

"The Advent of His Government"

Rev. Lee F. Veazey

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.*

Isaiah 9:6-7a

A number of themes are present in Advent hymns and Christmas carols. One of those themes is made known in the opening lyrics of two familiar carols: "*Joy to the world! the Lord is come: Let earth receive her King*" and "*Hark! the herald angels sing, 'Glory to the newborn King'*". This theme is the kingship of Jesus Christ, and these hymn writers didn't make it up; rather, they discovered it as they read the Bible.

Not only are preparations for Christmas in full swing, preparations for the next presidential election are also. Throughout political campaigns we hear about the need for small government, big government, less government, or more government. However, we don't hear as much about the need for good government.

Yet Isaiah 9:6-7a describes a government that isn't just good, but great as it is both progressive ("*of the increase*") and permanent ("*there will be no end*"). This government rests on the shoulders of King Jesus, the (human) child who was born and the (divine) son who was given. This government is not only great, it's absolutely perfect. Moreover, this chief executive isn't up for election or re-election; this leader cannot be voted into office or voted out of office. Rather, he has been, is now, and always will be King.

According to the prophet Isaiah, King Jesus has a four-fold name: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

As Wonderful Counselor, Jesus rules and counsels with true and complete wisdom. He doesn't need advice from anyone because he himself is wisdom.

As Mighty God, Jesus is the one who created and sustains the entire universe. He is the one who upholds and rules all things by the power of his Word. Just as he doesn't need advice from anyone, he also doesn't need help from anyone. He is all-powerful, eternally and infinitely strong. No one can challenge him or defeat him.

As Everlasting Father, Jesus reveals the Father who loves, protects, provides, disciplines, and instructs. As Wonderful Counselor, he has the wisdom. As Mighty God, he has the power. As Everlasting Father, he has the heart in which wisdom and power are brought together to provide and to protect.

As Prince of Peace, Jesus brings two gifts with him: Peace with God and the peace of God. Through faith in the person and work of Jesus, people are at peace with God. Through faith, his peace rules and governs their lives, guiding them and guarding them.

As his government, that is his reign and rule, increases, so also peace increases. The perfect, progressive, and permanent government of Jesus brings with it perfect, progressive, and permanent peace, peace which is not only the absence of conflict between man and God but also the restoration to a life of wholeness and completeness.

It's important to remember that although the government of King Jesus is in this world, his government is not of this world nor from the world. One of the most remarkable statements of Jesus is when he says, as recorded in John 18:36, "*My kingdom is not of this world . . . my kingdom is not from the world.*" Why is this so hard to believe? Because it requires faith, not sight. Yet, when we see those who are "*poor in spirit*" (Matthew 5:3) displaying "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*" (Galatians 5:22-23) we can be sure that we're observing the rule and reign of King Jesus. As they follow their King and move toward people, citizens of his kingdom move downward in humility and upward in self-sacrificial

service. In the Kingdom of God, the values of the world are turned upside down, where power is used not in order to be served but rather in order to serve.

To whom has Isaiah the prophet been speaking? It is "to us" that a child is born, "to us" that a son is given. Who is the "us"? "Us" are those people who are trusting in the promises of God, and in particular this promise of God: to rescue his people from their sin and restore them to a right relationship with him by sending his one and only Son to live the perfect life of obedience that we should live and then to die the death we deserved to die for the rebellious life that we do live. This person, whose advent and birth we celebrate this December, came to do for us what we could never do for ourselves, living and dying in our place and on our behalf.

Christianity is not about man going to God but God coming to man. It's not about man becoming God, but rather God becoming man. The celebration of the incarnation, God becoming man, is not sweet and sentimental. Rather, it is sober and serious, for Jesus came on a mission to rescue the helpless and the hopeless. "*The reason the Son of God appeared*" the apostle John writes "*was to destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John 3:8). Jesus came to "*deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery*" (Hebrews 2:15). Jesus Christ was born to die; he came to lay down his life for others.

Jesus Christ the King has already come in grace to set his people free from the penalty of sin and the power of sin. He will return and come again in glory to set his people free from the presence of sin. Until then, let us give thanks to God and, in the words of "Silent Night!", "*with the angels let us sing alleluia to our King; Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!*"

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