

## BIG, BIG SHOULDERS! ISAIAH 9:6

On a mild November night in 2008, Barack Obama stood on a stage in Chicago and addressed an adoring crowd after winning the presidency. The euphoria in Grant Park that evening was palpable, and had even the news anchors and political pundits pronouncing that this was no ordinary election, for this was no ordinary man. Even some of the most stoic among them were visibly moved, informing the viewing audience that what we were witnessing was not just historic, but momentous. One boldly proclaimed that this man was ushering in the dawn of a new day for America, and that America would never be the same.

The day after the election MSNBC's Chris Matthews said, "I've been following politics since I was five. I've never seen anything like this. This is bigger than Kennedy. This is the New Testament."

Newsweek editor Evan Thomas wrote, "In a way, Obama is standing above the country, above the world. He's sort of God. He's going to bring all the different sides together."

Film director Spike Lee said, "You'll have to measure time, 'Before Obama,' 'After Obama'...every-thing's going to be affected by this seismic change in the universe" (Klein, *The Amateur*, 62-63).

However, within six months, those dreams and expectations had all but evaporated. By the end of his first term, the nation was in a crippling financial crisis and the government was mired in mind-boggling debt, contentious gridlock, and bitter partisanship. It was clear, even to his staunchest supporters, that Barack Obama would not be the savior they anticipated.

Two years ago, when a billionaire with zero political experience became President of the United States, many of those on the opposite side of the political spectrum had similar hopes and dreams. They were convinced that his no-holds-barred, tell-it-like-it-is personality and his no-nonsense, "get-her-done" leadership style would not only drain the political swamp in Washington, but turn it into a fertile political field. However, within two months of taking office his administration has been embroiled in criminal indictments, infighting, scandal, and stunning firings and resignations. Today, many of those who hailed him as America's Savior are so disillusioned they long for the stability and security of the Obama administration.

Frankly, I don't blame our presidents for not living up to the expectations that people have of them. I actually blame *people* for putting so much hope and trust in *human* leaders. When will we learn that even the best and brightest men and women don't have shoulders that are big enough and strong enough to provide what we *really* need and want—real and lasting peace and stability and security and freedom and wholeness and good will?

Which brings me to the reason why Christmas is such a spectacular celebration, for we celebrate the birth of a different kind of leader, the only Leader whose competency and skill actually exceed our highest expectations, a Leader who cannot fail and, therefore, will never disappoint, a Leader who is *truly* invincible, and a leader whose term will never end and whose kingdom will last forever.

Nearly seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah predicted the coming of this Leader, and his timeless words provide a stark contrast between the temporary kings and kingdoms of this world, and the eternal King and kingdom that are immeasurably greater than anything in this world.

Isaiah prophesied at a time when Israel was being brutalized by the tyrannical kings and nations that surrounded them. He describes Israel as a beast of burden with an oppressive yoke on its shoulders. But he said that one day God would send someone to remove that yoke and provide permanent peace and freedom. He says, **Isaiah 9:6**.

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders. And he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (ESV).*

Chapter 9 begins with a description of the terrible darkness and gloom in the region around the Sea of Galilee, the area that suffered the most under Assyria’s harsh rule. But Isaiah prophesied that those regions would be the first to see the dawn of a new day. That glorious day would be ushered in by the birth of a male child who is described as the radiant light who would one day shine in Galilee.

Isaiah talks about the advent of this child in two ways: First, as a child who was born **to us**; a human being born for *our* benefit, for *our* well-being, indeed, for *our* salvation. *“For to us a child is born.”*

And second, as a Son who comes from God Himself, from outside the realm of humanity. *“For to us a Son is given”*. He was not *born* in this world as God’s Son, but was already God’s Son who co-existed with His Father from eternity past. So when He came into the world He was **given** as His Son. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...” (Jn. 3:16).*

A distinction is made in these two clauses, *“Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given.”* In the first there is an emphasis on the *humanity* of Christ as one who was born—who became flesh and lived among us (John 1:14). In the second there is an emphasis on the *deity* of Christ as the One who is the pre-existent Son of God—who, prior to being born into this world was, in His very nature, God (Phil. 2:6). In chapter 7 Isaiah identified this child as *“Immanuel,”* which means, “God with us”.

But notice what Isaiah says about the responsibilities this child would have when He grew up. *“The government will be on his shoulder.”* He would be a ruler, a head-of-state; but not just any ruler or head-of-state. The government He would lead and administrate is *God’s* government—otherwise known as the kingdom of God. And so this child would grow up to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. He would be the supreme Ruler in the Universe, having all authority and all responsibility.

*“The government will be on his shoulder.”* That means He would be responsible for the execution of every divine decree, the implementation of every divine plan, the fulfillment of every divine purpose, the destiny of every human being, the well-being of every kingdom citizen, and the management of all the kingdom’s resources. He would assume responsibility for everything, and everything would depend on Him.

I would suggest to you that those are *big, BIG shoulders*. And in order to successfully administrate this government it requires exceptional qualities and skills, which are implied in the names that will be given to God’s Messiah. **Verse 6b.** *“He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”*.

*Four* names are used to describe the coming Messiah, each of which reflect both His divine and human nature. He is “Wonderful Counselor” because He has been personally acquainted with the counsel of God from eternity past and will be able to impart this divine counsel for eternity future. He is Wisdom personified and all of His judgments are true and right.

But the Hebrew word “Counselor” was also used of a lawyer or advocate. Isaiah predicted that Messiah would be the One who would plead our case before Almighty God so that we could be spared from God’s terrible wrath, which is the fair and just punishment we deserve as a result of our sin and wrongdoing. Concerning Jesus, the Apostle John wrote in his first letter, *“If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2).*

After dying on the cross and rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, Jesus now sits at the right hand of God, and pleads our case before Almighty God and secures our forgiveness and favor with God. That’s because as a human who had experienced every temptation we do, yet was without sin, He was qualified to die in our place and be punished by God for us. He satisfied God’s justice on the cross, and our forgiveness is based solely on what He did there for us. So when we sin He says to the Father, “I paid for that.”

And speaking of Almighty God, Isaiah says that the Messiah is, Himself, “Mighty God.” Just as He has supernatural wisdom, so He has supernatural strength. He is, indeed, God with us (Isa. 7:14), and is therefore able to *perfectly* and *powerfully* execute His leadership responsibilities.

When Jesus the Messiah came to earth He demonstrated divine power in many ways. He healed the sick, made the lame to walk, and the blind to see. He cast out demons, calmed the sea, and even raised the dead. But His divine power was on display supremely when He Himself rose from the dead three days after He died on the cross, something no one else has ever done.

Isaiah tells us that this Christ child would also be “Everlasting Father” or “Father of eternity,” which means that He has no beginning or end and is from everlasting to everlasting. He transcends time and space, and as such He cannot be contained or confined. He has no limits or boundaries.

“Prince of Peace” means that as the ruler of this kingdom He secures and sustains and preserves the subjects of His kingdom. He ensures that neither hostility nor animosity will have a place in His kingdom, and that His kingdom will never be divided. And because He Himself is our peace, His peace will rule in the hearts of His people.

As you can see, God’s Messiah is eminently qualified to have God’s government rest upon His shoulders. He’s a different kind of leader, the only Leader whose competency and skill actually exceed our highest expectations, a Leader who cannot fail and, therefore, will never disappoint, a Leader who is *truly* invincible, and a leader whose term will never end and whose kingdom will last forever.

**BIG, BIG SHOULDERS!**  
ISAIAH 9:6

MAIN IDEA: NO HUMAN LEADER CAN COMPARE TO THE LEADERSHIP ABILITIES OF GOD'S MESSIAH

GOD'S APPOINTED LEADER (MESSIAH)

THE CHILD

BORN FOR US

GIVEN TO US

THE GOVERNMENT ON HIS SHOULDERS

HIS NAMES (QUALIFICATIONS)

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

MIGHTY GOD

EVERLASTING FATHER

PRINCE OF PEACE

## BIG, BIG GOVERNMENT! ISAIAH 9:7

The title of part 1 of my Christmas message was “Big, BIG Shoulders”. The title of part 2 is “Big, BIG Government”. Having said that, I realize I am addressing an audience comprised of many who are strongly *opposed* to big government. Some of us equate big government with interference, incompetency, mismanagement, and wastefulness. Many would agree with Ronald Reagan, who said, “The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: ‘I’m from the government and I’m here to help.’”

And I would submit to you that this is the very reason *why* so many are suspicious of government. Government is run by *flawed* people, and the bigger the government the more flaws there are to contend with. So as we continue to look at Isaiah’s prophecy about God’s appointed Leader, the Messiah, who would carry His government on His shoulders, I ask that you let Messiah’s *flawless* character shape your perception of His government and allow you to appreciate, and rejoice, in its massive size and scope. **Isaiah 9:6-7.**

*“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. <sup>7</sup>Of the increase 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. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this” (Isa. 9:6-7).*

The prophet moves from Messiah’s humble birth in the first part of verse 6 to His glorious reign in verse 7. He describes the kind of kingdom Messiah will have, and there are a few things worth noting. First, it will be an *ever-expanding* kingdom.

In the history of our world there have been a number of powerful, influential leaders who have shaped vast portions of the world’s borders and cultures. The Pharaohs of ancient Egypt, the kings of Babylon and Persia, Alexander the Great, the emperors of Rome. Most of these leaders imposed their wills upon unwilling subjects by subjugating them. But as influential as their kingdoms were at the time, they endured for no more than a few generations. And all of those kingdoms eventually shrunk or vanished altogether.

But it will not be so with the kingdom of the Christ. *Of the increase of his government... there will be no end.* His will be an ever-expanding kingdom, a kingdom without boundaries and borders; a kingdom that keeps getting bigger and broader.

We are told in Revelation that at the end of time, when Jesus returns to this earth to gather His people, His followers will include people from every nation, tribe, and tongue. Every people group will be represented in that heavenly throng that surrounds the throne of King Jesus.

Second, not only will the kingdom of Messiah be ever-expanding, it will be an empire of ever-increasing peace. *Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end (7a).* In His reign as the Prince of Peace there shall be no limit and no end to that peace—peace that doesn’t just refer to the absence of war, but an absence of turmoil and tension in relationships. An *inner* peace, a settled contentment, a joyful and restful satisfaction. In other words, there will be nothing about this kingdom or king to criticize, to resent, to condemn, or even to disagree with. And this era of peace will last forever.

And that brings me to the third description of this kingdom. It is everlasting. **Verse 7.** *Of the increase 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.*

And *forever* means *forever*. He's talking about an infinite reign, where peace and justice and righteousness will prevail throughout eternity, without interruption and without interference. And we can be sure that this will happen because God said that He Himself would make sure it happened. The end of verse 7, "*The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this*".

Indeed, nearly 700 years after Isaiah's prophecy God delivered on His promise. Just after Jesus was born in Bethlehem He made an announcement through an angel to some unsuspecting shepherds. *I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord*" (Luke 2:10-11 ESV).

As we read through the Gospel accounts about the life and ministry of Jesus; as we explore His amazing teaching, astonishing miracles, and incredible love; as we ponder the claims He made about Himself; as we read about His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead three days later; we are forced to conclude that this was no ordinary man. This had to be the child that was born for us, the Son that was given to us. And we are forced to make a decision. Will we believe in Him or not?

I don't know some of you. I don't know what you believe about Jesus or where you stand in relation to Jesus. What I *do* know is that He knows...and He cares. I *do* know that when Jesus died on the cross He bore *your* sins in His body, and He did it because He loves you more than you will ever know.

I also know that three days after He died He rose from the dead, and that His resurrection proved that He was who He said He was—Messiah, Son of the living God. It demonstrated His divine power. It established that His death on the cross did accomplish what He said it would—the forgiveness of sins and the defeat of the powers of darkness. It proved that Jesus was telling the truth when He said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies...*"

Whoever *believes*. Believing in Jesus means that you not only believe that He is who Isaiah and the writers of Scripture say He was. It means that you confess with your mouth that Jesus is, indeed, the Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. It also means confessing that you cannot make yourself right with God—that you cannot sufficiently clean up your act or impress God with your good works or your charitable deeds. It means that you confess that Jesus made things right for you, and you are putting your complete trust in Him as God's sole provision for your right standing with Him.

You do this and He will forgive your sins and free you from their guilt and punishment. He will reconcile you to Himself and adopt you as His son or daughter. And He will make you a citizen of His kingdom and give you access to His throne, not merely in this life, but forever and ever. Amen.

Pastor Stan Myers  
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## BIG, BIG GOVERNMENT! ISAIAH 9:7

MAIN IDEA: MESSIAH'S KINGDOM AND PEACE ARE EVER EXPANDING AND EVERLASTING, SECURED BY NONE OTHER THAN GOD HIMSELF

EMPIRE OF PEACE  
EVER-EXPANDING

EVERLASTING

THE DAVIDIC THRONE

TOTALLY SECURE