

ISAIAH 9:6

THE SHOULDERS OF JESUS

“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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”¹

The story of the entire Bible can be told by focusing on the shoulders of mankind. In **GENESIS 9:23** we read that two of the sons of Noah, Shem and Japheth, placed a garment on their shoulders and walked backward so that they could cover their father’s nakedness without embarrassing him.

When Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away from his home, he placed a skin of water on Hagar’s shoulder [**GENESIS 21:14**].

Eliezer, chief of Abraham’s servants, travelled to Mesopotamia to seek a bride for Isaac. As he stood by the well near the city of Nahor, Rebekah came with a pitcher of water on her shoulders [**GENESIS 24:15**].

During the Exodus, when Israel left Egypt for the Promised Land, the people of God each carried on their shoulders the kneading bowls and the dough, which was not yet leavened [**EXODUS 12:34**].

Bezalel and Oholiab were filled with the Spirit of God. Thus empowered, they made beautiful garments for the High Priest. On each shoulder was an onyx stone engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel [**EXODUS 28:7, 12**]. Whenever the people of Israel moved, they transported most of the accoutrements of the Tabernacle on wagons. However, the golden table of showbread, the seven-branched candle stand, the golden altar of incense and the ark were transported on the shoulders of the children of Kohath.

When Israel crossed the Jordan, Joshua commanded that a representative from each tribe was to pick up a stone from the middle of the river and place the stone on his shoulder, bearing it to the far shore so that a memorial could be erected there as a reminder of the mercies of God [**JOSHUA 4:5**].

Samson carried away the gates of Gaza, bearing them off to Hebron on his shoulders [**JUDGES 16:3**].

Moving beyond our text, we witness the Lord condemning Shebna because of his self-exaltation. God, speaking through the Prophet, says that He shall appoint Eliakim the son of Hilkiah to reign over His people, and God will place on his shoulder the key of the House of David [**ISAIAH 22:22**].

Passing on to the New Testament, I observe that the religious leaders of Israel in the days of Jesus’ earthly ministry were condemned by the Master because they tied up heavy burdens and laid them on the shoulders of the people [see **MATTHEW 23:4**]. Jesus, on the other hand, taught that He was the Good Shepherd. The shepherd is distinguished as one willing to inconvenience himself in order to seek one lost sheep; and when He has found it, He lays it on His shoulders and carries it home [see **LUKE 15:5**].

The entire story of the Bible can be told by focusing on the shoulders of mankind. Just so, today, we are focusing on the shoulders of the Messiah.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The Hebrew word translated “shoulder” is *šēkem*. *Šēkem* “designates not just the shoulders, but also the upper part of the back in general. Hebrew *šēkem* can designate either the common noun “shoulder/back” or the place name ‘Shechem.’” ...The **KJV**, in **GENESIS 48:22**, has Jacob saying to Joseph, “I have given you one ‘portion’ above your brothers.” For ‘portion,’ the **RSV** [together with the **ESV**] has ‘one mountain slope’ and the **JERUSALEM BIBLE** [has] “Shechem.” The text presents a play on words here. Jacob parcels out to Joseph Shechem, a place which becomes the latter’s burial place eventually (**JOSHUA 24:32**)...

“[T]o wear something on the shoulder is to wear or display it proudly and assert authority... In this context note in the messianic passage (**ISAIAH 9:6**) the phrase, ‘The government shall be upon his shoulder.’ The Child is to be a King and Ruler.”²

In the text before us this day, “the government,” referring to the coming Millennial reign, is said to be upon Messiah’s *shoulder*.³ During these days of Advent, I am focusing attention on the Advent prophecy that is found in **ISAIAH 9:6, 7**. There, Isaiah encouraged the nation through pointing to the coming Messiah. In concise, pointed words, the court prophet spoke of the coming King of Israel. In this message for this second Sunday in Advent, I invite you to explore Isaiah’s otherwise mundane reference to the shoulder of Jesus. Isaiah states that the government shall be upon His shoulders. Whatever can be meant by this statement? What are the implications for us today?

THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER — Isaiah speaks in the present tense, but intends that we anticipate a future fulfillment. He is looking forward to an event so momentous that the entire world will be astounded. Isaiah is actually speaking of the Messiah in this text. As we saw in a previous message, the humanity of Christ our Lord is clearly prophesied in the words pointing to a child that will be born, whereas the deity of the Saviour is confessed in the words promising that a son that is to be given. Now, Isaiah, guided by the Spirit of the Lord, testifies that the government shall be upon the shoulder of this One who is to be born in order that He may be given in sacrifice for mankind.

A noted German scholar of the Hebrew language wrote concerning this passage, “The same person whom the prophet foretold in **ISAIAH 7** as the son of the virgin who would come to maturity in troublous times, he here sees as born, and as having already taken possession of the government. There he appeared as a sign, here as a gift of grace. The prophet does not expressly say that he is a son of David in this instance any more than in **ISAIAH 7** (for the remark that has been recently made, that *yeled* is used here for “infant-prince,” is absurd); but this followed as a matter of course, from the fact that he was to bear the government, with all its official rights (**ISAIAH 22:22**) and godlike majesty (**PSALM 21:6**), upon his shoulder; for the inviolable promise of eternal sovereignty, of which the new-born infant was to be the glorious fulfillment, had been bound up with the seed of David in the course of Israel’s history ever since the declaration in **2 SAMUEL 7**.”⁴

² Victor P. Hamilton, שְׁכֶם **2386** (article), in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, **Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament** (Moody Press, Chicago, IL 1999) pg. 924

³ Cf. **New American Standard Bible** (Lockman Foundation, La Habra, CA 1997) which translates the Hebrew as **shoulders**. However, the noun is singular; therefore, the **ESV** translates the term properly as **shoulder**, though we would normally refer to the **shoulders** in English.

⁴ Franz Delitzsch, **Isaiah**, in Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, **Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 7**, (Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, 2002) 248

Well might we ask what the prophet meant when he spoke of “the government?” What government could the prophet have possibly had in mind? Careful study of the Hebrew reveals that Isaiah used a somewhat obscure word that is translated “government.” *Miśrâ* is assumed to have been derived from the word *śrh*.⁵ According to Scripture, it seems evident that God has in mind the reign of Messiah over all the earth. In other words, this is an eschatological passage, it points forward to the reign of Messiah over the earth. This is an important truth: Christmas speaks of hope precisely because it points forward to the reign of Messiah over all the earth.

During this present age we know that Satan is “the god of this world” [2 CORINTHIANS 4:4]. Jesus identified the wicked one as “the ruler of this world” [e.g. JOHN 16:11]. The devil, Satan, is also referred to in the Word of God as “the prince of the power of the air” [EPHESIANS 2:2]. However, the malevolent angel will not always be the ruler of this world. The Beloved Disciple foresaw a day when Satan would be overthrown. At that time, it will be announced that “the Kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ will have come” [REVELATION 12:7-12].

Throughout this present age we know that “Satan has sown the world with tears, suffering and death. The world is nothing other than one great planet for the burying of God’s created people. Death is everywhere reigning supreme. Suffering, trial, tears, disappointment, frustration, and hurt are everywhere. The prophecy says the day is coming when the government of the world will be seized from the hands of Satan, and placed in the hands of the Lord God. We will have a new King, a new government, and it will be in the hands of the Lord God Christ. There will be no more death. The dead shall be raised from the heart of the earth. All of us shall be immortalised, translated, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. God will make us kings and priests under the Lord.”⁶

There is coming a day when Christ shall assume His rightful place as ruler of this world. The Lord Jesus shall reign over this earth for a thousand years, and we who are His people shall reign with Him, according to His promise. When at last all rebellion has been suppressed, He shall deliver the Kingdom to the Father. What a precious promise we Christians have received; it is recorded by the Apostle Paul. “Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, ‘all things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all” [1 CORINTHIANS 15:24-28].

Dr. C. I. Scofield, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary and a gifted expositor of the Word, wrote of this coming reign of Messiah.⁷ Indulge me as I explore this extended study concerning our Lord’s coming Kingdom that was first presented many years ago. “[This] is not a promise concerning redemption. When the Bible means redemption it says so, and when it means government it says government. Let us credit the Holy Spirit of God with being able to say what He means... [This] promise enters into the New Testament absolutely unmodified.”

⁵ J. Barton Payne, מִשְׂרָה 2288a (article), in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, **Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament** (Moody Press, Chicago, IL 1980) pg. 883

⁶ W. A. Criswell, *Isaiah* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1977) 82-3

⁷ See C. I. Scofield, “The Return of Christ in Relation to the Jew and the Earth,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 108, No. 432, Oct. 1951, pp. 482-488, This is fifth lecture of a series delivered at the second annual Philadelphia Bible Conference in 1914. The original series, published in a Bible Study magazine known as “Serving and Waiting, was entitled, “The World War in the Light of Prophecy.”

You will no doubt recall when Gabriel spoke to Mary, he concluded his word with this promise concerning the Christ, “the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” [LUKE 1:26-33]. Again, I wish to pick up Dr. Scofield’s comments.

“Here, then, are two lines of promise absolutely unfulfilled at the first advent of Christ. He did not recover the Jews at that time from the countries whither He had driven them, and He did not sit upon the throne of David and establish a kingdom over the house of Jacob. On the contrary, at the behest of a cowardly Gentile governor He was taken away and crucified. Then, where is His ministry of confirming the truth of God and the promises made to the fathers? That is the very heart of the meaning of the Olivet prophetic discourse in the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew. I have not time, to read and expound this. It will be before us very much in later studies. But I want to call your attention to this: in the 24th chapter the Lord first programs this age and says it will be one of incessant wars, heading up in the ‘abomination that maketh desolate,’ and then shall be great tribulation such as was not from the beginning nor ever shall be. The age rushes on to this terrible period called the great tribulation.”⁸

The disciples appeared perplexed at what must surely have seemed to them to be a novel teaching; I am quite certain that we would have been equally confused had we been present. The disciples did not have the advantage we enjoy at this day late in the Age of Grace. Recall that Peter had earlier confessed his belief that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” [MATTHEW 16:16]. Reading the account, we are led to believe that Peter, and the remainder of the disciples as well, was anticipating a political leader who would lead the Jews in triumph over the Gentile rulers. Yet, Jesus persisted in speaking of going to Jerusalem, of being crucified, of rising from the dead on the third day. The disciples were confused; they were wondering what was going on. They wondered about the Kingdom, and about the regathering of Israel. To them, it must have seemed that Messiah’s work was being left unfulfilled.

The disciples were well acquainted with what the Old Testament prophets had written; they assuredly knew what Isaiah had written. Isaiah paints a picture of Messiah’s rule; but facts force us to confess that Jesus does not now rule over the earth. Despite the Pollyannaish worldview espoused by many modern Christians, Christ does not now rule over the earth. The Master spoke of His suffering and of another ruling as a usurper. Jesus warned His followers that they would experience opposition and oppression. The message Jesus had delivered to these loyal followers was one guaranteed to create extreme discomfort. In this, Jesus was but following the same prophetic thread that Isaiah spun. Yes, Isaiah did write of Messiah’s reign in our text. However, we dare not forget that Isaiah also foresaw Messiah’s suffering because of the sin of all mankind in the 53rd chapter of that same prophecy.

Until one reads the parables recorded in the 13th chapter of Matthew, it is not possible to understand that a great interval must occur between the sufferings of Messiah and the glory of His reign. Only as Jesus delivered those parables are we able to understand that during the intervening time the churches of God live in anticipation of being caught up to reign with the Master. Not one of the Old Testament prophets saw the birth of the church. In the prophetic vision, the two advents blended in one horizon. That statement is pictured in what we sometimes see when we are in the mountains. Far away on the horizon, it looks as if there is a final and ultimate mountain range. We travel toward it, and as we approach, we find that it is two ranges with a valley between. Just so the First Advent and the Second Advent are separated by the Day and Age of Grace, in which (thank God!) you and I live.

⁸ Scofield, *ibid*.

In Matthew's account of the Olivet Discourse [MATTHEW 24:4-13] our Lord says that there shall be in the outward world precisely what the disciples were thinking about in connection with the kingdom—wars, nation arising against nation and at best, peace as a fleeting ideal. At the conclusion of that outward world there will be a wicked person, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, and a final catastrophe of civilization, everything poured into one awful maelstrom of destruction and suffering—the great tribulation [MATTHEW 24:14-28].

And then what? “Immediately after the tribulation of those days ...” the Son of man shall come in great glory [MATTHEW 24:29, 30]. Then all the nations shall see Him coming in power and great glory. At that time, He shall sit upon the throne of His glory. Jesus says, in effect, to these Jewish believers gathered about Him, “Dear men, you have not been mistaken. You will get your kingdom.” How that idea lingers!

See the Saviour, in the first chapter of the Acts where, after the crucifixion and resurrection, there was a period of forty days of ministry as the Master prepared these men to go on a new mission. Now they would no longer say “The kingdom of God is at hand,” but rather their message would now be “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”

Standing with Jesus as He prepared to ascend into Heaven, the disciples asked, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel” [ACTS 1:6]? What a chance that was for the Lord to say “My dear disciples, will you never get that notion out of your heads?” That is what Jesus would have said if He had been taught by the modern pulpit. However, He only said, “It is not for you to know the times...” [ACTS 1:7].

Later, there was a council of the apostles and the elders of the Jerusalem church meeting with the representatives of the Antioch church. It was during this conference that Simon Peter declared how God at the first (in the household of Cornelius) had visited the Gentiles to call out from among them a people for His name. Next, James quoted from the ninth chapter of Amos—“After this...” After what? After the calling out of the people from the Gentiles for His name. The text affirms, “After this I will return ...” And what will He do at that time? The conclusion of that prophetic citation promises that the Lord “will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen.” For what purpose? “That the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord.” Who are the intended recipients of that grace? “And all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things” [ACTS 15:16, 17].

Now, my beloved people, if Jesus Christ is not coming back to do these things, then the promises—explicit, minute, not to be accommodated to the Christian era at all, made to the Jewish fathers—have failed. But He says He is coming back! And He promises that upon His return the government will be upon His shoulders.

Isaac Watts was only partly correct when he wrote the hymn, “Jesus Shall Reign.”

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

Jesus *shall* reign, but His Kingdom will not come through our efforts. Rather, the Kingdom of our Lord shall come at God's appointed time and it will be in fulfillment of all the prophecies delivered concerning the Messiah. This is the promise of Christmas. This is the Message of Christmas, a message of promise and hope in Messiah's reign.

THE WELFARE OF ALL MANKIND SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER — The purpose for the coming reign of Christ Jesus our Lord is so that He may fulfil the prophecies given in the Word. With His reign He shall fulfil the hope of all who now receive Him; and He shall bring judgement for the wicked, those who have not believed. However, God does not act superfluously. Always and ever, the glory of God and the good of mankind are at the heart of the Lord's gracious acts. The Saviour always seeks that which is for our benefit. Therefore, in assuming the government of this world, we may be assured that His reign will be for our good.

Throughout Isaiah's prophecy to this point, the promise of Messiah's coming is given in terms that speak of the welfare of all mankind as result of His presence. In **ISAIAH 7:14**, He is identified as "Immanuel—God with us." Isaiah has already testified that it is *to us* that the Child is born, and that it is *to us* that the Son is given—all mankind potentially benefits from God's grace and mercy. We who receive the gift are the beneficiaries of God's goodness and grace. Indeed, the government of Messiah is the kingdom of grace, and it will encompass the whole of the kingdom of nature and of power, as we have just witnessed. The entire world will be subject to the reign of the King.

The Lord Jesus testified, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" [**MATTHEW 28:18**]. He also confessed, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father" [**MATTHEW 11:27**]. On yet another occasion, the Master informed His disciples that the Father "has given all judgment to the Son" [**JOHN 5:22**]. It is not merely that the Son of God shall assume the reins of government, but it is that all governmental responsibility is said to rest upon His shoulders.

What is the purpose of government? I remind you that government is a divine gift to mankind. Even a casual reading of **ROMANS 13:1-7** reminds us that government has a vital role to play in the life of Christians. Government is responsible for punishment of evildoers and for the protection of the innocent. Government is responsible to commend righteousness and all that is good. It is difficult to justify much of a role for government beyond this, but clearly, these roles are commanded by and commended by God [see also **1 PETER 2:13, 14**]. It is a sad indictment of our fallen condition that no government has perfectly fulfilled these roles—no government today fulfils the roles of punishment of evil and protection of the innocent, much less that of commending good. However, we who await Messiah's reign anticipate that at the last Messiah's government shall be all that God intended.

Among the benefits subjects of the Kingdom may anticipate resulting from the King's rule are peace, justice and righteousness [see **VERSE 7**]. Moreover, that Kingdom of Messiah will be stable. Indeed, Jesus did testify that His Kingdom was "not of this world" [**JOHN 18:36**], but the Kingdom in view in our text is not solely a spiritual Kingdom. At this time, the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Christ reigning in the hearts of believers. However, what is in view is a literal Kingdom when Messiah shall reign over all the world. I shall have more to say about this coming Kingdom in a future message.

Isaiah will later speak of that Millennial Kingdom of Messiah. **ISAIAH 11:1-5** reads:

"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.”

Again, the prophet foresees a people enjoying the fruit of their own labours.

“No more shall there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days,
for the young man shall die a hundred years old,
and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.
They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.”

[ISAIAH 65:20-22]

We who are believers in the Living Son of God have been given this precious hope. We shall witness His reign over all the earth. We shall see His grace extended to all mankind as a perfect rule over this fallen earth is at last implemented. And we shall reign with Him. What else does Paul mean when he cites that ancient hymn that states, in part:

“If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
if we endure, we will also reign with him.”

[2 TIMOTHY 2:11, 12]

Despite this perfect reign, the heart of mankind is wicked, and the reign of Messiah must end in rebellion. However, the outcome is sure. All wickedness shall be put down, and righteousness shall prevail. The Son of God has conquered death, paid the price of sin, and He shall at last create new heavens and a new earth.

THE SALVATION OF EACH BELIEVER SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER — The message I am presenting seeks to glorify the Saviour, Jesus the Messiah, the One of whom Isaiah spoke. The message consists of a plea for each listener to receive the grace of God in Christ the Lord. The message I bring reminds each hearer who is a believer that the shoulder of Messiah bears us up because we are His beloved people. This is because He has carried our sin on His shoulders so that we might receive the forgiveness of sin.

The religious people surrounding Jesus often complained about Him, especially about what He was teaching. The response of Jesus whenever religious people complained about His actions often was to tell them a parable; and on one particular occasion, when they complained about His acceptance of sinners—even dining with them—He related the following parable.

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” [LUKE 15:4-7].

Pay particular attention to the fifth verse. We are the poorer for being separated from the land in this day. Whenever a sheep goes missing, the shepherd searches for that one lost sheep; and “when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”

When the sheep is found, the shepherd does not stand over it and condemn it. He doesn’t glare down at the trembling animal and scream, “You dumb animal!” No! Rather, the shepherd “lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.” The shepherd expends His strength on behalf of the sheep, and he rejoices in the knowledge that the sheep is found. What a beautiful and powerful picture of Jesus, the Good Shepherd!

W. A. Criswell, richly blessed pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas Texas for many years, in a sermon related the story of how he once witnessed the compassion of the Saviour. “I have a practise of talking to all the children who come into the church. An appointment is made, the parents bring the children to me, and I talk to them about the Lord, the church, and about being baptised. Somehow I did not know the background of one of the children who was coming. As the child sat by the mother, I began to talk to the child. To my chagrin and exasperation the child could not answer. You see, the children are given a six-week’s course and they are taught the answers in the book on joining the church. The child stumbled and could not answer. I thought it was a waste of time that they should make an engagement for the child to see me and not be prepared. The mother moved close to the child and, in the sweetest way, the tenderest tone, and the gentlest manner, began to talk to the little child about what I was asking. Then I realised that the child was retarded. I did not know it. The mother did not say, “You stupid moron, why can you not answer these simple questions the pastor asks?” The mother instead talked to the little child. As I looked I could not help but see the Spirit of God working through the sweet mother. In how many ways do we show ourselves unknowing. God does not find it in His heart to be judgemental, but He in kindness helps and encourages us. He lays it on His shoulders, lovingly and tenderly.”⁹

So it is for us who this day share the message. If we have run from the grace of God, seeking to escape into the wilderness, even now the Good Shepherd is seeking us. He calls us by name and is willing to lift us onto His shoulders, bearing us into His eternal Kingdom. We need but hear the Word of the Master. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” That text continues as the Apostle cites the prophet Joel. “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13]. The Master is seeking you; you need but believe that He cares for you and receive Him now, and all your sin and rebellion will be forgiven.

⁹ Criswell, op. cit., pg. 85

ISAIAH 9:6
THE SHOULDERS OF JESUS

Among us are Christians who are weak and broken. The pressure of life, the cares of this ruined world, the hurts and injuries of bodies under sentence of death have left each of us at one time or another wounded and weary. You who know the Master, and yet today are tired, wounded, weak and hurt—you wonder if you can go any further—your strength is almost gone. What a precious promise is given to each of God’s beloved children through Isaiah. When we are thus wearied and pressed down by the vicissitudes associated with this dying world, we need to remember these words.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.”

[ISAIAH 43:2]

This is the invitation of the Shepherd to all who are weary. “Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” **[MATTHEW 11:28, 29]**.

A song that was sung among the churches of the South some years back speaks to the message I’ve just presented. One verse of that song seems especially appropriate.

Sad, broken hearted, at an altar I knelt,
I found peace that was so serene;
And all that He asks is a childlike trust,
And a heart that is learning to lean.

I’m learning to lean, learning to lean,
Learning to lean on Jesus;
Finding more power than I’d ever dreamed;
I’m learning to lean on Jesus.¹⁰

Will you lean on Jesus? Will you permit Him to place you on His shoulders and bear you up, lifting the weight that threatens to destroy you? Believe that He cares, and cast all your care on Him, because He cares for you. Amen.

¹⁰ “Learning to Lean,” by John Stallings. Various iterations of this song have been recorded. This particular version seems to be closest to the original penned by John Stallings.