

The Government Shall Be Upon His Shoulders

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 December 2020

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] If you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to Isaiah chapter 9. And with Christmas only 12 days away, I had wanted to spend this time this morning reflecting on something that would prepare us to celebrate as Christmas draws near.

But again and again, there was a second thing that kept coming up for me this week, even in the past couple weeks, and that's this whole issue of government. This week alone I had four people, actually not from this church but outside of it, who wanted to talk to me or get in touch with me in some form about when we as Christians should disobey the government.

Maybe some of you were invited to go to the protest that was held yesterday in Regina. This past week we saw the Alberta government increase restrictions upon their citizens and make it illegal for anyone who doesn't live alone to gather with another household this Christmas.

And so as much as I've been wanting to focus on Christmas this past week, what it is that we're about to celebrate, my attention keeps getting pulled back to government and to COVID.

And I will say I'm saddened by how many in the church, many Christians are handling themselves in the midst of this situation.

[1 : 31] Some are arguing, some are fighting, others are rallying supporters to protest and calling those who won't join them spineless and cowardly.

Some are saying that we have a Christian duty to defy the government and engage in civil disobedience and that those of us who aren't are being unfaithful to God.

This past week I was scrolling through Facebook on Scott Moe's own post and finding people that were saying, shame on you, Scott Moe, and then clicking on their profile and they're a Christian. The pride, the arrogance, the selfishness, the foolishness, the impatience of Christian people is leaking onto the stage of our nation for all to see.

And we've already seen a few churches capture the attention and scorn of many for deliberately defying public health orders. And I can tell you as a pastor watching this, this is very sad.

[2 : 41] A lot of people are pointing their fingers and their words at the government. Amazingly, almost everyone seems to think that they know better just how to govern a million people here in Saskatchewan than the current people that we have in government.

I've been thinking about that old Christmas classic, It's a Wonderful Life. Some of you will have seen that. George Bailey, in a moment of frustration, expresses his wish that he had never been born.

Things are going so bad for him. And an angel comes and gives him the chance to see what his life would be like if he had never been born, what the people in his community would be like.

I wish we could give that opportunity to everyone who thinks that they know better than the government. The opportunity for all these people to see what it would be like to have been the Premier of Saskatchewan or the Chief Medical Officer for the past year.

It doesn't matter that none of us know a thing about provincial leadership and administration or about immunology or about virology. Somehow, many of us think that we are an expert because we've been sitting at home reading things on our devices, our computer, on the internet, on email, finding out what's really going on and how we should really be handling this.

[4 : 14] And more than anything today, I think what the Church of Jesus Christ needs to do is to simply turn off our phones, to shut down the Facebook, the email, the YouTube, and open our Bibles up and read them and get on our knees and pray.

If Christians all across Canada would simply do that for the next month, I think we'd be amazed at how clearly God would speak to us about how we ought to live in these days.

I think we'd be amazed at how much joy we'd find in the midst of what's going on, how much strength. I think we'd be amazed at how much encouragement and wisdom God has already given us for such a time as this.

I got thinking, you know, do you want to have peace in the midst of all this? Do you want to get that grumblebee out of your bonnet?

Do you want to see your anger and frustration melt away into peace and joy? My advice is turn off the internet, open your Bible, and feast.

[5 : 32] Too many of us are simply letting the news, our Facebook friends, preachers we don't even know, YouTube, guys sitting in their basements recording videos, we're letting them tell us what and how to think, and God himself is being drowned out by all these voices and is not getting through to us.

Everybody wants to blame the government and criticize the government. It's the government's fault. This policy is unfair. This is unjust. How come they have applied these rules to this sector and not to this one?

This policy takes away my freedoms. Let me be clear, I'm not here to defend the government this morning. But we will open the scriptures and look at what they have to say about government and civil disobedience after we have celebrated Christmas.

I think that's really important for us. This morning, I want to point our hearts to a passage that gives us a reason to celebrate at Christmas even as we think of government.

long ago, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah and he said this. This is Isaiah 8.22.

[7 : 06] Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom. Nevertheless, verse 1 of 9, Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who are in distress.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned.

Down to 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.

Of the greatness 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.

[8 : 25] the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. Many of us are used to hearing these words at Christmas, but I wonder if this Christmas these words don't mean a little bit more.

Isaiah spoke first about the darkness of his day. He lived in dark times and the people of Israel were about to go through even darker times in the near future.

He spoke of how this darkness would persist until a future day when a great light would come over the horizon. These words remind me that even though we live in dark times today, they're not as dark as times in the past.

Why? Because the great light has dawned. Jesus, this child that was promised long ago, this son who was to be given has come and has been given.

2,000 years ago in Bethlehem, he was born. And this is what we celebrate at Christmas. But what's so wonderful about this prophecy is that it's about so much more than just a birth.

[9 : 49] you might wonder, how can we celebrate Christmas this year without a large gathering with family? How can we do it without a whole bunch of people together exchanging gifts, without big turkey dinners, amidst all these restrictions?

How can we have joy in the midst of all this? we can celebrate and have joy because Christmas is not just about a birth. It's about the birth of a king who will someday put Scott Moe and Justin Trudeau and Joe Biden or their successors out of a job.

Do you hear that in these words? For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

I love this sentence which God spoke long ago through Isaiah. It starts with a birth and it ends with a statement about government. It makes no mention of the several thousand years in between because they do not alter the reality of who this child is and what he will someday do.

The government will be on his shoulders. Are you dissatisfied with your current government? I've got news for you this Christmas.

[11 : 26] You're going to get a new one. This child who was born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, the man who sojourned through the land of Israel, was crucified by a coalition of governments.

That same man rose up from death and ascended to the throne of heaven and in God's wise planning and perfect timing, that same man will return with great power and glory and take up the responsibility of governing the great kingdom of God here on this earth.

You're getting a new government. Jesus will someday return and he will come to shoulder all of the responsibility of oversight, decision making, policy creation, law enforcement and leadership for all of God's people.

The governments of that day when he returns will be displaced and superseded by the king of kings. What will this government be like?

Isaiah tells us, of the greatness of his government and peace. There will be no end. Greatness. Let's think about that for a minute.

[12 : 58] All of the great governments of the past have at least one thing in common. No matter how great they became, their greatness came to an end. Think of the Egyptian empire.

The pyramids came to an end. Think of Alexander the Great and what he managed to accomplish in his brief window in history.

It came to an end. Think of the greatness of the Roman empire at its heights. Military strength unrivaled. It came to an end.

We might even think of present day governments who can rival the greatest nations of our world today. Yet for all their greatness there will come a day when their greatness will fade and will recede before this one great government.

The kingdom of Christ. The kingdom of God. His kingdom when he returns will be great. His government, his governing will be great.

[14 : 09] And it will go from great to the greatest of all time. and from there it will continue to become greater and increase in greatness forever.

Of the greatness of his government there will be no end. It will never be taken over. It will never fall. It will never be superseded by another kingdom, people, nation, leader. not ever. Not only greatness but peace.

Of peace that comes about from his government. There will be no end. If you ever take the time as my wife has to read through a brief summary of the world's history one thing will stand out to you for sure.

There has been a lot of wars again and again and again. There are these seasons in which people live in peace and wars and hostility has ceased and then it happens again.

[15 : 20] War comes. Hostilities happen. But when the child that was born in the manger in Bethlehem returns there will be peace forever.

Not just the cessation of wars but the cessation of all conflicts fights arguments disputes no more COVID squabbles no more feeling unsettled about people in the world somewhere whose freedoms are being stripped away for this reason or that no more enemies or threats of any kind of the peace that comes with his governance there will be no end.

what else? Isaiah says he will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice justice that's something that we long for in our world today isn't it?

No more corruption no more lies no more using positions of power to achieve personal benefits or to do favors for friends no more of the guilty getting off easy or free and never again the innocent being wrongly convicted justice from the time that he comes and establishes that kingdom from that time on and forever righteousness there's been a lot of talk in our day about governments trying or failing to do the right thing but when Christ the one who was born 2000 years ago returns he will not only know what's right he will establish what is right and he will uphold what is right from that time on it says and forever and so we have reasons big reasons to celebrate this Christmas to celebrate with all of our hearts because no matter what restrictions are on us from the government this will pass and a day is coming when we will have a new government a perfect government and we will have that forever the zeal of the

Lord Almighty will accomplish this we might read this and think well that just sounds impossible how could we ever have an existence like that maybe that's the reason why God chose to paint us this picture here with broad brush strokes about the kind of government and kingdom it will be rather than getting into all the details maybe it'll look so new and unfamiliar to us that it would just blow our

minds to even try to describe it we wouldn't even be able to comprehend it perhaps but lest we think for a moment that this is impossible this final statement reminds us that it is possible it's possible because of the one who will bring it about the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this he is the Lord Yahweh the creator the one who spoke our universe into existence he is almighty there's nothing that's impossible for him that he cannot do and by his zeal by his desire he will bring about this good kingdom with his chosen king and it will last forever and so we celebrate not just a birth at [19:16] Christmas but a birth that changes everything a light that when it finally comes to reach the full light of day will totally dispel all of the darkness in our world we celebrate the birth of our king the Lord Jesus when he comes he will solve all the problems of our world the problems that earthly governments have made and the problems that earthly governments have try as they may just been unable to fix and so I want to encourage us to put our hope in that this Christmas and to truly rejoice one day this king who came long ago and was born in Bethlehem will come again in his words soon he will return and the government will be upon his shoulders and we will come to that moment where we will take up these words from revelation the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our

Lord and of his Christ and he will reign forever and ever what a wonderful and glorious day that will be let's pray father in heaven we thank you that you have given us hope and reason to celebrate centuries ago and we trust that you will do all that you have promised please help us in these days God not to be dragged down with discouragement not to be dragged into arguments and complaining help us to be filled with joy and full of hope make us a bright and shining light in the darkness all around us this Christmas we ask in Jesus name amen rumor you you