

# Do The Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament Point to Jesus or to Someone Else?—Part 6

Dr. John Ankerberg, Dr. Walter Kaiser, Dr. Pinchas Lapide

**Dr. John Ankerberg:** Let's take a question from the audience.

**Audience:** Yes. Christ said in promising to come back, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man—*no man*: Jew, Greek, no man—comes to the Father but by me." Peter, a Jew, speaking to other Jews, said, "This same Jesus whom you killed, God has made both Lord and Christ." The word that was translated from the Septuagint or from the Hebrew Messiah to be *Christos*, Christ. It means the same thing. And he says, "He is the Christ."

**Ankerberg:** What's the question?

**Audience:** The question is: In scanning all your knowledge of the Hebrew Old Testament, is there anything that disqualifies Jesus Christ as being the Messiah of the Jews, too?

**Dr. Pinchas Lapide:** I'm afraid so. You see my dear friend, "Messiah" is a Hebrew word. Messianism is a Jewish gift to the world. No other nation was more hungry and thirsty for the coming of the Messiah than the Israel of 2,000 years ago.

Why, I am asking you, did they then not accept this Jesus as the Messiah—a term which at that time was totally unknown to the rest of the world, because it was a pure Hebraism? That question is begging to be answered and my only answer is that He was not *yet* the Messiah of the Jews, but indeed He did become the Savior of the Gentile Church.

And I refuse to think of narrow categories of black and white or "Yes" or "No." I credit my Lord in heaven with more fantasy and imagination than the pure, narrow yes or no. There must be 500 things between. And the between possibilities are that He has become the Savior of the Gentile Church, a fact I would never gainsay. But He has not yet become the Messiah of Israel; could very well become that during His Second Coming.

**Ankerberg:** Dr. Kaiser, why don't you answer that question, too?

**Dr. Walter Kaiser:** I would say that my feeling is that the Zechariah 12:10 passage comes back and here the prophet himself has Israel being regretful at a certain point in history, over this One who was the central hope and is identified in some way with the speaker, the Lord Himself. "They shall look on *me* whom they have pierced, and mourn." Why the mourning there and why does the prophet, who is not speaking from a Christian perspective, still see in the Day of the Lord, "Yom Yahweh," the whole moment here when everything is pulled together, why does he see this as a moment of regret?

And I can only say that indeed it's not because this was the Jesus or the *Yeshua* of the Gentiles, but it was what the Jewish community recognized itself for the most unrecorded part of history. And the place for the best historical work yet to be done, I think, is in the first five Com-

mon Era (or Christian) centuries, here in which there was in Palestine, in Jerusalem and the surrounding cities, a large Hebrew believing community that *did* place their trust in *Yeshua*.

Some historians, Neander and others, have said to the tune [of]—already by the second century—a million were involved in basic belief. I have no way of checking these kinds of things, but I have seen recently some of the documents which are beginning to roll in. There was a large, large community. It wasn't just Pella, which is generally said here. We are talking about 20, 30 different sites, some of them which we are uncovering here [a] kind of synagogue and Christian mix and blend. And it speaks of the fact that it was less a moment of tension in the first Christian centuries, or Common Era, than it is now. There is a greater rift between the two because this is seen as an abandonment of one's Jewishness if one goes to this particular point. But it was not seen, apparently, in the early Christian, or Common Era, centuries.

**Ankerberg:** In reading the Hebrew Scriptures myself, it seemed to me that there were other times when the Jews had straight revelation and missed it completely. The Exodus is point in case. They just came right out of Egypt, God does wonderful miracles, and they turn around and they don't believe God. Now, why they didn't do that—I think we're all sinners, but it seems like if they could miss that under Moses, then they might be able to miss some of these things on the Messiah. Does that make any sense?

**Lapide:** It does make sense, I'm afraid, because of all books of the world religions—over 500 in number—I know none which treats its own believers in such a cruelly realistic manner as the Hebrew Bible does with its Jews. All our weaknesses are stressed, all our virtues are underplayed. It's true. (That's one of the reasons why we are elected, it seems to me, because self-criticism is a Jewish invention.) But let me put it that way. You are quite right. But one piece of an answer you will find in Daniel 10. Daniel 10:40 says, "I, Daniel, saw this vision of God and the people standing around with me did not see it." Visions imparted by God in both Testaments are always to single persons, to unique personalities, metaphysically gifted with a high degree of vision and audition, and the others don't get it. It takes all the trouble in the world for that seer to impart that message to the others who fail to see and hear.

**Ankerberg:** I read that in your book and I appreciated that insight because what you're saying is that it can be true, even if one person goes against the majority.

**Lapide:** Yes, I'm afraid you're right.

**Ankerberg:** Okay, then we've got to come back to the tests of Deuteronomy 18 to find out if that person has the real goods, because the rest of us didn't see it.

**Lapide:** When my friend Kaiser quotes Zechariah, "They will look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn...."...

**Kaiser:** "Look on *me*...."

**Lapide:** "Look upon me whom they have pierced...."

**Kaiser:** "Eli."

**Lapide:** Let me stick to the text, Kaiser. We never pierced Jesus. By all four Gospels, the Roman soldiers pierced Him in the most brutal manner. No Jew ever would have done that, because it would have been the pinnacle of cruelty. So the prophecy doesn't stick. We have not pierced Jesus by any matter or by any circumlocution of poetry.

**Kaiser:** I think you're right on the point of the Romans. It is the Romans, and I know the point you are making and I respond to it. However, I am also quoting a Jewish prophet. I didn't write that text. I'm only repeating it, as you know, and I take it there that it is a figure of speech by

metonymy or something of that sort. My point isn't to find out where the fault lies. I don't think that's what the writer is talking about. I think what the writer is talking about, the identity between the One who was pierced and the One who is associated with God and the One who is a Servant who is coming back in that glorious section of Zechariah 9-14. Christians, you know, haven't had a monopoly just on Isaiah 53. If there is another passage that is quoted more than any other, it's Zechariah 9-14. In the passion narrative, that plays as large a part as does Isaiah 53. And third place would come the Psalms, too—the so-called “Messianic Psalms.”

So, we've got at least three strings here upon which the New Testament writers are playing quite a bit rather than just one particular passage. But, no, I think that's wrong. Let me say it plainly. Christians are in error when they say that Jews are the ones who killed Jesus. I think that's poor. It is no wonder we've got trouble in a dialogue. And if I can say something directly to Christians, I would tell you just bluntly, “Cut it out!” I'm giving you professional advice. The text says that it was the Roman community and just a few of that particular day. It has nothing to do with the race as such. As a matter of fact, the Jews of the first century did not even have the power of execution. That resided within the Roman province. There is a part that is played there. I'm not trying to re-read or re-write history. But I'm saying it is wrong therefore to pass it on down.

**Ankerberg:** Yeah. I want to be sensitive to this, but I can hear all of the Christians at this point. Okay, I'm hearing Christians at one point and hearing Jews at the other point, okay?

**Kaiser:** We'll take care of them next. Go ahead.

**Ankerberg:** All right, here it goes. In the text you find, “The people,” it says, “And they began to accuse him saying,…” They were the ones that brought Jesus before the authorities who then took Him. Okay? They were the ones that were around Pilate and said, “We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a King” and so on. I'm not trying to cause a problem here. I'm saying, “Be true to the text at that point.” You do have the Jewish leaders. If you're saying you have the remnant, and “Not all Jews are Jews,” Paul said, and I believe that applies to both communities. That because you have a group—that doesn't mean you're talking about the main group here. Okay?—but you have the leaders, it seems, coming and making this case and the Romans go along with it. They are the ones that execute. How would you say that in terms of the text? How would you answer the question, “Well, aren't the Jews at that point responsible?” I'm not trying to cause a problem, I'm just saying, “This is what they're going to come back [with],” and you've got to answer it if we're going to have peace here.

**Kaiser:** No, I specifically said I'm not trying to re-write history. There is a dual involvement of Jews and Romans. But I'm saying, “Don't pass that down and say that therefore that awful saying that's in our midst, that for all succeeding generations that is the crime here.” The Romans were the ones who ultimately “pulled the trigger,” as it were. There is involvement, and to that degree, I still think the prophet's on target when he says that indeed they did pierce by way of synecdoche in which you put the part for the whole, and that it is an involvement of the Roman community. But you have to have accusers who bring it there. I can't re-write history, but on the other hand I can't either ask that that become a stumbling block, because it will be. It will be a stumbling block to Christian and Jewish dialogue when we're out there.

**Ankerberg:** I agree wholeheartedly. [To Lapidé] Let's clear up another one on your side of the tracks, okay? When we hear the Jewish writers, and especially people today, we hear about the holocaust, and we are made to feel guilty like every one of us were the ones sitting there, lighting the fires in the gas chambers. As a Christian myself, I love the Jewish people. My Lord

was a Jew, and He told us to love them and to talk with them and to care for them. The Scriptures as I read it are full of that, and if I belong to Christ and I have the Spirit of Christ in me, I *must* be that way. So when I hear somebody saying, “It was the Christians that did that!,” I am repelled at that, and I wonder, in the Jewish community, if there are people that can see that we’ve got the same problem over here when we have this dialogue, that not all people who are called “Christians” are really Christians. That there is a difference. Especially, you have a wide variety of Evangelical Christians across this country that are saying, “That is abhorrent!” And some people that have called themselves by the name of “Christ” didn’t know the first thing about it. Just like on the Jewish side of the tracks maybe some people did some things in the name of Judaism that they didn’t know the first thing about it. Does that ring a bell? Is that true? Does that come across in the Jewish community?

**Lapide:** The trouble is that in the back of the minds of many good Christians, Judas and Caiaphas were Jews. Peter, Paul and Jesus, no. And if we don’t stop with this vivisection, and ultimately agree that the entire drama of Jesus of Nazareth took place on Jewish soil and that all the actors in the drama, the villains and the heroes, the good guys and the bad guys, the cowboys and the Indians—they were ultimately, without exception, circumcised Jews. Before we accept that, dialogue is awfully difficult. There were no first rate and no second rate Jews. They were just all Jews, Jesus included. That’s Point One.

**Kaiser:** Selah.

**Lapide:** Beg your pardon?

**Kaiser:** Selah.

**Lapide:** Amen! Selah! Thank you! And the second point is that I, God forbid, have no recriminations. I love Christians, I teach Christians, and I learn from Christians. But it is a historic fact that the many millions of Christians for many centuries have made the cross into a sword and into a crooked cross. And therefore Jews who know very little of Christian theology—and forgive my brethren, they don’t know very much about the New Testament—when they were killed by the thousands during the first crusade in the Rhine country, the valley of the Rhine by hoards of crusaders with cruciform swords—*cruciform*—and they said, “Baptism or death!,” and the vast majority chose death, and they heard of Jesus, the only implication they could attach to the name of Jesus is that He was the inventor of anti-Semitism. It took a long, long time—the end of this our 20<sup>th</sup> century—that people came forth like me, and God forbid I’m not the only one, but I’m a spearhead, I do trust, who will detach this luminary of Judaism by the name of Jesus from the misdeeds of many, many of His ill-baptized followers for almost two millennia and let Jesus be Jesus and let Him shine forth in His own light without the dark shadows many pseudo-Christians have cast upon His figure.

**Ankerberg:** Yeah. Reminds me of the old saying, “People haven’t rejected Christ because of the faith, they’ve just rejected Christ because of the Christians.”

**Lapide:** Absolutely!

**Ankerberg:** And they need to look at Christ. Next question here.

**Audience:** My question is, “How can the Messiah, who we look to come, or to come again, how can the Messiah bring the Kingdom of God where there is peace and there is righteousness, without being the One that was spoken of by the angel in Matthew who said, ‘Of whom it was spoken, He will save His people from their sins’”? When the Spirit spoke through Isaiah that, “It is your sins that have separated between you and your God,” how will there be the kingdom of peace and of righteousness without Him being that One who will save from sin,

which is the reason there is not peace and there is not righteousness and there is not the Kingdom of God?

**Ankerberg:** Okay.

**Lapide:** Well, there is a Jewish and a Christian answer to what the theologians call the “Delay of Parousia.” In other words, we’ve been praying and waiting for His return for almost two millennia, and He hasn’t come yet. In the Mishna, which is not less cruel with its Jews than the Prophets are, it says, “If all Israel would celebrate two Sabbaths in the Spirit of the Lord, the Messiah would come at once.” In the Second Epistle of Peter it says in the New Testament, “Shape your conduct and behave yourselves to your brethren in a manner Christ wanted, and you will accelerate His return. Should you go on committing all the sins you and I know,” says Peter, “then you will delay the return of the Lord.” The joint conclusion of both quotations is that it seems we Jews and Christians are to blame that He hasn’t come back yet. It’s up to us not only to pray and to kneel, which is a very good thing, but it’s not enough. Because if we do believe this Jesus, then He said, “Not those who call me ‘Lord, Lord’ will come into the kingdom of heaven, but those who *do* the will of my Father in heaven.” The doing should accompany the praying, and that’s good old Jewish home truth. If we do not *do*, which means “Prepare the way for that so hotly yearned-for kingdom of heaven,” it will not come on its own, because this God of ours wants human cooperation.

**Ankerberg:** Dr. Kaiser, maybe you want to answer that.

**Kaiser:** Yeah. I just would say that I think that’s half of the answer. I would put a prologue to it, if I may, and that would be, “But I can’t *do*. As a human, I’ve got that herd instinct—‘All we like sheep have gone astray.’ Then I’ve got my own problem. Each one of us has turned to our own way. How am I ever going to do the will of God unless there be some help from somewhere with regard to taking away my guilt and my sin?” And it seems to me that this is also part of that particular picture, and it’s the one I think that is separating us here. But yet it is the one that the Prophets were constantly burdened about. It is the one, I think, that we have dropped since the Exile. Yet it still is in the Prophets of the Exile, Malachi and Haggai and Zechariah—they are still saying, “If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked way and seek my face, then will I answer and I will hear from heaven, and I will heal their land.” And the healing, it seems to me, and the hastening, as you say, I think you’re right on 2 Peter. I think that’s right, and I think that’s also right according to Jewish thought, as I understand it—imperfectly as I do—but it still is. There’s the possibility of hurrying up and hastening that day. But I can’t hurry it up and I can’t hasten it until I deal with my sin through my Messiah, and I must ask that that perfect Lamb of God, the spotless Lamb without blemish that I put my trust in, that One take away my sin. Only then, I think, can I *do* the will of God and only then will the whole of the Kingdom of God be hurried up and accelerated. Looking for a “hurrying up” or a “hastening” of the Day of our Lord. You remember, that’s the passage that’s being alluded to here in 2 Peter. And I think that’s exactly on the money.

**Ankerberg:** I’m reminded of what the people were asking Jesus when they said, “What must we do to do the work of God?” And Jesus said, “The work of God was to believe on Him whom He had sent.” Question.

**Audience:** Yes, for Dr. Lapide, leaving out the creation and man, which some do not consider creation, and realizing that there is no empirical evidence other than this for man to make a decision about God, what do you think of the proposition that in a final analysis, man must make a personal decision, utilizing the Scriptures and literature, to come to a personal belief, and what do you think of the drawing power of the Holy Spirit in relation to the belief in Jesus Christ

as the Messiah, the Suffering Servant and the King of Kings?

**Lapide:** I'm quite convinced, as I said, [that] Jesus of Nazareth has become the Savior of the entire worldwide Church. I believe it is part of [the] salvation plan. I fully understand my friend Kaiser that the inner feeling of getting rid of his guilt and his sins, and, by golly, I've got my own bundle to carry, enables him and liberates the energies, the moral energies in your heart, and in yours, to do good and hasten the Day of the Lord. I fully agree. Forgive me for not needing Jesus for that, because I pray to His Father, without bypassing Him, because what He wanted, lifelong, is to "preach the will of the Father." And the will of the Father, to do that, is the main contents of my life. So we don't diverge very much. But one of the rabbis said, and that it is the great solace of people like me, "Do not consider yourselves as irredeemably sinning, because God's will to forgive is even greater than your power to sin." In other words, I have a suspicion that the loving Father in heaven, without whom my life would be senseless, knows very well what kind of a weak, cripple I am, morally and in all other respects; nothing much to write home about. But He will recognize my good will. He will forgive my many failures. And every day, as the rabbis say in my morning prayer, "He lets me start life with a clean sheet." Every day for me is a new creation of the world.

**Kaiser:** What about the Torah, though, with its pointing, its elaborate pointing, to the need for someone other than you or me to take care of that particular problem? I don't hear you referring to anything in the sacrifices, at all. Do they function for you? Do you see a theology there at all? Or do you feel that has been jettisoned and that we are finished with that part of the Torah?

**Lapide:** No, we are not. You are quite right. The main problem for all the rabbis after the year 70 when the Temple fell, and sacrifices of atonement were impossible, is, "How do we get rid of our sins?" That was the main question.

**Kaiser:** Yes.

**Lapide:** Never mind the edifice. Never mind the glory of Solomon's building art and all that. That's it!

**Kaiser:** And that's where I am right now in the question.

**Lapide:** And the answer of the rabbis given before 90 to a despairing, downtrodden and downcast Israel on the verge of despondency was, "On three legs stands your substitute for the Temple"—Now, it's hard to translate into English—"on prayer; on practiced love of your neighbor; and upon daily repentance." And that is the main question, which you have quite rightly put, which has enfranchised itself and which has become, I would say obligatory in Orthodox Judaism since the out-going first century. Otherwise, we couldn't have lived.

**Kaiser:** And yet on Yom Kippur, the holiest of all the holy days, as I understand, in the calendar of Israel, stands a drama that is enacted that would say, "Those three legs, though very wonderful, need a fourth leg, it would seem to me." There is the goat over whom all the sins of all of Israel are confessed, and that one is taken into the Holy of Holies—only this one day of all the year—and sins forgiven on the basis of a substitute, it would seem to me here. And then another goat—still one sin offering, but two parts—that goat is led away. Sins forgotten, "Remembered against us no more," because of a substitute. I don't hear that coming through in the three legs. And there is, I think, where the Evangelical part of the dialogue with Jewish conversation is so extremely important. And I think only on that one particular leg hangs the whole discussion. We are deeply concerned about what some have done in the name of Christianity. As a matter of fact, we dislike that even being attached with Christianity and feel horrified, just horrified, when we have read about the Crusades, when we have read about Auschwitz and

Buchenwald and the rest of them. But one thing that our heart longs for more than anything else, the conversation on the point of Yom Kippur, which I think is the heart of it. And could it be that in the Messianic longings there is a tie between this, the central drama in all of Judaism, and this which is the central drama in Christianity? Is there some possible link between Calvary and Yom Kippur?

**Lapide:** There is.

**Kaiser:** Of course the Christians will say, "Yes," and we need the further conversation between both communities to tie that together.

**Ankerberg:** Let me ask you both for just the 30-second wrap-up concerning our main topic, and that is: "Do the Hebrew Scriptures, the Messianic prophecies, do they point to Jesus or somebody else?"

**Lapide:** My answer is they could very well point to Jesus, but certitude we will gain when He comes back and tells us Himself.

**Kaiser:** And my answer is they *do* point to Jesus of Nazareth, *Yeshua*, because: First, the claim of the book: I must receive the claim of the Prophets until I find evidence contrariwise. I approach the text on its own terms. I must not read into the text. I must "stand under" the texts and let them be my teachers and then bring the actual claims. I must use the tests of Deuteronomy Chapter 13 and 18. Did they predict? Did it come to pass? If it does come to pass, then the text says, "Not only trust the prophet, but look in the direction to which he pointed." And my great prayer and deep love and concern for not only my Jewish friends, but also non-Jewish friends is, "We've got to see if God dropped the drama into the center of history. And this is the One, Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew from Bethlehem, from the line of David, that He was the One who indeed fulfilled the expectation of the Prophets." My study and all that I have been able to do over these years, I think, has proven over and over and over and over again. To tell you the truth, I have not found *one point* at which the biblical text of the Prophets or the Torah or the Writings have failed in their coming to pass. There are aspects of them that still wait. Here, we look for the Second Coming, the Parousia, the return of our Lord.