

# 1. What Child is this? He is the Promised Lord - The Ultimate King

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[ 0 : 00 ] Last week, as some of you know, I was away with some of our Cornell apprentices on a reading and study week. And the students had a set book to study. And when they finally crawled out of bed about lunchtime, when I'd already done almost a full day's work, the book did eventually get opened.

I took one or two photos for the headmaster, just in case their total ignorance of the content suggested that absolutely no reading had been done at all. But I do have proof that the book was opened.

Maybe I'm being a little unfair. There was certainly some reading done of the book. And the book's title was this, *The Christ of the Prophets*. It's a truly magisterial book.

It's quite the best thing I've ever read on prophecy and the biblical prophetic books. Its author, Palmer Robertson, is one of the great exegetes, one of the great biblical theologians of our generation.

I recommend that book very strongly to you. Also his other book, *The Christ of the Covenants*. It's a classic of biblical theology. However, I'm not going to give you a summary of that book tonight.

[ 1 : 02 ] You'd be glad to know. Terry McCutcheon will be happy to do that for you afterwards down in room five. Can't see you, Terry, but don't let him out of the building. But I mention it because our title for this Christmas series really comes from that book.

Christmas, according to Isaiah the prophet. And we're going to focus over our five specifically Christmas services on just one text really. Isaiah 9 verse 6.

As we ask that question of the babe born in Bethlehem. What child is this? What child is this? Who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping.

Whom angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping. What child is this?

Well, that's the question that faced all of those who were in the story of the first Christmas.

Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, the wise men, Herod, all Israel in fact. And also it's still the vital question that faces all men today. If we're to make any sense at all of the claims of Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 10 ] What child is this that we're talking about in the Christian church? Well, we're going to look for our answer to Isaiah the prophet. And to his understanding of what that first Christmas was going to bring to the world.

And our particular focus will be this wonderful verse, verse 6. A verse that's so well known, isn't it? For that lovely aria in Handel's *Messiah*. Although, of course, we'll have to look around at other places in Isaiah to get the full picture of who this child was that he spoke of so long ago.

So tonight, by way of introduction, I want to range a little bit more widely through the book of Isaiah to see that, first of all, Isaiah is speaking of this one to come, this child to be born, as one who would himself be, at last, the promised Lord.

He'd be the ultimate king of glory. Look at verse 6. We're told that the government, that is, the government and the rule of all things in heaven and earth, will be upon his shoulder.

And verse 7 says that of the increase of his government and of peace, there will be no end. And that's a cause of great joy. So it could hardly possibly be any earthly government, could it?

[ 3 : 28 ] God forbid. Of course, it never is, is it? Thank goodness. Poor Mr. Howard discovered that just last week, didn't he? In Australia. And poor Mr. Brown looks as though he might discover that a little sooner than he thought, unless things pick up a little bit in the political scene for him.

But this child says, verse 7, his rule will be on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

And it's certain, no doubt, no depending on the voters, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. So what child is this?

Well, the chorus gets it right. This, this is Christ the King. He's the promised Lord. He's the ultimate king of glory. The king of the whole world, the whole universe.

So come back with me to first century Palestine, to occupied territory where, well, for hundreds of years, God's people Israel had lived, subjugated.

[ 4 : 36 ] They'd never been free since their exile in the 6th century BC to Babylon. Yes, they'd return to their land. But first of all, they were under the rule of the Medes and the Persians, and then the Greeks, and now the Romans.

Many, many had given up all hope of freedom. Others, of course, had led rebellions and uprisings to try and find their own freedom, and had failed.

But there was a faithful and godly remnant, those who still clung faithfully to the ancient promises of God, God's promises to bring help and succor to his people.

Men like Simeon, remember, that we meet in Luke chapter 2, who were righteous and devout, we're told, waiting for the consolation, for the comfort of Israel.

Well, what was he waiting for, Simeon, and others like him? Well, he was waiting for Christmas, according to Isaiah the prophet. Remember how Handel's Messiah begins with that tenor solo, singing the words of Isaiah chapter 40, Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people.

[ 5 : 46 ] Make straight a highway for our God. And then the wonderful aria that follows it, And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh, all nations, shall see it together.

That's what Simeon was waiting to see. The glory of the promised Lord, according to Isaiah. And he was waiting for the beautiful feet of Isaiah chapter 52, of the one who brings good news to Zion, who preaches peace and publishes salvation, and says, Your God reigns as King and Lord.

That's what it means when Luke tells us that Simeon was waiting to see the Lord's Christ. And God had revealed, we're told, to Simeon, specifically that he would see him with his own eyes before his death.

He was waiting, literally, for Christmas, for the birth of Christ, the Christ of God. But what child is this, who was born King, as Matthew chapter 2 tells us the wise men were looking for?

Well, Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, our special verse tells us the answer. Unto us, a child is born, he says. But the question still arises, Who is he?

[ 7 : 06 ] What is he? When would this happen? Well, as to the when question, neither Isaiah nor any of the prophets knew exactly. Peter tells us in his first letter, chapter 1, verse 10, that they all searched and inquired diligently to find out precisely the time and the precise human identity of the one who was to come and to suffer and to be glorified.

But as to the who question and the what question, well, Isaiah was very, very clear indeed. And the whole of his prophecy is bound together with the person and work of this child who was to come, what he really was and what he would accomplish.

Because Isaiah is looking forward to and speaking of the coming at last of the promised Lord, the ultimate king of glory. The answer.

Not, not only to the political needs of Israel at the time, but the answer to all the nations of the whole world. And indeed to the whole cosmos and indeed the renewal and the salvation of the whole universe from the curse caused by sin.

And that's why when Simeon saw the Christ child, the baby Jesus, he said to God, Now, Lord, you're letting your servant depart in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation, a light for revelation to the nations, as well as a glory for your people Israel.

[ 8 : 40 ] You see, Simeon understood this child to be the promised answer to every need of the whole world from the beginning of history and for all time, forever. It was that big.

But you might say, well, can that really be what Isaiah is speaking about? Isn't it just, isn't it just fanciful thinking by these early Christians as they, they scoured the Old Testament to find texts that seemed to give legitimacy to Jesus as their leader?

Aren't these, these prophecies that we hear read at Christmas, aren't they just disconnected verses here and there that really had all to do with the politics of the day and ancient Israel had nothing at all to do with the future?

Certainly, certainly not predictions centuries in advance about a coming child who would be God. Surely, nothing to do with a child, a human, who could be the promised Lord, the King of glory on

earth.

Well, you may have heard skeptics saying exactly that kind of thing. That's, that's very much the kind of thing you'll hear people say on BBC documentaries that come out at this time of year about the birth of Jesus and who he really was.

[ 9 : 53 ] But when you read Luke chapter 2, it's very obvious, isn't it? That's certainly not what Simeon thought and others like him. Nor is it what the apostles came to see so clearly and the gospel writers who understood Jesus' birth in exactly the terms that Simeon did.

So I want tonight to look at the context of our verse here in Isaiah and ask what Isaiah really was saying about this child who's to come. What child is this that he's talking about?

Let me quote to you a very helpful paragraph from Palmer Robertson's book *The Christ of the Prophet*. I think it sums it up very, very well indeed. He says, three connected mountain peaks provide the spinal backbone for Isaiah's prophecy.

The three things are this. The coming of the ideal Davidic king, the king in the line of David, the sufferings of the anointed servant of the Lord, and the arrival of the days of God's eschatological kingdom.

That big word just means the new creation, God's new world of the latter days. And I think that's so very helpful because it ties together what it means for Isaiah to say that he is promising the coming of the promised Lord, the ultimate king of glory.

[ 11 : 11 ] He's the ultimate answer to the world in all those three ways that I quoted. He's the ultimate ruler of the whole world. He's the king in David's line. He's the ultimate redeemer of the whole world.

He's the anointed servant of God. and he brings the ultimate restoration for the whole world. God's promised kingdom of glory.

And that's what the whole of Isaiah's prophecy is all about. So let's just think tonight a little about these three things as Isaiah speaks of them and relates them to this child. First of all, this child is the ultimate ruler of the whole world.

Just turn back a page if you like to Isaiah chapter 7. I want to look at the context of the very first mention of this child who is to be born. You know the verse very well.

It's verse 14. Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.

[ 12 : 18 ] Let me just quote Palmer Robertson again on this verse. He says, extraordinary efforts have been made to rid this passage of everything that sounds supernatural. That's true.

You may have heard people say just that. Oh, that word they say, that word virgin there in verse 14 doesn't really mean that. It just means a young woman. Well, I can just simply tell you as a matter of plain fact that that is absolutely not true.

Can't go into all the details tonight. If you want to look, look at Alec Matias commentary on Isaiah. Isaiah in the IVP series. But his conclusion is this, that in every single explicit context where we find that word used in the Bible or outside the Bible, it clearly means exactly and precisely a virgin.

And you know, all you have to do is look at the context of this prophecy to see immediately that something absolutely monumental, something absolutely, essentially supernatural must have been what was being talked about.

You see, Isaiah chapter 7 begins by telling us that God's people were under a supreme threat, a deadly threat, not just a political threat.

[ 13 : 37 ] Yes, Syria and Ephraim, the surrounding nations, were taking sides against Judah. And verse 2 tells us so bad it was it made the people shake like trees in the wind. They were petrified.

Just like I suppose some here tonight can remember the dark days of the early days of the Second World War and the fear that gripped this nation as the bombers of the Luftwaffe wrecked our cities. But it was something far, far worse than just that. Look at verse 6. The threat, you see, was for these enemies to terrorize and terrify and utterly destroy Judah.

But above all, do you see what they want to do? They want to wipe out Israel's king in David's line. They want to put somebody else, the son of Tabeel, as king instead.

In other words, they want to wipe out God's solemn covenant with David that a son of his line would always, always rule his people. And do you see what that means?

[ 14 : 42 ] That is the same kind of cosmic assault by the seed of the serpent that we've been reading about in Genesis on God's covenant promise and on God's promised seed. It's the great

assault that we see all the way through the history of God's people.

We've seen it in Genesis with Cain destroying Abel, with the demonization of society in Genesis 6. We see it all the way through the story and we will see it with Ishmael warring against Isaac, with Esau warring against Jacob, with the Pharaoh in Egypt subjugating God's people and again and again all the way through.

And here is another cataclysmic assault on the plan and purpose of God. It's an attempt to destroy God's very covenant of salvation because all depends on the king in David's line.

And that's why God prompts Ahaz to ask for a sign, to ask for a sign from God that God would not forget but that he would remember his covenant just as he remembered it with Noah and with Moses.

And when Ahaz is, well, false piety you can only call it, when it stops him from asking God for a sign, God says, right, you need a sign and I'll give you one anyway. A mighty sign that will show you that no force in earth or heaven can possibly threaten my plan of salvation.

[16:09] or can stop my promised seed from trying over his enemies. And God says to Ahaz, look, even if there is not a man left in all the earth to father a king in David's line, even that can't stop me.

For a virgin shall conceive and give birth to my king. And he shall be the world's ultimate ruler because he himself will be God, the promised Lord come to his people at last.

His name will be God with us, Emmanuel, with us, God. Now Ahaz, can I make it any plainer to you than that? It's as though God is saying, one who is God will be born of a woman.

Palmer Robertson says, only the same spirit of unbelief that marred the response of King Ahaz to the prophet's message will rationalize away the wonder of this word. Emmanuel, God with us, the ultimate ruler of this world, a king who is himself God.

That's what our verse, chapter 6 of verse 9 says, his name shall be the mighty God. What child is this? That's who he is. This child who is promised to be born, this son who is given to us, is the coming Lord.

[17:41] He's the ruler of all the world. And he comes as a king in David's line, just as he was promised. Look over to Isaiah, chapter 11, because again, this speaks of the same one who is to come.

Look at verse 1, he says, this one who is to come will be a shoot from the stump of Jesse, that is, from the remnant of God's holy seed that Isaiah 6, 13 said God would preserve even through the judgment of the exile.

And yet, look at verse 10, he's also the root of Jesse. Jesse springs from him. So yes, he's another David, he's the son of Jesse, he's the shoot from the stump of Jesse.

And yet, he is the root and the origin himself of that whole holy family from which he would be born. A king who is himself the root of all things, who is God.

And that's why verse 2 of chapter 11 is so unique. You see, the spirit of Yahweh, the Lord, will rest, that is, will rest in fullness and in completeness on him.

[18:56] you'll be full of wisdom and understanding and counsel and might. And if you look at verses 4 and 5 of chapter 11 about his rule with righteousness in all the earth and his judgment of the wicked, well, it reminds you, doesn't it, of the Psalms, of Psalm 2 in particular, God setting his king on Zion's hill who will rule all nations and rule all rulers.

of Psalm 110 where the king in David's line is enthroned and to rule in power and justice forever. This child is to be the ultimate ruler of the whole world.

And that's why our verse says he will reign forevermore and if the increase of his government and rule there will be no end ever. And so notice the answer, the answer that God gave to Ahaz's immediate political problems way back then was that.

Not a quick fix in this world for Israel's problems but an ultimate answer for the whole world. And the answer that Simeon was waiting for and got in the first century was not a quick fix for the problems of first century Israel under the Romans.

But it was the ultimate answer. God's ultimate ruler for the whole world. He will be great said the angel to Mary of her child Jesus and he will reign forever and of his kingdom there will be no end because the child that Isaiah promised had come the ultimate ruler of the whole world.

[20:43] But let's look at Isaiah's second great mountain peak that identifies this child. He's the world's ultimate ruler but also he is the ultimate redeemer for this world.

Not only is he a king who is himself God but he is a saviour also who is himself God. This child who is God's promised answer for the world under the curse is both a ruler and a redeemer.

That is the great king who is prophesied to rule the world is also God's suffering servant who will redeem the world.

This is so so important for us to grasp because that was something that the Jews of Jesus they just couldn't stomach and they can't stomach still to this day which is why still for the most part Jewish people reject Jesus as the Christ.

But Isaiah makes it so so plain. Turn over with me to Isaiah chapter 42 if you would. You'll probably know that this chapter is the first of what's called four servant songs about the suffering servant of God who will suffer in order to redeem his people's sins.

[ 21 : 58 ] I just want you to look at the very first thing we're told in chapter 42 about this one who will be the suffering servant. Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights.

I have put my spirit upon him. You see? That's exactly the description we had in chapter 11 remember about God's redeemer king.

The spirit of the Lord he said shall rest upon him. And look at verse 4 of chapter 42. He that is God's servant will bring justice to the earth.

Just as we read back in chapter 11 that God's king would bring justice to the earth and bring equity to all the world. You see they're one and the same. God's king and God's servant.

He's God's servant king. If there were any doubt about it at all, all you need to do is turn over a few pages to Isaiah chapter 52 and 53.

[ 23 : 00 ] It might just be worth looking. This is the fourth and the greatest of the servant songs. Words that we know so very well indeed. But look at chapter 52 verse 13.

Behold says God my servant he shall be high and lifted up and shall be exalted. Now there is only one figure in the whole of Isaiah's prophecy that ever is high and lifted up and that is God the Lord himself.

Remember Isaiah's call in chapter 6? He saw the Lord high and lifted up and the train of his robe filled the temple. Or in Isaiah 57 verse 15 the Lord himself speaks and says thus says the Lord the one who is high and lifted up who inhabits eternity whose name is holy.

God is holy. You see this child is the saviour who is himself God. And that's why he alone can be the ultimate redeemer of the world.

And that's why he can fill the world with righteousness and justice and peace only because he can deal with everything that prevents righteousness and justice and peace in our world.

[ 24 : 28 ] The sin of human beings and the guilt and the curse upon this world as a result of it. But he the high and the lifted up one himself he comes to be made low as a servant that he might be crushed and stricken for the sin of his people.

That's what Isaiah 53 tells us. He comes to be an offering of sin so that he the righteous servant might make many to be counted righteous.

And that alone is why his kingdom will be established and upheld with righteousness and justice from this time forth and forever more because he deals with sin.

He's a redeemer. And again do you see that God's answer in this child he promises is never merely just a political thing, an earthly thing.

It doesn't just concern the natural order. It's about sin and the spiritual realm and the root cause of all the cosmic disorder in this world. And that brings us to Isaiah's third mountain peak.

[ 25 : 45 ] This child is the ultimate ruler of the whole world because he is to be the ultimate redeemer of the whole world. And therefore Isaiah tells us his coming will initiate the ultimate restoration for the whole world.

This child brings cosmic restoration and recreation to the whole universe, to the whole cosmos.

Now that's such a feature as you know of the later chapters of Isaiah the prophet.

I want you to look again right back to chapter 11. Because it's so clear even here, right there in the context of this child and of what Isaiah is telling us about this one who is to be born, the shoot of Jesse, who is the root of Jesse, the one upon whom the promised spirit of God will dwell in abundance.

Look what this new David is going to do. First of all we're told he's going to gather all God's faithful remnant, all of them, under his rule.

Look at verse 11. In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people. That's the faithful remnant, all of those like Simeon, like Anna, like Zechariah, Elizabeth, the shepherds, Mary and Joseph and many, many more, all who responded to the ministry of Jesus.

[ 27 : 11 ] He'll call and gather his remnant. But that's not all. Look at verse 10 and verse 12. He'll gather all the nations to his rule as well. Verse 10, he'll stand as a signal for the peoples and the nations shall inquire of him.

Verse 12, again, he'll raise a signal for the nations as well as the banished of Israel. You see, all Isaiah is full of that.

It's absolutely full of it as you read his prophecy. That's why Matthew, you remember, right at the very beginning of his gospel, quotes that at the very start of Jesus' ministry. In fact, he quotes, doesn't he, the beginning of Isaiah chapter 9, especially drawing attention to verse 1 about Jesus beginning his ministry in Galilee of the nations, Galilee of the Gentiles.

He will gather the nations also to his light. That's who Jesus has come to call. But then third, look at the context of these verses in Isaiah 11, about this king who comes to rule Israel and also to rule the Gentiles in harmony and in joy together.

Look at what his rule of righteousness is going to be like. Look at verses 6 to 9. the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fatted calf together, and a little child shall lead them, and the cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the adders den, they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

[ 28 : 59 ] Well, what's that talking about? That's not talking about groups of well-meaning people trying to make this world a little bit of a better place by helping people and fighting for justice and so on, good as that may be.

That's not talking about some hope of an earthly utopia through politics or social policy or anything like it. nothing like that.

That's talking about a recreated universe. It's talking about a world from which the curse of sin has been banished at last forever. It's talking about a world that has come into its being through the victory of the servant king of God.

Isaiah sums it all up again in the very last couple of chapters of his prophecy, chapter 65. Behold, he says, I create, a new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind, says the Lord.

And he goes on to describe again the glory of that eternal kingdom, which will be glorious and perfect and just and right, because, you read Isaiah 65, verse 25 later, you read this, because dust shall be shall be the serpent's food.

[ 30 : 24 ] Well, we've been reading in Genesis, we should recognize what that means, shouldn't we? At last, the serpent, the great enemy, the author of sin, the destroyer of God's image in man, shall be utterly destroyed, cast down into the dust forever.

And only then, only then can there be a world where, as Isaiah says, they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.

What child is this? He is the one who brings cosmic restoration to this whole universe. That's the Christ child that Simeon was waiting for.

That's the child Isaiah himself was waiting for when he wrote in Isaiah 8 verse 16 to bind up this testimony, to seal the teaching among my disciples. And when he says, I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.

But you see, that's what Christmas is about. In the birth of the Lord Jesus, he's hiding his face no more. Love is smiling from his face, as the carol says.

[ 31 : 41 ] Strikes for us now, the hour of grace, Savior, since thou art born. And Simeon said, now my eyes have seen your salvation.

This child is the promised Lord. He's the ultimate king of glory. He's the ultimate ruler of this world. He is the ultimate redeemer of this world.

And he brings ultimate restoration to this world. And that's why, by the way, that's why Simeon said of Jesus to the child's parents, that he would be a sign that is opposed.

And that's why he said to them that to be associated with him, that is the real Jesus, would inevitably bring pain and opposition. Why? Because that is not the Jesus that this world wants. Nor is it, alas, often, far too often, the Jesus that the church is willing to proclaim. So let me ask you this, this Christmas, is this the child that you are thinking about in the birth of Jesus at Christmas? [ 33 : 03 ] Have you got this child's real identity just as clear as Isaiah the prophet had? Six, seven, eight centuries before the Lord Jesus came. I hope we have, because if we haven't, it will lead us into all kinds of problems.

Let me just as we close make that clear. First, if we don't really grasp that Jesus is the ultimate ruler of this whole world, well then we may be inhibited, mayn't we, from proclaiming a unique gospel of a unique savior and a universal Lord for all men and women and boys and girls.

We may be inhibited from proclaiming a Christ who commands all people everywhere to repent and bow to his ultimate lordship and his alone. And we may shrink back from preaching Christ alone as the way of salvation to Jew and Gentile, to Muslim and Hindu, to secularist and spiritualist alike.

we might get completely confused and start to talk about all sorts of things like interfaith witness and all kinds of other things that show we haven't grasped at all what Christmas is really all about. We need to grasp Isaiah chapter 11 verse 4 for example. That's what it means that Jesus is Lord of all, that therefore he must judge the nations with justice and therefore ultimately he must destroy all those who will not submit to his rule.

[ 34 : 40 ] If we don't grasp his ultimate kingship we'll shrink from that. We'll also shrink from what Isaiah 66 verse 19 demands, that we should declare his glory to all the nations and all religions too.

We'll probably also be tempted to finish Isaiah chapter 66 at verse 23 and not verse 24. Look that up yourself later. Second, if we fail to grasp that this child comes to bring ultimate restoration to the whole cosmos, the universe, then we might lower our horizons drastically.

We might be looking for a fulfillment that isn't nearly, nearly big enough. Because our eyes won't be on the new heavens and the new earth that Christ has begun with his coming and will usher in his coming at the last.

So we won't be living for that world, will we? Instead our eyes will be far too much on this world and our priorities will be in this world. And we'll want to settle, won't we, for a partial fulfillment of these prophecies.

We might lose our way completely down the road of a social gospel as liberalism has. Getting totally taken up with trying to alleviate this world's problems which we can never ever do because of the sin in the heart of man.

[ 36 : 00 ] Even if we start as evangelical believers and evangelical movements we can end up getting sidetracked and put all our energies into things like political campaigns and peace and justice about poverty and AIDS and all manner of things which are very worthy in themselves.

But we'll never, ever, ever bring the real and final solution to this world which comes alone with Christ's coming in glory when all who he is calling to himself have finally been called to himself. But no, you see, Isaiah tells us this child brings the real answer, the ultimate transformation of all things. And therefore our task is to proclaim that glory to all the nations.

As Isaiah 66 tells us, they shall declare my glory among the nations and so, as Peter says, to speed his coming. And at last he will bring restoration to all things.

And that'll be what's filling our horizons, not shoring up a dying world. Third, if we fail to see that this child is the ultimate redeemer who suffers to bring salvation and who calls his followers to share in that suffering that we might also share in his glory and that we might also in his way bring redemption to a suffering world, we don't grasp that truth.

[ 37 : 35 ] Well, again, we might fall into all kinds of triumphalism and mistake totally what it means to follow this king in this world. For in this world he was despised and rejected and he always will be.

And all who follow him always will be too. A sword will pierce your own side also, said Simeon, the Jesus' parents.

And unless we see that as Isaiah saw it, we might like to think that following this king now means that we have all the glory of a king's court now here in this world, health and wealth and prosperity and bliss.

But no, said King Jesus to his followers, in this world you will have tribulation. But he said also, this world is not all there is.

Be of good cheer, I have overcome this world. So what child is it that you are celebrating this Christmas? Are you really as clear as Isaiah?

[ 38 : 40 ] Isaiah? If he's the ultimate ruler, then you will bow to his authority alone. And you'll be calling others also to bow to that authority alone, whatever their background, whatever their religion.

If he really is the ultimate redeemer, then you'll trust in his cross and you'll carry his cross, gladly bearing the reproach that he wore that others also might hear of him.

And if he brings, as he does, ultimate restoration to this world, you will be living, won't you? In detachment from this world, increasingly content with the material things that we have, but increasingly longing for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to usher in that transformation forever and ever.

The whole of the trajectory of our lives and our energies will be focused there, on real world transformation, not on fantasies of utopianism and changing things here in this passing world. What child is this that we sing of and speak of at Christmas? Well, there's a lot to think about, isn't there? But wouldn't time spent pondering these implications be time just as well spent as on Buchanan Street shopping for presents?

[ 40 : 04 ] I think so. Well, let's pray. For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with righteousness and justice from this time forth and forevermore.

And the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. We thank you, our Heavenly Father, that in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have done this.

And that even now, as he reigns invisible in this world, so one day, and we trust and pray that day may be soon, his reign will fill this world with light.

And so we pray that this Christmas, and indeed every day and every week, we would be those who by proclaiming his glory to the nations, play our part in that great mission that we may speed his coming, and that at last this world may be, as you have purposed it to be, a place of righteousness, and justice, and joy, and peace, and gladness, forever and ever.

[ 41 : 39 ] Amen.