

# The Messiah - King - Peace Maker

by Paul Bramsen

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*The sermon explores the role of the Messiah as a peacemaker amidst the ongoing conflict in Jerusalem, emphasizing the need for divine intervention and reconciliation.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 9:6

**Topics:** "Messiah And Peace", "Reconciliation And Justice"

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## Description

Paul Bramsen discusses the ongoing conflicts in Israel, emphasizing the importance of praying for the peace of Jerusalem as mentioned in Psalms 122. Despite numerous failed peace efforts and deep-rooted animosities, there is hope for peace through the miraculous intervention of the Messiah, who is believed by Jews, Muslims, and Christians to be the Prince of Peace. The sermon delves into the unique attributes of the Messiah as a peacemaker, just ruler, and the one who will bring reconciliation between humanity and God, highlighting the significance of his role in establishing lasting peace in Jerusalem and the world.

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## Transcript

Isn't it ironic that Israel's capital means 'city of peace'? Since Israel was reconstituted as a nation she has been plagued by bitter disputes. We are saddened by the escalation of bloodletting which has recently erupted again. This is a matter of urgency seeing that this conflict could have a polarizing effect on Christians and Muslims around the world. Therefore God-fearers ought to pray for the "peace of Jerusalem" as scripture says in Psalm 122.

The prospect for peace seems bleak considering many failed peace efforts and continued bitter fighting. Many Palestinians remember that they weren't consulted when the UN partitioned Palestine in 1947. They struggle to come to terms with what seems to them an illegitimate act by the UN when it recognized the state of Israel. It is true that Israelis have committed many injustices which have fueled the conflict but so also have the Arabs. The deepening dispute with spiralling rage and vengeance causes many to lose hope that there will ever be a just settlement with lasting peace. As hopeless as it seems from a human viewpoint there are reasons to be encouraged and to believe Almighty God can do the impossible.

It will be helpful to begin by briefly reviewing some key events that have happened since the rebirth of the nation Israel. No sooner did the United Nations recognize Israel in 1948 than the Arabs launched "a war of elimination and massive massacre" against the Jews -- in the words of Azzam Pasha, then secretary general of the Arab League. Israel lost relatively little territory in this war. Then 19 years later the Arab League planned another full scale attack against Israel but again Israel survived virtually unscathed.

Indeed, she acquired considerable new territory. The UN called on Israel to return all this new land but Israel has only given back a portion of it.

Since 1967 numerous attempts have been made to negotiate a peace settlement, one of the more notable ones being the Oslo peace accord (1994). This agreement was meant to mark a milestone in Arab attitudes to Jews, whereby they would recognize Israel's right to be a nation. Arafat agreed to have the Covenant of the PLO and the Charter of the Palestinian National Authority amended to enshrine Israel's right of existence. However, Arab hatred against the Jews proved too intense and the promised amendments never materialized.

Muslim radicals are becoming increasingly frustrated at Arafat's failure to deliver their promised land. Indeed, they seem to be setting the agenda as the recent 'Jerusalem intifada' drags on and intensifies, like reporter Farhana Ismail discovered when she visited the West Bank recently. She concluded that "activists are ignoring Arafat's orders" and radicals are "pressuring the PLO leader to take a tougher stance." Judging from what seems to be a "disintegration of Arafat's regime" and the resurgent intifada the prognosis for peace is very poor.

Peace negotiations had reached a critical stage before President Clinton left office, focusing on the resettlement of Palestinian refugees and the status of Jerusalem, especially the Al Aqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock which are on or near the place where the Jewish temple once stood. Middle East researcher, Dr. Randall Price, describes the Temple Mount as "the most volatile acreage on earth."

He notes that when the Israelis captured the Al Aqsa mosque in 1967 they recognized it "held a unique religious status for Muslims and would invite only war if Jews asserted their rights there." Since then 5 riots have been triggered by alleged Jewish or Christian incursions on or near the Temple Mount. The latest riots sparked by Ariel Sharon's visit to the Mount late September 2000 have left a death toll of 500.

Radical Palestinian groups, (as well as the PLO) are determined to gain "control over Jerusalem and total control over the Al Aqsa Mosque". However, Ariel Sharon is adamant that Israel will not relinquish sovereignty of the Temple Mount, saying, "Jerusalem is the indivisible capital of Israel - with the Temple Mount at its centre - for all eternity."

Since Israel has sovereignty of the Temple Mount - the holiest site of the Jews - you might think they would have the privilege of praying on this 40 acre plot of ground - somewhere, perhaps under controlled circumstances on a Jewish holy day. However, Jerusalem's leading sheikh objected fiercely to any such suggestion, saying, "We will not stand idly by ... not over our dead bodies."

The rivalry aroused by having two holy places on the same ground is understandable, and to some extent, unavoidable but what is baffling is to see such animosity between two 'half brothers' who both claim strong ties with Abraham as a patriarch and spiritual model.

Another undercurrent that explains why the peace process has failed, is the Islamic belief that has circulated widely among Palestinians stating that Muslims will destroy the Jews in the last days. Authoritative Hadith writings quote Muhammad as saying, "The Last Hour would not come til the Muslims fight against the Jews and the Muslims kill them until the Jews hide themselves, and the stones and trees would speak up saying, ... There is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him." (Muslim, Book 40, #6985)

The prospect for peace is bleak. Something very unusual must happen if this deadlock is to be broken. For this we must turn to God. Whether we are Jews, Christians or Muslims our common belief is that God will send the Messiah as peace-maker in the last days. According to Muslim belief Al Masih will usher in an era of peace. The Bible describes the Messiah as the 'Prince of Peace'. In the Old Testament we read that "He will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares." (Zechariah 9:10; Isaiah 2:4) Could there be some common ground here? Certainly exploring the idea of Messiah and his role in the peace process is worth pursuing.

#### Miraculous Peacemaker: The Messiah

It is agreed by Jews, Muslims and Christians that the Messiah is the only realistic hope for peace, but, "How will he bring peace?" There is more than one aspect to answering this question but one thing is clear: God's peacemaker will exercise awesome power, restraining and judging evil with an iron sceptre. It is written "he will rule with an iron sceptre ... He will judge between the nations and ... beat their swords into plowshares." (Psalm 2:9; Isaiah 2:4) Let us take a closer look at what kind of ruler and king the Messiah will be.

#### God's Peacemaker Will Be Just

The portrait of the Messiah coming in the end times to reign and powerfully execute justice is not unique to the Bible. Islam teaches that the Messiah will defeat antichrist - an evil figure with super-human powers. According to the hadith the Messiah will rule justly with awesome power and institute a period of peace which will "fill the earth". Peace will even pervade the animal kingdom so that "the wolf will live with the lamb".<sup>1</sup>

#### God's Peacemaker Will Exercise Rulership

The Qur'anic account of Jesus birth contains another clue confirming the kingly role he will have, "Behold, the angels said: O Mary God giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from him: his name will be Christ Jesus" (Surah 3.45).

Muslims know that Mary's baby received a name from God himself, as revealed through the angel. Unfortunately the Qur'an does not spell out the significance of the name Messiah but commentator Yusuf Ali acknowledges it means 'to anoint'. He explains in a footnote that it derives from the Old Testament practice of anointing "kings and priests to symbolize consecration to their office."

#### God's Peacemaker Will Be Both King & Servant

The Jewish prophets foretold the Messiah would be king (Isaiah 9:6,7; Zechariah 9:9,10; Jeremiah 23:5). Wise men from the east, who were probably Gentiles, came at the time of Jesus' birth to pay homage to him as new born king (Matthew 2). When Jesus reached manhood he affirmed his own royalty when he said to Pilate, "You are right in saying I am a King." (John 18:37)

The earlier prophets described Messiah as the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 49 & 52). It is no wonder, then, that Christ's royalty was hidden by the humble way he served those who were downtrodden and needy. However, when he returns to earth in the future, as he prophesied, no one will doubt his kingly power. He foretold that "when the Son of Man comes in his glory ... he will sit on his throne ... All the nations will be gathered before him ... Then the King will say..." (Matt. 25:31)

As we can clearly see, Muslims, Christians and Jews believe that in the end times the Messiah will come to rule as a mighty king. Imagine, all of us claiming that we honour the Messiah - but not everyone will be acceptable to him. At that time it will become clear who the Messiah really is. If it turns out that the Messiah is Jesus (as Muslims and Christians believe) the Jews will be deeply disgraced and humiliated. On the other hand, if Muslims are correct - that Jesus is only another prophet - then the Christians will be ashamed and judged wrong for having believed in him as they have. By the same token, if the Bible is true, then the Muslims will be proved wrong because they strongly denied Jesus' supernatural origin and character.

### Messiah Will Have A Unique Relationship With God

The scriptures, which Christians and Jews alike believe, and which the Qur'an also acknowledges as God's Word, states, "the prophet said, 'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a king who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.'" (Jeremiah 23:5)

These words of Jeremiah reflect the original promise of God through Samuel to King David, "I will raise up your offspring to succeed you ... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he will be my son." (2 Samuel 7:12-14) Notice how God has a 'father-son' relationship with David's offspring.

This relationship is a spiritual one, similar to the description in the Qur'an where Satan has human 'progeny'. We read in Surah 18:50 "Iblis broke the command of his Lord. Will ye then take him and his progeny as protectors ..." Yusuf Ali explains in a footnote, "Satan's progeny: we need not take the epithet literally." (compare the Injil - John 8:44 where Jesus speaks of certain people as being children of the devil).

Like the word 'progeny' in Surah 18, Jesus used the term 'son' in a nonliteral sense when he urged his followers to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." Believers should act like their Father because "he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? ... do not even pagans do that?" (Matthew 5:44-47)

It is clear that Jesus used the term 'son' in a non-literal sense. From these scriptures we can see that Muslims and Christians should have no problem with God being a spiritual Father to humans. The problem comes when Jesus is claimed to be a unique prophet sharing a special place of honour with God - above everyone else. The Muslim scripture affirms the Messiah's virgin birth and says he is 'among those closest to God' but it does not go so far as to recognize the total uniqueness of Jesus.

Let's consider whether Jesus really is unique. Jesus taught his followers in Matthew 5 to imitate their Father God by being good to those who are not good to us. No one, however, is perfectly righteous and good, no one, that is, except the Messiah. Jesus asked the Jews, "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46) As much as they tried to find fault and trip him in his words they couldn't prove him wrong in any way. Indeed the Qur'an itself leaves no room to even hint that Jesus Christ was a sinner, although it candidly admits the sins of other prophets. Jesus is unique, therefore, because he is the only human to live a morally perfect life.<sup>2</sup> In this respect Jesus was perfectly like his Father.

Jesus stands above all other humans not just because of his impeccable character but also because he will rule as king over "all nations" and judge them, even as we read earlier in Matthew 25. Has anyone else made such a claim?

Neither was Jesus alone in predicting he would exercise worldwide dominion. The prophet Micah foretold this, saying, "But you Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Then Micah describes Messiah's global reign, saying, "He will stand ... in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God ... for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be their peace." (Micah 5:2,4,5)

When the prophet speaks of the Messiah having 'ancient origins' we should not assume he had a specific starting point. The Hebrew word for 'origins' simply means 'goings out'. Jesus clarified the meaning of this puzzling phrase when he said, "I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." We see a further clue to this unique attribute of Jesus when he prayed to God, "Father glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." (John 16:28 17:5) Did anyone else make such a claim - implying that he existed before the world began?

This prophecy of Micah reminds us of the peace that Messiah will bring. We recall that one of his names is, 'Prince of Peace'. However, peace is not just a matter of how we relate to one another as humans. We also need peace on another dimension, i.e. with God. This raises the question, "Could the Messiah have a peace-making role between man and God?"

#### Messiah: Making Peace Between Man and God

The Bible recounts two instances where Jesus met individuals who were notorious sinners, one was a man and the other a woman. Both of them experienced peace with God through Christ's influence. These stories are worth reading in their entirety, but for now will you please pay special attention to his concluding words to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven ... your faith has saved you, go in peace." (Luke 7:48-50) To the man he said, "Today, salvation has come to this house ... for the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)

Can we doubt that in this situation reconciliation with God was in view? The onlookers in Luke 7 responded to Christ's remarkable words, saying to themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" In Luke 19, the Jewish leaders reacted in a similar way, saying, "who can forgive sins but God alone?" The Qur'an also affirms this saying, "who can forgive sins, except God?" (Surah 3.135)

Earlier we considered the Messiah's claim to have a unique link with God by virtue of his sinlessness. Now we see another astonishing credential. Jesus exercised the Divine prerogative of forgiving people's sins. Doing this, Jesus showed another similarity between himself and God - in keeping with the proverb, "like father like son". Jesus placed great importance on the fact that he did what his Father did.

This is evident in an encounter with the Jewish leaders. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." Upon hearing this the Jews wanted to stone him because, they said, "You, a mere man, claim to be God". Jesus answered them, "Why do you accuse me of blasphemy, because I said, 'I am God's Son'? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does." (John 10:29-37)

When Jesus forgave people their sin he reflected one of God's traits. This attribute of saving people from sin clearly belongs only to God, as it is written, "I, even I, am the Lord and apart from me there is no saviour... I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake..." (Isaiah 42:24,25; 43:11,25) Ponder whether any other man claimed to have the authority to forgive people's sins.

God alone is Saviour, but we know that he planned to save the world through his Servant the Messiah, as the scripture says, "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6) This prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus but notice especially how it 'fits' with the story of Christ's birth, in particular, the name given to him.

If you have never pondered the name Jesus (Isa), as revealed by the angel of God you don't know what insights await you. It is hard to imagine, first of all, how this special name could be chosen randomly, as in a lottery draw. Undoubtedly, God chose it wisely in keeping with the mission he foreknew the Messiah would accomplish.

I would encourage you to explore the significance of this unusual name Jesus but be careful to interpret it in the light of prophecy. If you search this meaning carefully you will understand that the destiny of God's Servant was to bring "salvation to the ends of the earth." Furthermore, I trust that as you ponder the meaning of Jesus' name, you will notice Jesus' clear statement of why he came - "to save the world." (John 12:47) Christ's uniqueness is once again underscored. No one else ever claimed "to save the world" did they?

#### Earthquake in the City of Peace

Jerusalem is being shaken by human conflict but a day is coming when Jerusalem will be shaken by a great earthquake. "Therefore, the Lord says, 'In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel ... every creature and all people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence.'" (Ezekiel 38:19,20)

We might ask, "What provokes God's wrath?" Is it moral decline, for example, Israel has legalized homosexual marriages and abortion? Could God be angry at the way the Jews have been mistreating the Palestinians and other gentiles living in Israel? Or, is there something else that angers the Lord - perhaps in the world at large? If we look carefully at these prophecies we will see that God's wrath will be unleashed not only against Israel but also the world (see Zechariah 12 & 13).

The earthquake Ezekiel spoke about is described in more detail, by the prophet Zechariah, where he tells how all the nations will be gathered to fight against Jerusalem, "Then the Lord will fight against those nations ... the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west ... with half the mountain moving north and half moving south." (Zechariah 14:3-5, cf. Revelation 16:18)

This prophecy has not gone unnoticed by geologist, Dr. Amos Nur, a Stanford University professor, who has studied earthquakes in Palestine. Nur notes that the direction of the predicted earthquake follows the natural fault line, "The most remarkable thing about this quotation from Zechariah is the clear description of a strike slip fault in which the part to the east moved to the north and the part to the west ... moved to the south. This is exactly the kind of motion that we know happens on the Dead Sea transform during earthquakes" (Amos Nur & Chris MacAskill, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down - Earthquakes in the Holy Land*, Stanford, CA: ESI Productions, 1991).

Neither should this prophecy go unnoticed by us. God has left this fault line as a sign to remind us of the truthfulness of his word. Although there will be a massive multinational attack against Jerusalem in the last days, God will come to her rescue and "make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. ... never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure." (Zechariah 12:3; 14:11)

God assures us he will rescue the remnant of his people but we should remember that this deliverance will come on a large scale only when the Israelites repent of their sin and trust in God's Messiah, as the scripture says, "They will look on me, the one they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first born son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great..." (Zechariah 12:10,11)

It is amazing that in Israel, today, there are already about 6,000 Jews who believe in Jesus as their Messiah. Doubtless this is a foretaste of Zechariah's prediction. In the coming days we can expect many more Jews will repent at their longstanding rejection of the predicted Messiah-Savior.

In the meantime we expect that many Israelites will continue to reject the Messiah and consequently be disciplined by God. Scripture warns that Israel will experience "a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then ... How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob but he will be saved out of it. ... I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished." (Jeremiah 30:7-11) We can be certain that any unfairness the Israelis have shown toward the Palestinians will be set right by Al Masih Isa, the long awaited Messiah.

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