

THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ON HIS SHOULDERS

Isaiah 8:19-9:7

Key Verse: 9:6

“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.”

Many today are dissatisfied and angry with their government. People are disappointed with Obama-care and the US government nearly shut down because of insufficient funds. But this is not new. Compared to other governments, the US government is better than most. People always put their hope in governments and then despair. Someone said, “Governments are a necessary evil in a fallen world.” Earthly governments can never be our real hope. Our real hope is Jesus. Why is Jesus our real hope? It is because his messianic government will be perfect. The government depends upon the character of the one who rules. Why then is Jesus the perfect ruler? Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Let’s learn today how Jesus rules and what is the nature of his government.

I. A Great Light has dawned (8:19-9:5)

What was the spiritual condition of the people of Isaiah’s time? Isaiah served the ministry of God’s word in the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. In the year King Uzziah died (chp 6), God commissioned Isaiah as a prophet for the nation. He saw the vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem (1:1). In the time of King Ahaz the spiritual condition of the nation began to get much worse. Once, when the king visited Damascus, the capitol of Syria, he saw an idol in the temple and was inspired thinking that this is more modern. So he decided to modernize the temple in Jerusalem and made a sketch of the idol and then sent the sketch to Uriah the priest to build it and set it up in the temple of God. By doing this, King Ahaz himself promoted idol worship in Israel; and as a result, the people of the nation went even further astray from God and deviated from the truth (2Kg 16:10,11). When they abandoned God, were they happy? Did they enjoy their freedom? No, they became empty and began to wander like Cain the restless wanderer. People roam when they have no roots in God. They needed direction but without God’s word, they consulted spiritists and

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mediums. But this made their spiritual condition worse. When the people rejected God's word, they became more and more distressed and dark; hungry and famished, they became enraged and cursed God and their king. People were roaming here and there looking for answers to get out of their miserable situation. But they saw only distress and darkness and fearful gloom. They were thrust into utter darkness. It sounds like America, doesn't it?

Isaiah rebukes them saying, **“Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?”** How foolish to consult the dead when we can go to the Living God and receive the words of God? Isaiah admonishes the people to consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning (20). In other words, he admonished the people to go back to the Bible. Whenever we are in the darkness, we must go back to the Scriptures. The truth is that we can find everything we need through deep Bible study. Only the words of God can dispel the power of darkness in our hearts and give us clear direction, hope and vision.

Lets' read verse 1. **“Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan.”** Verse 1a begins with, **“Nevertheless...”** Nevertheless is a transitional word that indicates a contrast to what the author had been saying. A moment ago, Isaiah was talking about gloom and darkness but suddenly the prophet changes his tone from gloom to hope, from darkness to light. Why was Isaiah suddenly full of hope? It was because he himself turned to God and heard the Christmas message that a child is born for us.

In the past when Northern Israel fell into idolatry, God humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali. In the time of King Hosea, the Assyrians captured this area and deported many Jews to Assyria and many Gentiles moved in to replace the Israelites. In that way, the Jewish people intermingled with the Gentiles bringing disgrace to them. This intermingling of Jew and Gentile caused the people to become multi-religious and idolatry spread even more. So historically, they were despised as a land of Gentiles. This is why Nathanael wondered if anything good could come from Nazareth (Jn 1:46).

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But now God wanted to honor Galilee of the nations (Matt. 4:12-16). How could this despised area become honorable? It is because Jesus spent his boyhood in Nazareth (located in Zebulun). Although he was born in Bethlehem of Judah, he grew up in Nazareth and started his messianic ministry from there. Later, he set up his headquarters in Capernaum (located in Naphtali). This would bring honor to the whole region of “Galilee of the Gentiles”. Throughout the centuries Christian pilgrims visit Galilee to walk where Jesus walked. Mother Barry and Pastor Ron who visited Israel said that to visit Galilee is like having a living Bible study.

Let’s read verse 2. **“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”** The time just before Jesus’ coming was also very dark. For a period of 400 years since the prophet Malachi, there were no prophets who gave the words of God. When people do not have God’s word, they lose vision and hope. They were thrust into utter darkness. But as we know, it is darkest just before the dawn. Jesus is the great light for the people walking in darkness. When Jesus came he announced: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!” (Mt 4:17). He taught them the words of God and healed the sick and cast out demons. He opened the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf and made the mute speak and the lame walk and raised the dead. He forgave those who were suffering from guilt and condemnation because of their sins. Jesus counseled those who were wandering, giving hope to the hopeless.

Most importantly, he called his disciples one by one, **“Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men”** and raised them as great spiritual leaders by bearing all of their weaknesses. He taught them until they confessed, **“You are the Christ,”** and until they accepted the way of the cross. He commissioned them as apostles and sent them out as missionaries to all nations. Actually, all of this occurred in Galilee.

Jesus is the great light that dispels all darkness and the shadow of death. Jesus said, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”** (Jn 8:12). While all other men were only flickers of candlelight, Jesus is the one true light who shines forever (Jn 1:9).

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In verses 3-5 Isaiah describes the Messiah's work of salvation. The coming of the Messiah will enlarge the nation and bring great joy (3). What kind of joy? First, he compares it to the joy of the harvest. While farmers are waiting for the harvest, they are anxious until it finally arrives. Then when the harvest has come, they dance and rejoice. Next, Isaiah compares their joy with the joy of victory in battle. After a victory, the warriors divide the plunder and rejoice.

Likewise, Jesus' coming meant that sin, death and Satan were destroyed. Jesus conquered the power of sin on the cross (Luke 23:34). He defeated the devil and all the evil forces of darkness through his resurrection from the dead. Jesus set the captives free. We can rejoice because Jesus has won the victory for us in his death and resurrection. We rejoice because the spiritual nation has been enlarged – the kingdom of God is growing and expanding among us.

Then Isaiah borrows from Israel's history and describes it as being like the day of Midian's defeat (4). God shattered the yoke that burdened them and defeated their enemies. God used Gideon and his small band of three hundred men to conquer a vast army of Midianites. All they did was to blow their trumpets and shout while they firmly grasped their torches. When they depended fully on God He gave them a great victory (Jdg 7:20-22). Victory comes from God, not from us. We must remember that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the forces of evil in the heavenly realms. So we need to depend on God and put on the full armor of God (Eph 6:10-20). Then God will give us victory.

II. For to us a child is born (6-7)

Let's read verse 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.”** Why is the coming of a child good news? This is no ordinary child. This child has the life of God. The good news is that **to us a child is born; to us a son is given. A child is born** refers to his humanity. **A son is given** refers to his deity. Jesus was fully man and fully God. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, who would grow up to become the Savior of the world and the King of kings and establish his government.

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“And the government will be on his shoulders” (6b). His government will be different from earthly ones. His government will be holy, perfect and eternal. I heard from Sh. Steve that he and a group of fellow engineers were having a discussion about the ideal or perfect government. Though they were from very different backgrounds, they reached one conclusion: Mankind needs a **benevolent dictator** who will govern unselfishly. But they could not agree on whom since there is no one like that on earth. But there is one: Jesus, the Messiah. The Messiah Jesus will be the perfect ruler whose government will deeply satisfy all his subjects. How is it possible? It is possible because of his glorious name. Bible names have special meanings in Hebrew. According to Hebrew tradition, to name someone was to designate his or her essence. Jesus’ full name in Hebrew according to Isaiah 9:6 is “Wonderful Counselor-Mighty God-My Everlasting Father-Prince of Peace.”¹

1st, Wonderful Counselor [Pele-Yo‘etz] (6c; 11:2). **Pele** means “a miracle, a marvel, a wonder.” The second term, **yoetz**, means **not only to counsel and advise, but also to plan and execute**. Both ideas are combined in the same root. The child that is born to us will be an astonishing and miraculous advisor who will also marvelously execute His plans. This is why his government will be so wonderful.

What makes Jesus so wonderful? Isaiah 11:2 says, **“The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—”**

When I was young, I really wanted to marry a beautiful woman of God. And I did. And after that, I really wanted to have children so God gave me two handsome boys, Paul and John. But I realized that it’s not easy to manage a family and provide support. I need God’s wisdom. Also, when I was a fellowship leader, a chapter director and a national director for Argentina, it was much harder than managing a family. I needed super wisdom. How much more wisdom is needed to

¹ “For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; dominion will rest on his shoulders, and he will be given the name Pele-Yo‘etz El Gibbor Avi-‘Ad Sar-Shalom [Wonder of a Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace],” (CJB). (“Avi-‘Ad can actually be translated “my Everlasting Father” because of the “i” in Hebrew which signifies the English singular first-person possessive case.)

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rule all the nations at once? A good ruler must have great wisdom how to rule. Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor full of wisdom and understanding.

2nd, Mighty God [El Gibbor] (6c; Mk 4:39, 41). Here “mighty” carries the meaning of warrior, champion and hero. **Jesus is mighty to save and mighty to rule. Jesus is our mighty warrior-champion-hero for whom nothing is impossible because he is Mighty God.** When I serve people and the ministry I often feel my weaknesses. Not only this, I want to see God’s work in the lives of my children and Bible students. We all want to see the mighty work of God. Jesus is the Mighty God who can transform us. Jesus is Mighty God who sustains the universe including our lives and families and the world so he is uniquely qualified to rule.

3rd, Everlasting Father [Abi-‘Ad] (6c; Mk 2:5). **A meaningful translation of Abi-Ad is my Everlasting Father. Jesus is my everlasting Father; the Father of Eternity. As Everlasting Father, he can give eternal life to all those who believe in Him. Moreover, he is compassionate as a father. According to ancient Semitic tradition it was the father’s role to provide, protect and promise an inheritance or destiny for his children. Jesus is our Everlasting Father who will provide, protect and give us an eternal inheritance.** Jesus welcomes sinners into his kingdom with the love of a father. When Jesus saw the paralytic, he said to him, **“Son, your sins are forgiven”** (Mk 2:5). Jesus welcomes all who come to him in faith with open arms as the Everlasting Father. When I look back on my shepherd life, I often lacked God’s heart. Pray for me to be a father-like shepherd for my family and all my Bible students.

4th, Prince of Peace [Sar-Shalom] (6c; Eph. 2:14). **Jesus is Prince of Peace.** The Hebrew word **shalom** can also be translated “soundness” or “well-being.” It is tragic but all humanity is at war with God because of sin. This is part of the cosmic war going on between God and Satan. When he came the first time, Jesus the Prince of Peace made peace with God for us. He literally made peace through his death on the cross. **“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”** Jesus is our peace. In Christ, we can be reconciled to God through the cross and reconciled with one another. Now in Jesus we are all one. We are all brothers and sisters with one Father and one Lord. There is no more hostility. All barriers were broken in

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Jesus the Prince of Peace. I think many will agree that coworking is one of the most difficult things to do. But it is possible for very different people to cowork together in Jesus our Prince of Peace. When we meditate on the messianic titles of Jesus, we cannot but say: Jesus is Wonderful and His kingdom is and will be wonderful!

Let's read verse 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."** Jesus' messianic kingdom will be eternal. The kingdoms of this world are all passing away. Kingdoms come and go. But the kingdom of the Messiah will never end. Of his government and peace there will be no end. He will rule his kingdom with justice and righteousness. How is this possible? The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

We long for the perfect government. We long for the perfect One to rule us: one who has perfect wisdom, full of compassion, strong and yet peaceful. Who can be this one? Only Jesus! Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. Jesus is everything to everyone. Jesus' kingdom begins now in our hearts. Jesus' kingdom will also be a real kingdom in the future full of joy, freedom and peace. In Jesus' kingdom there will be glory to God and peace to everyone on whom his favor rests! May Jesus the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace bless you this Christmas.