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Isaiah 9:7

Perfect Resolution Sermon Series: "Big Government"

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Back in the days of Isaiah the prophet, there was no such thing as a Democrat or Republican. There were no government shutdowns, or legislative fights over budgets and border walls. Back then, 700 years before the birth of Christ, there were no congressional investigations, no absentee ballot controversies, no voter ID laws.

But there was a government back in Isaiah's day. And that government had problems, too.

The prophet lived in the land of Judah, and the government there was a monarchy. The people of the land were ruled by a king. So the success or failure of the government, back then, depended on who the king was. Good, wise, godly kings led effective governments. Evil, dim-witted, ungodly kings led terrible governments.

And, in Isaiah's day, there were some really terrible governments. The nation of Judah was a royal mess, because the kings seemed to care only about themselves. They made disastrous foreign-policy alliances. They didn't manage the economy carefully. Worst of all, they stopped caring about God.

So Isaiah lived at a time when the government in his land was in definite disarray.

Human governments in every land, in every day and age, are never close to perfect, aren't they? Even the best governmental systems in our world have flaws. Even the greatest government officials have weaknesses. Governments have been rising and falling, thriving and

declining throughout all of human history. Because every human government is human. And every human -- in every kingdom and in every nation, in Isaiah's day and in ours -- every human is a sin-filled, sin-plagued person who's tripped up by sin every single day.

The kings in Isaiah's day were. The founding fathers of our good old USA all were. Every single one of our government leaders in Washington and in downtown Raleigh are. And so am I. So are you. We're all in the same boat. We're all lost, condemned sinners, the Bible tells us.

When we're honest, we see the effects of our human sin in our own lives every day, don't we? And we don't have to look too far to see the effects of sin in our nation, in our culture, in our government even, as well.

And I'm certain that was equally true for the people back in Isaiah's day, too.

So when God gave the prophet a message for the people, and he talked about a new government, I'm sure their ears perked up. And so should ours.

God was promising the people of Judah that, one day, a Savior would be born. We've been studying this promise, from Isaiah chapter 9, the past few weeks. The people of Judah were living in troubled times, but God promises that a Messiah will come. A divine Savior Child will usher in a new government, a new kind of government. Isaiah's talking about the advent of a government completely different from any human government we've ever seen.

Verse 7 describes a constantly-improving government; a perfectly-peaceful, positively-just government; a completely-righteous, never-ending government. When the promised

Savior child comes, God promises, that's the new kind of government he'll bring.

Well, what happened? Where is it? Why are we still stuck with human governments, with imperfect leaders, with disappointing political systems? Where is this promised new government?

It's so important for Christians like us to understand that Jesus didn't come to set up a new kingdom on earth. Jesus wasn't born to fix human governments once and for all, or to bring heaven on earth. Jesus came to rule our hearts. Jesus was born to be our suffering Servant Messiah. The Babe of Bethlehem's mission wasn't to end up sitting on a throne, a jeweled crown on his head. Our Lord's destiny was a cross, and a thorny crown.

Jesus came to bring sinners forgiveness. He gave his life as payment for our sins, and he makes us right with God. He restores us to God's family, and we are citizens now in God's eternal kingdom. Together with all people who believe in Jesus Christ, we worship him as our true King. We give Jesus our primary allegiance. We Christians live by Christ's standards above all. We honor his commands. We follow his rules.

And, empowered by Christ's Spirit, living in us, Jesus sends us out into the world not to fix it, but to help the people of the world to believe in Jesus Christ. He was the promised hope back in Isaiah's day; and Jesus is the only hope for every person in our country, in our world, today.

Because this world is lost. This world is condemned. Our chief mission, as American Christians, is not to save our nation, or to restore our government to some higher level of Christian principles. Our first mission, given by Christ

himself, is to make disciples! It's to help people in our neighborhoods and our communities to come to faith in Jesus Christ, to know his forgiveness, to trust in his love, to believe in his salvation.

So when you and I read in our Bibles about a new kind of government, we need to understand that we're really living with two governments.

First, there's our human government. It's imperfect, and it will always be imperfect. The government will drive us crazy sometimes, and give us heartburn occasionally. But, as Christians, we're commanded to respect our leaders, to obey them, to pray for them. God speaks in mysterious terms in the Scriptures about how he works through governments, good ones and bad; and how we Christians are expected to learn to honor those who lead us, the good and the bad.

But then, even more important, we need to understand that our supreme government, our ultimate leadership, comes from God. God's Son fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. And Jesus Christ ultimately rules in this church, in this nation, in every part of this world; and, most importantly, in your heart.

Every day God gives you on this earth, it can be a struggle to be living in these two kingdoms, under these dual governments. But understand today that, even while you're being a good citizen here in the USA, your true citizenship is in heaven. Your final allegiance is to God. Your constantly-improving, perfectly-peaceful, positively-just, completely-righteous, never-ending King is Jesus.

He came for you at Christmas. Now live for him, and live in faith with him forever. Amen.