

## Governed by the Word of God

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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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Isaiah is speaking of a Savior, a wonderful Prince of Peace coming to rule over a kingdom. This kingdom would be made up of a people wholly submitted to the Prince's supreme authority. And the Prince himself would provide loving counsel to those he ruled over, guiding and directing their lives.

Of course, the prince Isaiah describes is Christ. Jesus' kingdom has indeed come, and it exists in the hearts of his people. From now until the end of time Jesus is going to rule over his kingdom with divine order: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end...and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (9:7).

If Christ reigns as the supreme authority over his kingdom, what does it mean for his people to be governed by him? The dictionary defines "govern" as "to guide, direct, control all actions and behavior of those under authority." In short, Jesus is to guide all our actions and behavior. We must allow him to direct us daily, from our words and deeds to our very thought life.

At the same time, Scripture says, Jesus rules over all the nations of the world. "He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves" (Psalm 66:7). Do not be fooled: Our country is not ultimately controlled by Republicans, Democrats or Wall Street. God alone is in control of America and every nation. He sits as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, reigning over all creation from his heavenly throne:

"Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance...he taketh up the isles as a very little thing...All nations before him...are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity" (Isaiah 40:15, 17). Isaiah is saying, "Go ahead, try to measure God's might against the powers of the world. Take all the weapons, armaments and militias of humankind and put them on the scale. Next to the Lord those things amount to no more than a mound of dust."

Think of all the oppressive regimes throughout history that thought they could rid themselves of God completely. Virtually overnight the Lord blew away the Iron Curtain, which had dominated life for multiple millions in the twentieth century. Of course, we need to continue praying and working on behalf of persecuted brothers and sisters in all oppressive cultures. Yet we must also be confident that God is still in control of every nation. "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isaiah 52:10).

In no other kingdom does God rule as supremely as in his kingdom established in the hearts of his people.

Jesus said, "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). It is within this kingdom — the realm of our hearts — that Christ rules supreme over his people, guiding us, healing us and governing our lives and future.

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:7). This verse speaks not only of Jesus' endless rule through eternity but of his rule over our lives at present. Simply put, we must always increase our submission to our king's rule. Can you say Jesus' government over you is increasing? Is your life coming increasingly under his authority? Or do you avoid his rule when it conflicts with your fleshly desires?

I want to look at how God governs his kingdom of his people. Hebrews says that in the Old Testament God spoke to his people through the prophets but that today he has chosen to speak through his Son: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

In short, Jesus is God's explicit message to us, the divine Word made flesh. And today the Father has sent the Holy Spirit to remind us of Christ's words while he was on earth. Thus, Jesus governs us by the written, revealed

Word of God.

“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power” (1:3). “The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (4:12).

David’s Psalm 119 is a powerful testimony of someone governed by God’s written Word: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (verse 11). “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (verse 105). “I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way” (verse 128). “Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (verse 133). “I rejoice at thy word” (verse 162).

We know about all the problems David experienced in his life. Although he faced awful times of failure and confusion, David continually allowed himself to be governed by God’s Word. And the Lord always brought his life back into divine order.

Of course, society today will have nothing of this sort of government by God’s Word. The Bible has become an object of mockery and derision, outlawed in many schools, courts and public places. As a result America has no real moral authority.

God’s message to us through this is clear: “If you despise my Word, your foundational structures will erode and eventually topple overnight.” “All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass...but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isaiah 40:6-8).

Far more serious than a nation despising God’s Word is a child of his who neglects his Word.

As I consider the church of Jesus Christ today, I see fewer and fewer Christians allowing their lives to be governed by God’s Word. Many will no longer sit through a church service to hear sound doctrine preached. Why? For the past several decades, during what is now called the “church-growth era,” an entire generation of believers grew accustomed to musical entertainment, skits and ten minute sermons.

I do not condemn any pastor or congregation for their well-meant efforts to become “friendly” to sinners and seekers. But over time many of these churches, without knowing it, built their houses on sand. A generation has now passed, and many large churches exist without any real foundation in Christ. Their people have spent years sitting in church yet know little of God’s Word because they haven’t heard it preached. As a result, many Christians are confused and utterly lost when trials overwhelm them because they have no Rock to stand on.

There is another tragic result of this lack of biblical preaching. For a time, a great multitude of Christians ended up traveling across the country to seek “a word from God” through celebrated prophets, many of whom were no more than charismatic fortune-tellers. You may wonder how any follower of Jesus could come to such a point of deception.

Consider the typical believer who makes such a trip. Perhaps he has an ambition to do some great work and wants his dream confirmed by a spokesman for God. Imagine his thrill when a “prophet” tells him things about his life no one could possibly know. Yet the ambitious Christian can’t judge that prophetic word against God’s because he doesn’t know what Scripture says. Now his entire future, as well as his family’s, hinges on the words of a charlatan!

The Bible exposes every ambition in us that is of fleshly origin. And the Holy Spirit is faithful to show us every hidden lust in our heart that will mislead us. Therefore, if we refuse to come under the rule of our loving Lord’s Word, we open ourselves to grave deception.

What is the lie coming that so many Christians will accept?

Paul warns that in the last days, “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11- 12). What is the lie Paul refers to here? It is the deception that the Antichrist will be humankind’s deliverer.

You may wonder, “How could any Christian be so deluded he would believe the Antichrist is the messiah?” Paul gives us the reason in the preceding verse: These believers “received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2:10). By being ignorant of God’s Word, such Christians neglect to come under its governing rule. Thus, they are swept up by every wind and wave of doctrine and easily misled and deceived.

The frightful things we see happening in the world and the erosion of biblical preaching should drive us to God’s Word. We should desire to be governed by no voice other than the One who remains trustworthy on our behalf. We cannot afford to trust even the sweetest inner voice we may hear. Paul says that even if an angel were to bring us a word that is contrary to Scripture we should reject it.

The Lord promises, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isaiah 66:2). God chooses for his anointed work those who revere his Word. Moreover, Scripture makes it clear that when we submit to his holy Word, he fills our life with joy. “Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word...he shall appear to your joy” (Isaiah 66:5).

Finally, James tells us, “Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls...But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:21, 25).

In these times of global shaking and personal trials, allow your King Jesus to govern your life through his Word. Then you will be blessed indeed. No matter what trial comes to you, he will sustain your heart with joy. Hallelujah!

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