

## The King Of Kings

***“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this”*** (Isaiah 9:6,7).

Whatever will happen to this earth of ours? What will happen to its people? What is God doing? What is He going to do? What can we know for sure? The questions are as rapid fire as the succession of events that have rocked the world and “turned it upside-down” in the last few months—indeed the last few weeks and days.

The last question should probably be the first one—What can we know for sure? The only thing we can know for sure is what the Bible specifically states, and that only as we surely understand what it does state. To understand what it does state requires a very careful analysis of the text and the context of each passage, together with the clear links to other passages. The prophet’s declaration—*“the government shall be upon His shoulders,”* seems simple enough. Do we not all know what “government” means and what “shoulders” mean? Or do we? For most people, “government” is a semi-technical, somewhat obscure term for the complex processes that control the people of a given political unit. In the common conceptions or misconceptions of the word, it is the source of all that is wrong with the quality of life in a given community. In such thinking, the “government” is responsible to guarantee health, wealth and happiness for everyone. Unfortunately, this misconception prevails in the Christian community as well, where Christ, who is *“Lord of all,”* must guarantee the quality of life for all who are the subjects of His Kingdom. All human ills are subsumed under the catch phrase—“Tell it to Jesus.”

The fundamental question, of course, is what is the precise meaning of this particular word in its context in Isaiah? What are the parameters of government as assumed by God in His governance of the world? The Hebrew word here is a derivative of the word *shar*. It is, in fact, the root of two other words in the same passage—*“The Prince of peace”* and *“Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end.”*

So what is the meaning of *shar*? It has to do everywhere in the Old Testament with the idea of rulership. Thus, the phrase *“Prince of peace”* really means “Ruler of peace.” And in the third case, the description of that rulership is that it shall be without end or “boundary.” Thus, the parameters of the rulership of Christ are established as “without boundaries.” We must assume then that His rulership will be universal.

In the phrase, *“Prince of peace,”* the word *shar* is used again. This indicates another aspect of His rulership. The word “Prince” does not mean “heir apparent” to a throne. It is rather the equivalent of the Greek word *archon*, which means “chief ruler.” It was used of the rulers of the ancient Greek city-states. In this respect, the phrase does not mean that Jesus is the quintessential example or exponent of peace, but rather that He is the ultimate

ruler over peace. Isaiah is obviously not talking about peace on the earth, since the earth has been under the control of Satan from the time of the fall. There has not been a period of universal peace among men on the earth to this day. The world has been caught in the maelstrom of conflict since the fall.

*But doesn't God have ultimate rule over the universe?*

Yes, indeed, He does have ultimate authority over the entire universe.

*Then where does Satan come in?*

According to Jesus in John 14:30; and Paul in Ephesians 2:2, Satan is the "prince [chief ruler] of this world." He has been allowed to exercise a measure of control over it as a result of the entrance of sin into the world. On the other hand, he exercises a certain free reign as long as God allows it. However, according to I Corinthians 15 and Hebrews 2, Satan will one day be a footstool under the feet of Christ. In Revelation 20 we are told that he will be cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years [possibly symbolic] and then released for a time. After a short period of rampage, he will be totally destroyed along with all of the forces of evil.

*But why does God allow him this control?*

There are many ways to approach this question. The ultimate answer must be left to God. However, it would seem from the development of God's will as outlined in the Scripture, God's ultimate desire is the recovery of mankind. "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). By allowing evil to run rampant on the earth, God is trying earnestly to urge the people of earth to cast their lot with His Kingdom which is of the Spirit and to abandon the transient and destructive focus on the earth and its material substance. If life were lovely on the earth, people would not be inclined to seek the Kingdom of God. Having said this, however, let me hastily remind you that this is only human speculation. The ultimate purposes belong to God. Suffice it to say that 1). Satan does exercise control on the earth at the present time; 2). God has ultimate power over Satan as He chooses to exercise it on the behalf of his children; and 3). He will one day, destroy completely the forces of evil and will assume His ultimate authority as "King of kings and Lord of lords."

For the prophet to say then that "the government shall be upon His shoulders" is simply to say that His is the ultimate Master of the universe. It is not to say that He will rule and overrule in the affairs of humans on the earth. From the time of the fall to the present hour, God has allowed evil and good to co-exist. In the end, however, good will prevail and evil will be expunged from the earth, even as Satan was cast out of heaven. The evidence is that there will be a kingdom on the earth in the future, peopled by those who have not participated in the Church—the Bride of Christ—while it was on the earth. Apparently (and only apparently) the Church has been something very special occupying the interim period of the apostasy of Israel and her reinstatement. Romans 9-11 makes this whole concept very clear. The original branches of the olive were cut off and new ones engrafted. This, of course, was symbolic of Israel's apostasy and the Gentiles' acceptance. But of course, as Paul indicates, the original branches can be grafted in again.

During the millennial kingdom when Satan has been cast out for a time, Christ will rule the earth with a rod of iron. Even though Satan has been cast out, there is no indication that universal salvation has taken place. And, indeed, when Satan is released, there is apparently a large number of his followers who will be brought together under his aegis (Revelation 20). This, in fact, is the real essence of Ezekiel 38. The millennial kingdom comes in after Christ has defeated the foes of Israel especially embodied in the false Messiah. Contrary to the common practice of making predictions, it is not at all clear what happens in the period of time between the present and the coming of the false Messiah. It is certain, of course, that there will be great upheaval in the Middle East. In fact, the upheaval will be such that the Israelis will be receptive to the false Messiah, because he will promise to deliver them from their conflicts. Certainly, there will be no real peace in the Middle East until that time. It is quite possible that the Moslems will be the dominant factor in the upheaval (something we have been saying for years). If that is true, whatever happens at the negotiating tables, all who are faithful to the Koran cannot possibly accept the idea of a legitimate presence of Israel in Palestine. No matter what is said at the conference tables or written in the treaties, it will always be worded so that it allows loopholes. No Moslem can possibly accept the Koran and at the same time agree to the legitimacy of the presence of Israel in Palestine.

We will have to continue the subject next month, but the implication of these issues for the Christian is that the total rulership of Christ at the present time is over His own Kingdom. And according to Paul in Colossians 3:1, we are dead as far as this world is concerned and alive unto Christ in our spirits. And as such we are "hidden with Christ in God." We are totally insulated from anything that Satan can do as far as our spirits are concerned. He may batter our flesh and batter this world, but our spirits remain eternally secure. We are joint heirs with Christ in the Kingdom of God. Jesus said to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion—*"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid"* (John 14:27).

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