

Allan MacRae, Isaiah 7-12, Lecture 10

This is lecture 10 delivered by Dr. Allan MacRae at Biblical Theological Seminary on Isaiah 7-12:

Let us open our Bibles to the ninth chapter of Isaiah. In that chapter, we notice how it begins with a prediction that in the very area where the darkness and misery came because of the Assyrian invasion, there the light will emerge. It will be a wonderful light. Those people, walking in darkness, will see this great light. It looks forward imagines the situation. It gives us that promise in verse 5: "Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning. It will be fuel for the fire." What a wonderful *promise!* It is not an order that we should destroy all of our armaments and let anyone come in and take over our nation any more than it is an order that we should take all the locks off our doors and leave our houses open for marauders to pillage them. It is a prediction of a time when there will be no need of equipment for war, when there will be universal peace and safety, and that is very important to recognize in passages like this. There is a promise given in the Bible of a time when there is no further need of any kind of armament or protection.

Now, it is true that where the gospel is widely taught, where many people come to know the Lord, you are far safer from violence than in other places. This country of ours was founded mostly by people who came here in order to gain religious freedom. People who came here in order that they might worship God as they believed the Scripture taught. Now, they were not completely sanctified. There were people among them who fell far short of the ideal that was being taught among them, and, as generation after generation came, there grew up among them swindlers and people who would commit all sorts of evil. However, the level of violence, the level of crime in those days, was far lower in the United States than in any country where the Gospel was not being widely proclaimed.

Charles Dickens hated the United States. He hated it because the printers here took his works which he published in England and made copies of them and sold them without paying him any royalty on them, and so he made a visit to this country. When he got

home, he ridiculed what he found. The president of the United States invited him to dinner and he sent a brief note: "It does not suit my convenience," so I heard it said once that he was the only man who had ever refused an invitation to a presidential dinner. I don't know whether there's any truth to that or not, but it is certainly unusual at least. It shows that he was not prejudiced in favor of the United States, and yet Charles Dickens, said in that time about 1840 or 1850, "In the United States, at any time of day or night, a woman could walk anywhere with no fear of being attacked or molested in any way." Now that is a tremendous statement made by one who was prejudiced against, rather than for, this country. It is not that way today. The Gospel is not being preached as it was. Many souls, are being reached in our country for the Lord, but the overwhelming majority of our people never hear the gospel, and crime and violence have increased as never before.

This statement was recently made by a federal officer, that, "...50% of those who are arrested on charges of rape or murder are age 17 or under." Well, that is a situation which we never had in our country before. This verse does not say that people will just open everything up and let the robbers take everything they want. It says that the time is coming when they won't need equipment for war, that there is to be a time on the earth not only when peace reigns in the heart--it will reign in the heart of those who believe in Christ, that is a marvelous part of the blessings of the Gospel--but this says there will be a time when there is no need of armament.

Question: "The next verse talks about this 'spirit of peace' that's going to commence with the birth of Christ."

It doesn't say when it will commence; it says it is *coming* through Him. But the early Christians, and I shouldn't say the "early Christians," the Christians from, say, the third century and the fourth century thought that various predictions in the Bible of a time of universal peace were fulfilled. There was peace then in the Roman world, such as the world had never seen before, some of them said the birth of Christ cast its influence not only forward but also backward. Because of the coming of Christianity and because Augustus had established a regime of peace within the Roman empire, people

could travel hundreds of miles without fear of molestation and within that portion of the world, there was such peace as the world had never seen. So they said that it was the fulfillment of many predictions in the Scripture, that through Christ, universal peace would come. But then, at the end of the fourth century, the barbarians broke through the Roman defenses and began marching back and forth across the Roman Empire pillaging and destroying. Eventually they reduced the level of literacy of the Roman Empire from perhaps 70% down to perhaps less than 2%, and then the Pagans began to say, "Look: you promised this would come through Christ, look at what's come now." As to whether that was a fulfillment, whether it refers to peace in the heart rather than external peace, or as to whether it is something yet to come; that is a question we could discuss at length. Well, it is a very good question to look at and to have in mind.

But I want to go on from there to the next verse. Certainly, this either is going to start when the child is born or it is going to be the result of the activity of this child who is then going to be born. I don't think we can be dogmatic on the verse between those two interpretations, but we can be dogmatic that there will never be universal peace on earth unless it is directly related in some way to this child who is born. It is not something that human effort human planning can bring about. It is something that *is* brought about by this child who is born.

"For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given," and we noticed last time that this may be Hebrew parallelism. We cannot conclude from this that he is going to be the God-man that is taught in this verse. It is true of many of the predictions that they are not absolutely clear in the Old Testament so that those people were foolish not to recognize them. Even Jesus Christ's own disciples did not recognize, that he was the son of God for a long time. He said to Peter: "Flesh and blood has not revealed it to you but my Father which is in Heaven". But the predictions are so given in the Old Testament that taking them together, the disciples come to see eventually that they all pointed to Christ. And so when it says, "for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," I believe we are justified in saying we have here a suggestion of the two-fold nature of Christ. Not a *proof* of it, not a definite prediction of it, but a suggestion of it, which we find wonderfully

fulfilled in what actually happened. He was indeed a human child born of Mary, born in a perfectly natural way as far as the actual birth was concerned. He was an infant, crying in his mother's arms. At the same time he was the son given to us by the Lord. While he was in the cradle crying for his milk, he was at the same time controlling the stars in their orbits and directing the affairs of the universe which he had created.

There's a mystery which we cannot understand. We can't understand the mystery of the God-man. How there can be only one God, and yet three persons? We can't understand it but it is clearly taught in the Bible. *One God and three persons*. We can't understand how Jesus Christ can be fully God and fully man. Not mixed, no mixture, and no division. The Chalcedonian Creed very definitely denies both attempts to rationalize. It's interesting how our theological controversies through the ages have really added nothing to our knowledge beyond what a person who reads the Bible as it stands can understand. But they have rid us of attempts to rationalize and explain how Jesus was part God and part man. He was not. When they agreed that he had two natures not separated, not separable, but not mixed. He has two complete natures. Then some tried to get around it by saying he's fully man, he's fully God, but the Will is only divine. The monotheists: he only had a divine will, not human will. That was condemned as a heresy by all branches of the church eventually though there was long discussion about. We get back to the simple statements of Scripture. Jesus Christ is fully God and he is fully man.

I said that verse 6 says, "...a child will be born;" verse 5 says that, the result of the coming of this child is going to be a complete abolition of war.' It does not say that it will occur immediately. It might occur immediately when he was born, it might occur later in his life, it might be God's plan for it to occur many centuries later, but it does say it will occur. And verse 6 therefore gives us this statement, which doesn't have to be a statement, about the two natures of Christ which, I believe, is the length of our knowledge and the fact is reasonable to interpret that way.

And then we read, "...and the government will be on his shoulders." I believe that then we can take this to mean that he is going to govern in the hearts of those who believe upon him. But in this age, he does not compel us to obey him, he calls upon us to obey him, he asks us, having believed in Christ and having been born in him again through him, to seek to bring our lives into conformity with his purposes, to see, to have our character transformed into the character he wants it to be; to study his word in order to find out what he wants us to do, to seek to have the government truly on his shoulder rather than in our personal desires and attitudes. This does not say the government should be on his shoulders, it does not say we should try to *put* the government on his shoulders. There is a prediction there that we should endure which suggests for us that we should endeavor to truly be reined by him, which promises us that if we seek to have him in our lives, he will take charge of our lives, he will enable us more and more to follow him. But, I believe the promise goes beyond that. I believe that he will so completely govern, that the time will come when it will be possible to completely eradicate armaments because he will be ruling either in the heart or over the activities of every individual upon the earth. It seems to me to be pretty difficult to get away from him. I would not base everything on this passage alone, but that certainly is the obvious interpretation of the passage.

If I were to say 2 visitors will enter the room this morning, if I were to make that prediction, well, about 5 minutes ago 2 visitors did enter and took seats in the back- I'm not asking you all to look at them- but stating the fact I will have made a prediction. The prediction has been fulfilled. Now, if somebody says, 'Well, there are still 10 minutes to the hour, 15 minutes to whatever it is and Dr. MacRae said 2 visitors will come, we wonder when they're coming?' Well, they're already coming. In fact, they've already come, see? So, the prediction is fulfilled. But now if I were to say our class in Isaiah will be visited by others interested in this subject, not to say when and not to say the number that might predict that 2 might come today and that is all the visitors we would have, but somebody else

will say, "he would not have spoken in such a general way if he only meant today, he may mean through the rest of the semester there will occasionally be visitors dropping in." You see what I mean? You have to examine the statement and see if it is a specific statement of one or whether it is a statement which may be taken as a series of events, or a statement which gives a principle. Like if I were to say our classroom will be open the rest of this semester for visitors to come, we might have no visitors the rest of this semester or we may have many, for I would have stated a principle. So, each statement has to be examined in the light of the general situation and the precise words.

When it says, "...for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," there are those who say, "Jesus Christ is coming back. He is going to again be born and grow up as a child in this world," there are not many who say that, but there are a very few who do say that.

The Tibetans say the Lama and the Dali Lama will be born every time when one dies; a new one is supposed to be born that instant somewhere in the country. They have to find him, and he's the head of their particular branch of Buddhism. They have a general series of events, but here, where it says, 'unto us a child is born, "unto us a son is given, that is the answer to all our problems," it seems in the presentation very clearly to be a description of one event, though many results may follow from the coming of this child, of this son.

We have in this verse much more than that statement--"the government will be on his shoulders"--that seems to me, to say that he is going to control the governments of the world, and now he has control in some periods to quite an extent of the government of Great Britain and Germany and of *this* country. But, there are many other periods when he has not seemed to have any control at all in these governments. But "...the government will be upon his shoulders" seems to suggest something that goes quite beyond that.

Then we find, "...he will be called wonderful, counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace..." That is a very interesting statement. He will

be called this when, in the most natural way that this is going to be his name. That is the way the Jewish of the Scripture takes it. They say "for a child is born unto us, a son is given unto us and the government is upon his sholder "pele yoeis el gibbor avi ad shar shalom" is his name. They take the Hebrew and simply transliterate it as a proper name. Now so many of the Jews that read it do not know what the Hebrew words mean and maybe that is all to the good if the version is prepared for Jewish readers entirely. He's going to have this beautiful name "pele yoeis el gibbor avi ad shar shalom." But in order to help them to understand it the Jewish version puts a footnote: "wonderful in counsel is God the mighty the everlasting father, the ruler of peace." You see they insert an "is" which you can very often do in Hebrew sentences. The word "is" is not ordinarily used. For most interpreters to have such a long stringy name as an actual name is so extremely unusual that it is hard to believe that is what is intended. His name shall called wonderful in counsel is God the mighty, the everlasting father, the ruler of peace." Most Christian interpreters feel the "is" does not belong there.

Though you take a Christian interpreter James Moffett a great Scottish scholar in these days when Scotland is not standing solidly on the word of God as it did a century ago and he translates the verse: "for a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us, the royal dignity he wears and this is the title he bears "a wonder of a counsel, a divine hero, a father for all time a peaceful prince." Of course that gets away quite nicely from anything that is really supernatural and could fit most anything. That is the way Moffett translates it. But most of our recent translations translate it much more similarly to the King James and it is very difficult to see how such a title can be given to any child who is born who is not actually the "mighty God" actually "the everlasting father, the prince of peace."

Now how is Jesus Christ the everlasting father, he is the son of God. Yes but there is only one God. All the qualities are in the one God though there are three persons. So in a very real sense Jesus Christ is the everlasting father though there is in the God-head the father as compared to the son.

I would say Jesus Christ is God and God is the founder of all things, the creator of all things. He is in that sense the father of all. Now God is not a father in the sense that a human is a father of a child. There is not the same physical relationship. But God is the creator, the sustainer, the former of all, and Jesus Christ is that just as much as God the father is.

They asked, "Show us the father and it is sufficient for us." Jesus replied "Everyone who has seen me has seen the father." The unity of the godhead is clearly taught in Scripture. Yet there is a distinction of persons. Those who put their emphasis one way go off into one heresy and those who put it the other way go off into another heresy. Early church history consists of showing how they went to this heresy and the church said no you're wrong. Then they went to the opposite and they said no you're wrong. When you get what the Scripture teaches there is a mystery which no one can understand but we can take what is clearly taught that there is one God and that everything that can be said about God is true of the entire godhead. But it is also true there is a distinction of persons.

The term "son" is given. I interpret that he is actually the son of God. He is actually the son of God but that as son of God he is fully God. As God he is the creator of all things, "By him all things were created." Therefore the term everlasting father can be properly applied to him even though there is a sense in distinguishing the members of the godhead it was applied to the father rather than to him. There is only one God and yet there are three persons in the godhead. We cannot explain it. It is a great mystery. But here is a strongest possible way it predicts the deity of our Lord.

Well we'll have to continue there next week.

Transcribed by students: Tim DeVries, Zach Youngquist, Anders Johnson, Charles Downing
Edited by Ted Hildebrandt
Re-narrated by Bill Gates