

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

A Child is Born - A Son is Given

By Sharon K. Griffiee

A Child is born.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV) – ⁽⁶⁾ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁽⁷⁾ Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

These two verses of scripture provide one of the clearest and most revealing prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming of Jesus, the Messiah (the long expected deliverer and King of the Jews). Verses 6 and 7 describe both the first and the second coming of Jesus.

In His first coming, over 2000 years ago, Jesus came to prepare the hearts of the Jewish people to receive their righteous king. Acceptance of Jesus' Lordship would require *repentance* of their sins and *entrance* into a kingdom, which Jesus said, was "at hand" but was not of this world.

Luke 17:20-21 (KJV) – And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

The Pharisees question was reasonable, because Jesus had been preaching for quite a while telling them that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand" (Matthew 4:17). The Pharisees were rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, even while He was standing in their midst, telling them that the kingdom of God was *within* their reach, it was within their grasp or possession. They did not have to go looking for the kingdom somewhere else. All they had to do was to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, who could bring the kingdom directly and personally to them.

Sadly, Jesus was not the king the Jews had pictured. It was difficult for them to get excited about a kingdom they could not observe in physical form. They expected the kingdom of God to come with great fanfare. They envisioned a kingdom ruled by a visible and powerful king.

The Jews of first-century Palestine missed Christ's message of deliverance, because they, like many today, looked for their deliverance in political solutions. These Zealots wanted freedom from Roman rule. They longed for a military messiah who would take up arms to crush their hated oppressors. Lacking faith in His divine mission, they did not want to wait for Jesus; they wanted to take matters into their own hands. At one point, they even tried to make Jesus a king by force, because He was not establishing the visible kingdom they wanted. The incident occurred when Jesus had just fed well over five thousand people.

John 6:14-15 (KJV) – Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

Jesus retreated to a mountain because He did not want people to seek Him for the physical powers He exhibited. Jesus did not come to teach people how to use physical power to get what they wanted. Neither is that Jesus' message to us today. The power Jesus wants us to have is a far greater power, the power to give up the *things* for which the world seeks. Things, that only leads to defeat and heartache. The power God wants us to have is the power to turn loose of those things that get control of us and make our lives downcast and miserable. The power Jesus lived by is the power of God's Spirit. When we partake of this life giving power, it opens our lives to do the work of God.

What would have been the far-reaching consequence if Jesus had taken up physical arms with the Jewish Zealots of His day? He would have limited the Kingdom of God to Israel, and would have sacrificed the greater calling and destiny of His life – facing the cross to save *all* of humanity from the ravages of sin.

The greatest need of the Jewish people was not freedom from Rome, but release from the chains of sin. The key to the Kingdom of God is *repentance*, not revolution! Yet, right up to the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus, the disciples longed for an earthly kingdom. However, the Kingdom of God was not to be in visible form at that time. Jesus made that clear to Pilate upon His arrest:

John 18:36 (KJV) – *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence [this world].*

After Jesus was questioned, Pilate went out again to the Jews gathered there and said,

John 18:38b-40 (NIV) – *“...I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release the king of the Jews?” They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.*

In this manner, His own people rejected Jesus, the King of Kings. The Apostle John tells us,

John 1:11-12 (NIV) – *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

A Son is given.

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) – *“For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given...”* (See: John 3:16)

The “us” in this scripture passage refers not only to the Hebrew nation, but also to *all believers* from all nations!

Zechariah 14:9 (NLT) – *And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day there will be one LORD—his name alone will be worshiped.*

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) – *“...And the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

David, the first great king of the Jews, assembled a visible kingdom for the people of God, but it was to be only a representation of the ultimate rule of Jesus, their true King. As the prophets promised, Jesus was the final king in David's royal line. However, Jesus was not just a king for Israel; he is to be King for all people! When Jesus comes to the earth for His second coming, the government will finally be upon His shoulders in visible form. What a great day that will be, when all earthly kingdoms will be ruled by Jesus. The world will then know what justice and righteous government is all about.

While we wait for Jesus' return, we must make sure we do not miss His message of deliverance. Before Jesus can assert his outward Lordship, He first must rule the *inner* fortress of our heart.

Colossians 3:15a, 16a (NLT) – *And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts... Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives.*

Questions for Personal or Group Study

1. In His first coming, over 2,000 years ago, what was Jesus' role to the Jewish people?
2. Was Jesus referring to a physical kingdom when He said, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand”?
3. Why did the Jews of first-century Palestine miss Christ's message of deliverance?
4. Jesus did not come to teach people how to use physical power. Describe the *greater power* that God wants us to have to make us useable to Him.
5. What would have been the far-reaching consequence if Jesus had taken up physical arms with the Jewish Zealots of His day?
6. What kind of government will we have when Jesus comes to earth to rule, for His second coming?