Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Government on His Shoulders
Scripture: Isaiah 9:6
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Politics and government. We seem to see them as necessary evils, bringing frustration in the present but still giving us hope for the future. Our contradictory attitudes about politics are revealing. We recognize the failure of human solutions, but at the same time we know *something* must be done to fix what's broken in the world. What man can't do, God has done; He's given the Messiah.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah 9:6 may be the most familiar Old Testament prophecy about the birth of Christ. Handel included those words in one of the great choruses of his Messiah oratorio. Chances are you either sing it or hear it several times every Christmas season.

Unfortunately, we seem to pull this passage out of the box only during the holidays. It's like one of the ornaments we use to decorate our houses. But have you ever thought about the rich truth this single verse teaches concerning the King of kings? Though we still await the full realization of His kingdom, the promised Messiah is the greatest political ruler ever.

Isaiah wrote this prophecy at least a hundred years before Israel was taken into Babylonian captivity—nearly 600 years before the birth of the Savior! Looking at a litany of failed monarchs, and sitting in the rubble of Israel's monarchy, Isaiah looked across the centuries to a time when God would rule on earth through His Son.

"A child will be born to us" underscores the Messiah's humanity. He had to come as a human being, in the form of a child, so He could endure the temptations men face, yet be without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

"A son will be given to us" implies the Savior's deity. He existed before His birth as the second Person of the Trinity: "Although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6-7). He came as the Son of God—God in human flesh—to conquer sin and

death forever.

“The government will rest on His shoulders” affirms His lordship. This verse looks to a time still future when Christ will reign over a literal, earthly, geopolitical kingdom that encompasses all the kingdoms and governments of the world (cf. Daniel 2:44; Zechariah 14:9).

In that day, the government of the whole world will rest on His shoulders. But until that time, His kingdom is in an invisible form (cf. Luke 17:20-21). The Messiah’s rule is over those who trust Him and obey Him as Lord. It’s currently an invisible kingdom, but will one day become visible and universal as His rule extends even over those who do not acknowledge His lordship in their hearts.

What kind of kingdom is it? What distinguishes the Messiah’s kingdom from the other kingdoms of this world? The names Israel used for Christ in hint at four characteristics that make the Messiah’s kingdom—in all its manifestations—different from any other earthly government. At a time when the world is weary and despairing of political solutions, when the political future looks bleak, this is welcome news.

No Confusion—He Is a Wonderful Counselor

First, this kingdom is free from confusion, because Christ is a “Wonderful Counselor.” The King James Version separates “Wonderful” and “Counselor” with a comma, but the words seem to go better together and appear that way in most modern versions.

Every now and then, a politician comes on the scene who possesses, according to some, messiah-like qualities. Whether it’s a reference to speaking ability, charisma, or wisdom, it’s certainly a compliment. However, when you compare the greatest social or political leader with Jesus Christ, you’ll find there’s no comparison at all.

During His incarnation, Christ demonstrated His wisdom as a counselor. While I was writing *The Gospel According to Jesus*, I studied every major encounter Jesus had with individuals who came to Him for counsel. He always knew what to say, when to reach out to a seeking heart, and when to rebuke an impetuous soul. Even his enemies testified, “Never did a man speak the way this man speaks” (John 7:46).

As God incarnate, Christ is the source of all truth. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). No politician can match that! It is He to whom we must ultimately turn and trust His loving rule of our lives.

Many of our politicians turn everywhere else for counsel. They go to one another; they listen to special interests; they have their own psychologists, psychiatrists, analysts, philosophers, spiritual

advisors, gurus, astrologers, and other human counselors. But the King of kings keeps His own counsel. After all, “Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has informed Him?” (Isaiah 40:13).

The Messiah is the Wonderful Counselor because He is God, the source of truth. When He rules the earth, there will be no uncertainty in his administration. He is the ultimate and only true answer to political confusion.

No Chaos—He Is the Mighty God

Second, the Messiah’s kingdom is singularly free from chaos because He is the Mighty God. He is the One who in creation brought order out of chaos.

Scripture says, “God is not a God of confusion but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Chaos is antithetical to who He is. He is a God of order. Christ the King is orderly, and He brings order to the troubled lives of all who surrender to Him. In other words, He not only tells His subjects what to do as a Wonderful Counselor, but since He is the Mighty God, He can also energize them to do it.

Legislation can go only so far; it stops short of providing the power and the will to obey. Because of the sinful nature, people will always strain against law and order (Romans 7:8). Add human fallibility to the inability to make people obey from the heart, and you can see the severe limitations of political and legislative solutions.

But when Jesus Christ comes to rule this earth, He’ll display His divine power by bringing order to the chaos. Those who do not submit to His leadership from the heart, He’ll subjugate with a rod of iron (cf. Psalm 2:9; Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). Those who humble themselves from the heart, bowing to Him as Lord and Savior, will find the power of the Mighty God unleashed in their lives to help them obey.

Because Christ is God, He can forgive sin, defeat Satan, liberate people from the power of evil, redeem them, answer their prayers, restore their broken souls, and reign as Lord—“Mighty God”—over their newly ordered lives. That’s a politician this world has never seen.

No Complexity—He Is the Father of Eternity

In comparison to human governments, the Messiah’s kingdom is uncomplicated because He is the “Eternal Father.” The phrase literally means, “Father of Eternity.”

That is a clear reference to the biblical truth that Christ is Creator of heaven and earth. In Hebrews 1:10-12 God the Father says to Christ the Son, “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands; they will perish, but You remain; and they all will

become old like a garment, and like a mantle You will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end."

Nothing is too complex for the Creator and Sustainer of everything. Infinity and all its intricacies are nothing to Him who is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Human life is getting more and more complex. Technology has so improved communication and transportation that commerce, culture, and religion have become global in nature. And rather than organizing and making sense of it all, governments of the world seem to exist primarily to make things more complicated. We build bureaucracies to deal with the complexities of life—and consequently life only grows more perplexing.

Messiah's government, however, is simple and uncomplicated. He is the sole ruler—no bloated bureaucracy—and He knows the end from the beginning because He is the Father of Eternity.

Isaiah, prophesying about the kingdom, wrote of the highway of holiness: "The unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8, KJV). His way is so free from the complexities of life that even fools cannot lose their way.

That kind of simplicity characterizes Messiah's entire government. As the Father of Eternity, He alone comprehends the complexities of time and eternity. He requires no bureaucracy; He shoulders His government by Himself.

No Conflicts—He Is the Prince of Peace

Finally, in the Messiah's kingdom there are no conflicts because He is the Prince of Peace. He offers peace *from* God (Romans 1:7) to all who are the recipients of His grace. He brings peace *with* God (Romans 5:1) to those who surrender to Him in faith. He brings the peace *of* God (Philippians 4:7) to those who walk with Him.

There never really has been peace on earth in the sense we think of it. Wars and rumors of wars have characterized the entire two millennia since the announcement at His birth of peace on earth (Luke 2:14).

That angelic announcement of peace on earth was a two-pronged proclamation. First, it proclaimed that God's peace is available to men and women right now. Read the words of Luke 2:14 carefully: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men *with whom He is pleased*" (emphasis added).

Who are those with whom He is pleased? They are those who have yielded their lives to the authority of His government: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy"

(Psalm 147:11, KJV).

Why should we hope in His mercy? Because we are sinners who need His forgiveness (Romans 3:23). We must recognize that fact first of all if we are to place our lives under His government. We must understand that He gave His own sinless, guiltless life on our behalf. He died for our sins to save us from God's righteous wrath (Romans 5:6-9). And we must be willing to turn from our sins and embrace Him by faith, realizing that we can never earn His favor (Ephesians 2:8-9).

But secondly, the angel's announcement of "peace on earth" declared the arrival of the only One who ultimately can bring lasting peace on earth. Jesus Christ will bring lasting peace in the final establishment of His earthly kingdom. As we already mentioned, He will ensure "peace on earth" over the rebellious at heart by wielding a "rod of iron." There will be no coup d'état, no insurrection, not even the slightest threat to disturb the peace He brings to the world.

Isaiah 9:7 continues, "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace." In other words, His government and peace will keep expanding and improving. The familiar hymn "Like a River Glorious" accurately speaks of peace that is "perfect, yet it floweth fuller every day, perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way."

How can anything perfect improve? That's one of the mysteries of Messiah's government. It gets better and better, and the perfect peace flows deeper and deeper.

I look forward to the day when He returns to execute the final political solution that will truly bring world peace. His is the greatest government because it's ruled by the greatest ruler—the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." He is the only hope of mankind.

I also hope the government of your life is on His shoulders, that He rules and reigns even now in your heart. Only then will you experience the growing peace that comes only from the Prince of Peace.

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