Jacob Neusner who says he wants to ask Jesus, "Who do you think you are--God?" in his recent book *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus* (see Discovery Paper 4383). He complains, says Robert Hutchinson, a freelance writer who interviewed him in Tampa Bay recently, that Jesus does not discuss "Eternal Israel." He also knows that "Christ is the new Moses with a New Law, and he becomes the Paschal Lamb sacrificed in a New Passover as part of the New Covenant." (*Christianity Today*, "What the Rabbi Taught Me about Jesus," pp. 27-29, September 13, 1993.) Neusner understands all this better than many Christians; he just does not believe it.

According to Isaiah, the nation of Israel looks at Jesus today with the same eyes and heart as Rabbi Neusner, but one day they will finally have spiritual insight into history that not only did Jesus come to die for their sins, but he was raised by God the Father; and they will finally understand what the Jewish disciples of old did when they watched Jesus being taken into heaven and the angels said to them, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Jesus will return to earth to set up his physical kingdom in Jerusalem, and meanwhile he is setting up his kingdom in the hearts of Jews and Gentiles who place their faith in Him as their Messiah. Let's look at Isaiah 9:6b-7, which skips over the entire church age and the tribulation. The battle of Armageddon is over, Christ is coming in the sky, and this is the proclamation that breaks out!

The Second Coming of Messiah

We read, "...And the government will rest on his shoulders...." Luke 1:30-33 tells us further:

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."

Just before our risen Lord departed from this earth he said to his disciples, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18; see also Revelation 2:27). The Roman government and the religious leaders of Israel rejected their Messiah, but the Father honored him; and immediately upon his resurrection he was given power in heaven to rule invisibly over all the created beings in every generation on earth, until he comes again to rule visibly on earth on the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem during his thousand-year reign.

"Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder,

When he opens no one will shut,
When he shuts no one will open."
(Isaiah 22:22; Revelation 3:7.)

A lot of folks missed Jesus' first coming, but no one alive on earth will miss his second coming in power and glory. John tells us in Revelation 19:11-16:

"And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'"

"...And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor...." Jesus was the name given to the Christ Child because he would save his people from their sins. But Wonderful Counselor is also a proper name given to him because of his ministry on this earth. That he should be both sinless and the friend of sinners is infinitely wonderful. He was the Wonderful Counselor to the woman at the well in Samaria, to the woman caught in the very act of adultery, to the rich young ruler struggling with self-righteousness, to the confused disciples, and so on. And further, Jesus told his disciples in the upper room the night before he was to be betrayed, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper [*parakletos*], that He may be with you forever" (John 14:16). He was referring to the Holy Spirit, who is an eternal Comforter who will continue to be the Wonderful Counselor in this day and the days ahead... "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:5). And when Jesus rules the world as Lord of lords he will continue to be a Wonderful Counselor.

The October 18 issue of *National and International Religious Report* stated, "Jews are among the United States' most 'unchurched' people." Of the twenty-five hundred Jewish households surveyed, only twenty-five percent of American Jews attend services at least once a month, and only thirty-nine percent are members of a local synagogue. In Israel, according to *Moment* magazine (October 89), fifty percent of the Jews are secular Israelis, thirty percent are religious Zionists, five percent are "Messianic Zionists" who see the rebirth of Israel in 1948 as the first stage in a process that will culminate with the coming of Messiah, and fifteen percent are the ultra-orthodox Jews, or *haredim* , who believe that only after Messiah comes and sets up his rule will it be worth celebrating religiously. Yet within the Jewish community individual Jews are accepting Jesus as their Messiah daily and continue to become members of God's spiritual "remnant" and our brothers and sisters in Christ. They are also privileged now to go, as we are, to their "Wonderful Counselor" about all their physical, emotional, and spiritual problems.

I am amazed at how frightened I get sometimes, even when there is no rational reason to be. I always have to go back to the Lord and say, "Excuse me, it's me again. I'm frightened, and you're my Counselor. Would you review for me who you are, who I am to you, and how we're going to get through this one? If I react to life with this fearful heart it will be in the flesh, and I will defend myself and hurt a lot of people. Please guard me against that." That same Counselor is yours. What is it that gets you or terrifies you or angers you? Go to the Counselor. He is as close as a prayer away, and he will understand. You don't have to be frightened any more. You may be tempted to be frightened, but you don't have to buy into it because you have the Counselor. His name is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. I always feel such relief when I go home and my wife is there. When I walk through the door, no matter what's going on in the world, I feel so comfortable and comforted. That is a picture of the presence and ministry of the Counselor Because he is with us everything is safe and peaceful.

"...His name shall be called...Mighty God..." The Jews had the great history of the acts of the Mighty God. He is the one who took them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, who brought them through the forty years

of wandering in the desert, and who conquered all the enemies of Israel at that time. This title signifies supreme deity for Messiah. There is no created being in the universe stronger than our Lord God Jesus, which he demonstrated in his every word and action while he was on this earth, and is now demonstrating in the heavenlies and will once again during his earthly rule in Jerusalem and into eternity. "For now we see in a mirror dimly...." But even in that dim light we can see enough of him to make us fall at his feet and worship him as the Mighty God. In speaking of his victory over the enemies of Israel, our Lord said through Isaiah (in 49:26),

"And all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior,
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."

The Lord reveals the future hope of Israel in the same words through Isaiah in 60:15-22 (see also Isaiah 10:21):

"Whereas you have been forsaken and hated...
I will make you an everlasting pride,
A joy from generation to generation...

Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior,
And your Redeemer, the Might One of Jacob."

At this moment the nation of Israel is depending on their army and the memory of past victories to be their mighty god. But one day they will find that the only Mighty God they can depend on will be their Messiah Jesus. The Christian community is commanded in the face of all our enemies to "be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might" (Ephesians 6:10).

"...His name shall be called...Eternal Father..." He was from eternity before his life on earth and he went back into eternity after he rose from the dead. He is the father of eternal life or the father of eternity. Jesus was the one who said while ministering on this earth, "I am the way, the truth, and the life...." (John 14:6). And one day from his throne in heaven he will say for all the world to hear, "Behold, I am making all things new...I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost" (Revelation 21:5-6). He is the only one who can give eternal life to the Jewish people as well as to the Gentiles because he is the Father of eternity (see John 1:12).

"...His name shall be called...Prince of Peace...." Jesus is the only one who can bring *shalom* not only to the nations of the earth but also to the hearts of humanity. The Jewish nation rejected their Prince of Peace when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey colt on Palm Sunday, and they nailed him to a cross the following Friday. But one day, because God raised the Prince of Peace from the dead, they will acknowledge him and bow before him as his people. Meanwhile on an individual basis the peace that was first broken in the garden of Eden can now be experienced between God and man in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote to the Romans in 5:1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...." Jesus said to his disciples in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives...Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." He is the author of conditions that involve everlasting, unbroken peace on earth, in heaven, and in the hearts of men and women forever. The function of a king is to bring peace. It is when God is with us that every circumstance can be seen in its right and proper light and there can be peace.

Tuvya Zaretsky of Jews for Jesus called me on Wednesday and told me that Richard Parnes, a telecommunications technician who prayed with him in September to receive Jesus as his Messiah, was baptized last Friday night by the pastor of a congregation of Jewish Christians. His family in the Bronx, New York said they would have been happier if he had gone back to acting in pornographic movies rather than become a follower of Jesus! But he had met the Prince of Peace and accepted him.

Having seated Messiah upon his throne, our prophecy follows him into his ministry to our hearts and to the nation of Israel as well as to the nations of the world:

"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."

Daniel the prophet saw the events at the end of "the times of the Gentiles" (which began in 586 BC when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the Jews were placed under Gentile rule and domination, and which will end when Jesus returns in glory; see Luke 21:24 and Daniel 8:13). Then, according to Revelation 13, the Lord will come in glory and deliver the Jewish remnant who have been besieged by the Gentile world powers under the rule of the beast and the false prophet in the last great battle on the plains of Armageddon, Israel. And he will usher in "the day of the Lord" in which he will set up his earthly kingdom: "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever" (Daniel 2:44). It will not only endure but it will continue to grow in peaceful ways.

Isaiah wrote in 16:5,

"A throne will be established in lovingkindness,
And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David;
Moreover, he will seek justice
And be prompt in righteousness."

Mary was told by the angel about Jesus, "He will be great; and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end." He will rule as the Son of God in the hearts of men, as the Son of David over Israel, as the Son of Man over the earth, and finally as the sovereign Lord over heaven and earth. Humanity will finally experience firsthand during Christ's thousand-year reign on earth his righteous justice, because he loves justice, as Isaiah 61:8 says. He will fill Zion with justice and righteousness (see Isaiah 33:5), as well as the nations (see Isaiah 42:1). The Spirit of the Lord will be upon him...

"And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth...."
(Isaiah 11:3-4.)

The nations of the world community are looking for a world leader. In order to drive home this point, let me just quote to you from the article "Ukraine over the brink" in the magazine *Economist* (September 4): "Since independence in 1991, Ukraine has been a disaster waiting to happen. The disaster is now upon it. At the end of August the currency collapsed...forcing the prime minister who was the only one working on reform to resign...placing the nation into a political and economic crisis." But then the article concludes with the most amazing paragraph: "More than a millennium has passed since the Slavic tribes of what is now Ukraine invited a group of Vikings to become their lords with the words, 'Our people are hard-working, our land is fertile, so come and rule over us.' If the leaders of independent Ukraine do not soon launch the economic reforms they have ducked so far, their people may yet look north again for princes to rule over what is potentially a prosperous country. Many Russians would be all too ready to help."

God has already provided his choice for the world ruler:

"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.

The nations are looking for a world ruler because they do not know how to rule, how to provide prosperity, peace, joy, and safety. Daniel says they are ripe for antichrist.

Which ruler have you chosen?

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