The Increase of His Government

Established with Judgment and Justice

"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 9:7

THESE BLESSED WORDS written by the Prophet Isaiah, that are often used during this special season of the year, focus on God's wonderful gift to his human creation. In the Western world, the Christmas holiday is annually observed on December 25th, although it is acknowledged by students of the Bible to be the incorrect time of our Lord Jesus' birth. Among many sincere Christian people, it is a time of reflection in which attention is centered around the life and ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and his ultimate purpose in paying the redemption price for the sins of mankind. The sin-sick and dying human family continue to wait for Christ's future kingdom of Truth and

righteousness that will be established over all the earth in due time.

The assurance of God's promises concerning Jesus is that the expanding influence of his future kingdom will mean a corresponding extension of peace and good will as the prophet has said, 'of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.' Had the ancient kings and religious rulers of Israel been obedient to the laws of God, they would have been enlightened to the grand purpose of God concerning the plan of redemption and reconciliation over the affairs of mankind. Although there have been some noble rulers who have sought the best interests of the people over whom they have ruled, the majority have been tainted with a worldly spirit of pride, selfishness, and the lack of necessary wisdom to be entrusted with anything more than limited power and influence in world affairs.

At the present time, a violent and polluted world bears stark testimony to the failure of all human efforts to properly govern the nations. The hopelessness of the people, which has resulted from this failure, continues to haunt the human race, and is as a plague which is robbing the people from experiencing the peace and joy of which Isaiah spoke. In the face of this calamity the people turn in every direction to seek a way out of their dilemma, while the vast majority do not realize nor understand that there is only one hope, which is God's promised kingdom in which Jesus will be earth's new king.

A MEANINGFUL MESSAGE

How much more meaningful the Christmas message should be this year to those who are able to grasp

something of its real and long-term significance. as well as to have faith in all that the promises of God indicate. The scriptural message should have greater meaning than to merely partake of the Christmas spirit that generally prevails in the exchange of gifts and the traditional family get-together for a sumptuous meal and a good time. It would be well to keep in mind the greater event which we commemorate by thinking upon God's gift to the world—our Savior, Redeemer, and King who is soon to rule the nations. At no time has this knowledge been more meaningful and relevant as a basis for hope and trust in the hearts and lives of the people than at the present. There has never been a more binding responsibility on the part of those who understand the real meaning of Jesus' birth, than to herald wide the glorious message of his future and glorious kingdom, that it is soon to be manifested for the blessing of all nations and the solution of all the many problems of a sin-sick and dying world.

Concerning our Lord Jesus and some of the many titles that are associated with his future and glorious kingdom reign over the human family, Isaiah further wrote, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6) In some translations of the Bible, one of the descriptive titles our Lord will be known by is "Wonderful Counsellor," rather than by two separate titles, 'Wonderful,' and 'Counsellor.'

This prophecy of Isaiah is but one of the important scriptural accounts concerning the birth of

Jesus—the Son of God—who was hailed by the angel in those most momentous and unforgettable words, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."—Luke 2:10-14

The promised child was born, the foretold Son was given, and the promised Christ came to be the Savior of the world. To emphasize the importance of the event and to explain further its significance, a 'multitude of the heavenly host' were heard praising God, and saying 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' No passage in the Scriptures is more familiar than this one. It will be repeated by many Christian people again this year, but it takes on added significance now, as the promised kingdom of Christ is ever closer at hand. May these blessed promises serve as a more meaningful inspiration to all who may consider them during this Christmas season.

EARTH'S NEW GOVERNMENT

One of the principal reasons the professed Christian world has failed to understand the full significance of the angelic message of peace and good will is that they have supposed the realization of its implications depend upon human efforts. In an attempt to Christianize the world and thus bring peace to

the nations, many have, in the name of Christ, joined hands with civil governments, and taken part in political action to accomplish their purpose. Concerning the birth of Jesus, the Son whom God would give, some have evidently failed to notice the prophetic assurance that ultimately the government shall be upon his shoulder, as promised in Isaiah 9:6.

To make sure that we understand this thought, the prophet adds, "The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (Isa. 9:7) The prophet refers to the promises by using the word 'this,' which emphasizes that it will be performed by the 'zeal of the LORD.' We note that the prophecy foretells the promise of the Christ child, the Son who would be born and upon whose shoulder the responsibility of the new world government would rest.

Jesus was this child, and his birth was not by the will of man, for even the fulfillment of this part of the prophecy was accomplished by Divine direction and power. When the angels sang 'on earth peace, good will toward men' they meant that through this child, and through the kingdom in which he would rule, God would bring peace to the nations. They meant, also, that his birth was an expression of God's good will toward men, and not that men would suddenly, and of their own volition, begin to exercise good will toward one another.

The prophet has told us, 'His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, [Wonderful Counselor] The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' All of these titles are ascribed to Jesus by God, and are indicative of the various ways in which the 'increase of his government' will be manifested

for the blessing of all the people. The title Counsellor, describes his future role as Mediator of a new and better covenant between God and men. One of the fundamental causes of all suffering and death in the earth at the present time is the fact that the human race is estranged from God through rebellion against his law. One of the functions of Christ's reign will be to bring about reconciliation between God and the human family. Peace between God and men is a necessary and fundamental prerequisite to obtaining peace among men. As long as mankind continues to be at enmity with God, and defiant of his law, they will be enemies of one another as well.

The first step toward the reconciliation of the world by Jesus was the sacrifice of his life as man's Redeemer. This outstanding act of love, and interest in the subjects over which he was later to be ruler, is one of the aspects which entitles him to be called Wonderful. The rulers of this world may be considered wonderful if through their ability as leaders they can induce their subjects to die for them and for the cause they represent. But Jesus reversed this procedure. The foundation of his greatness and world rulership, was manifested in the laying down of his own life in sacrifice that his subjects might live.

It is no wonder that Jesus also merits the title, The mighty God. This does not mean that he is the Almighty God, the Heavenly Father. It simply means that the Father has exalted him to such a high position in the carrying out of the Divine plan for the reconciliation and salvation of the human race. During his kingdom, our Lord will be recognized as a god, and the mighty one to whom such honor is to

be accorded, and who is worthy of being worshiped. We, who are his followers during this present Gospel Age, are bidden to honor the Son even as we honor the Father. The restored human race is also prophetically represented as giving this honor to the One who saved them, as recorded by the Prophet Isaiah. "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:9

We note that the expression, 'we have waited for him,' is repeated twice in this text, but it is applied the second time to the Heavenly Father, saying of him, 'We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' The people will then recognize the Father as the Author of the great plan of salvation, and our Lord Jesus will be a mighty god through whose death and kingdom rule they will have ultimately been reconciled to the Father and saved from sin and death.

NO MORE DEATH

The thought of salvation from death is further emphasized by the title, The everlasting Father. The word father means life-giver, and our Lord Jesus is the one who will give everlasting life to the people. No other ruler in the history of the world has ever attempted to give life to the people, but how essential this is to the lasting peace and joy of the human family when this is fully realized. We may perhaps visualize a world enjoying all the blessings of peace and security that human governments have ever promised, yet it would still be a sin-sick and dying world. The increase of Christ's

influence among the nations will be so widespread and all-comprehensive that even the great enemy death will crumble before him in defeat and destruction. Paul writes, "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."—I Cor. 15:25,26

Think what the destruction of death will mean to the human creation when it will first be manifested in the restoration to health of all the living. However, it will not stop there, for all the victims of the greatest enemy death who have been struck down throughout all the ages of the past are to be restored to life, that they too may take their places in the new world society. The responsibility for the fulfillment of all these wonderful promises that will come to pass in fulfillment of the kingdom of Christ will be 'upon his shoulder,' and we know that 'the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.' Jesus' birth was a miracle, and his glorious kingdom will be a reality to all in due time.

During his brief earthly ministry, our Lord demonstrated over and over again what miracles of healing and of resurrection are possible when Divine power is employed. He was raised from the dead by a miracle, because the zeal of the LORD of hosts performed this, and we have the blessed assurance that Divine power will also be used for the restoration of all the dead. In a world in which death is an everyday occurrence, how blessed is the promise that under the administration of Christ's future kingdom of Truth and righteousness "there shall be no more death."—Rev. 21:4

The prophet also describes Jesus as The Prince of Peace. We have noted that in his role as Mediator,

or Counsellor, that he will establish peace between God and men. This peace will be based upon obedience to the Divine laws of righteousness and justice. Those who are willingly obedient to God will be at peace with one another, for they will all be recognizing the one supreme authority. The Prophet Micah points to this future time. He writes, "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—Mic. 4:1-3

When this prophecy is fulfilled there will be peace on earth. This will not come to pass because men will have finally devised a way of living at peace with one another, but because of God's good will toward men in providing a Prince of Peace to enforce obedience to the principles of justice and love as embodied in his laws. (Rev. 2:27) This peace on earth established by The Prince of Peace will be more than peace among nations. It will also be peace within nations, as symbolized by the expression that every man shall dwell "under his vine and under his fig tree." (Mic. 4:4) It will mean peace in

every community, and in every home. It will mean peace of heart and mind that will never be disturbed by the fear of war, poverty, sickness, or the fear of death. In this promise, the reason ascribed for the conditions of peace and safety are assured by the kingdom of Christ. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."—Isa. 11:9

When the earth is filled with the 'knowledge of the LORD,' and the people are living in harmony with that knowledge, they will enjoy peace among themselves and within themselves. This peace will be the outgrowth of their peace with God, a peace which they will have found through the acceptance of the redemptive work of Christ as the only means by which they are saved from death, and by obedience to the Divine standards of righteousness which are the foundation of God's throne. Surely it is true that Jesus will be The Prince of Peace, and that of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

THE THRONE OF DAVID

Our featured text also states that the reign of the Prince of Peace will be established 'upon the throne of David.' This is a reaffirmation of the promise that the Messiah, the Christ, the seed of promise, would come through the lineage of David, and that The Prince of Peace would reestablish the kingdom of David. God recognized the kings of Israel as representing him, and that the kingdom of Israel was his typical kingdom. We read, "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David

his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him."—I Chron. 29:23

This arrangement ceased when King Zedekiah was overthrown and the nation taken into captivity in Babylon. The prophet Ezekiel wrote, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:26,27) Jesus is the one referred to in this prophecy as having the 'right' to reestablish the throne, or kingdom, which was there overthrown. It is from this standpoint that his rulership will be upon the throne of David.

From the time the LORD's typical kingdom of Israel was overthrown, and until the time when Christ's kingdom is established, the world is without a government in which the Lord takes any part. The reestablishment of the throne of David by Jesus is the prophetic manner of assuring us of the Divine authority to rule which will be vested in him. While the kingdom of Christ will be vastly more powerful and far-reaching than was the typical kingdom of Israel, it will in many respects be like it. God was Israel's Lawgiver, and had the people obeyed those laws, and had their kings administered them properly, and in accordance with God's will, they would have been blessed accordingly.

The laws of the kingdom of Christ will be the Divine laws administered by Jesus, the Divine king. He will have associated with him those who will have proven their worthiness of that high position by suffering and dying with him. (II Tim. 2:11,12)

These who are being called during this present Gospel Age will come forth in the first resurrection to live and reign with Jesus. We are thus assured that all the rulers in the new kingdom will be righteous administrators of the law. Their representatives on the earth will be the Worthies of old. These, as "princes in all the earth" (Ps. 45:16), will also have been prepared for their positions of responsibility. Being raised from the dead as perfect human beings, they will be capable of administering the visible earthly phase of the new kingdom wisely, and in harmony with the righteous laws and instructions which will be given to the people through them.

The throne of David is a symbol of Divine rulership that will be established, not temporarily, but forever. While the mediatorial phase of the kingdom will continue only for a thousand years, it will be long enough to restore the human race to life and to atonement with God. The rulership will thenceforth be without end. At that time, our prayer "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" shall be fully answered. (Matt. 6:10) Christ's kingdom of Truth and righteousness will accomplish the means by which this prayer will be answered. Truly the prophet was right when he wrote that of the increase of Christ's government and peace there shall be no end. It will have no end because it will not stop short of removing from the earth every element of unrighteousness, and every enemy of God and men. He will extend his sphere of influence until everything which has disturbed the peace of the people, and robbed them of the blessings of God, shall be destroyed.

OUR BLESSED HOPE

This is the blessed hope which continues to sustain us now during this holiday season, as well as throughout the year. Although we understand that December 25th is not the correct time of our Lord's birth, we may once more pause to give thanks to Almighty God for the miraculous and wonderful gift of our Lord Jesus who, we believe, will soon be manifest and recognized as earth's true Prince of Peace.

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