

CHRISTMAS INTERLUDE

God's Answers For Troubling Leaders

Part II: Solving The Incompetency Of Leaders

(Isaiah 9:6b)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

This Christmas Season, many people are alarmed at the incompetency of troubling leaders:

(1) Incompetency marks our current president: "(In the early days of the Biden administration, Americans were told the president would restore norms . . . govern as a moderate . . . work to unify the country . . . bring prices down . . . (and that) he was eminently fit for office, plagued not by cognitive decline . . . And, Americans were told – by the media and the president himself, in no uncertain terms – that he would not pardon his son Hunter. In a way, it's fitting that President Biden, in one of his last acts as president, has ensured that every major claim, every promise associated with his presidency, was a lie . . . (T)he biggest lie of the Biden presidency: 'No one is above the law' . . . (T)he former vice president (Biden) was able to evade prosecution despite a fact pattern that strongly indicates he was involved in overseas influence peddling, and he is closing out his presidency by ensuring his son can't be charged for what appears to be his role in the scheme." ("A pardon for whom?", Republican-American, December 4, 2024, p. 6A)

(2) Incompetency exists in our government agencies: (a) "Biden's Department of Justice and (Federal Trade Commission) quickly morphed antitrust into a tool for helping the White House achieve political aims that have nothing to do with keeping markets competitive. (Veronique de Rugy, "Will Trump turn his 'fix it' gaze toward FTC, DOJ abuses?", Ibid., November 23, 2024, p. 8A) (b) After Hurricane Milton, "A FEMA supervisor told workers in a message to 'avoid homes advertising Trump' as they canvassed Lake Placid, Florida to identify residents who could qualify for federal aid, internal messages viewed by The Daily Wire reveal . . ." ("Trump voters targeted," Ibid., November 20, 2024, p. 6A) (c) "When COVID-19 struck . . . federal health officials doubled down, ignoring actual evidence that disproved their insistence natural immunity was not as good as a shot" when "it's many times more effective . . . (T)he public health elite marched in lockstep, muzzling critics even as the mistakes accumulated and . . . (t)he U. S. per capita death rate far exceeded what other developed countries suffered." (Betsy McCaughey, "Disrupting the health agencies will save American lives," Ibid., December 2, 2024, p. 8A)

(3) Incompetency exists in academic and business realms: "(A) report in the New York Times Magazine found that the University of Michigan's decade-long, roughly \$250 million experiment in making (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) part of the . . . school's life has been a failure" as "students and faculty members reported a less positive campus climate than at the program's start and less of a sense of belonging . . . It'd be one thing if it were only the University of Michigan . . . but this dynamic has been duplicated throughout corporate America and our education system." (Rich Lowry, "The intellectual collapse of DEI," Ibid., November 30, 2024, p. 6A)

(4) Incompetency abounds in international climate summits: "(T)he Manhattan Institute's Heather MacDonald" claimed the "trouble with" international climate conferences has been that "nuclear remains an afterthought at best in the romantic pursuit of 'renewable' sources of power, whose harnessing required mineral extraction, energy-consumptive manufacturing, and unsightly and sometimes lethal disruptions of natural ecosystems." Besides, it's "well-heeled government officials and celebrities" who are "jetting off to climate conferences aboard carbon-dioxide-spewing private aircraft. Last year, 644 private jets flew into Dubai for COP28, according to a Nov. 14 Daily Mail report." ("Questioning articles of climate faith," Ibid., November 21, 2024, p. 8A)

Need: So we ask, "This Christmas, how does God want us to deal with incompetency in troubling leaders?"

I. In the prophet Isaiah's time, the rulers of God's people were dreadfully incompetent:

- A. Hundreds of years before Isaiah, king David's son Solomon had sinned so greatly that God had caused ten of Israel's twelve tribes to separate from Solomon's heir, producing the Northern Kingdom of Israel, where Solomon's son, king Rehoboam, was left ruling two tribes as the Southern Kingdom of Judah, 1 Kings 11-12.
- B. Over time, the kings of both groups of God's people drifted ever deeper into sin until by Isaiah's time, Israel's king made an unbiblical league with the Arameans that threatened to invade Judah, Isaiah 7:1-2.
- C. When God's prophet Isaiah urged Judah's king Ahaz to trust the Lord for protection, Ahaz refused the Lord's help (Isaiah 7:3-12), so God decided to let the cruel Assyrian empire invade the Arameans and Israel, taking Israel captive, and even to invade and almost overwhelm the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Isaiah 8:1-8.

II. In contrast, Isaiah 9:6b predicted the Messiah to come would have the government be on His shoulder, a figurative reference to the kingly robe He would wear as He capably ruled a reunited Israel and Judah!

- III. Meanwhile, God told Isaiah to be an example to other individuals in his era of incompetent human rulers by living a life of faith in God in contrast to the kings and the people around him, Isaiah 8:11-15:**
- A. The Lord directed Isaiah not to be like many in Judah who refused to believe that God would help them, and who viewed Isaiah's call to trust the Lord instead of developing an alliance with Assyria for protection against the Israel-Aramean alliance as a conspiracy to destroy Judah, Isaiah 8:11-12.
 - B. Instead of fearing the Israel-Aramean union, Isaiah was to revere the Lord, and God would become a sanctuary for Isaiah while God concurrently became a trap to unbelievers in Israel and Judah, Isaiah 8:13-15.
- IV. Isaiah responded to the Lord's admonition in faith, obeying Him, Isaiah 8:16-18:**
- A. God directed Isaiah to inscribe God's message on the hearts of the believing remnant in Judah, Isaiah 8:16.
 - B. Then, Isaiah decided to wait for the Lord Who was hiding His face, a picture of withholding His blessing, from the many people in Judah who were failing to rely on Him for protection from enemy nations, Isa. 8:17.
 - C. The names of Isaiah's sons would act as testimonies of what would occur, Isaiah 8:18:
 1. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz's name (cf. Isaiah 8:3-4) testified that the Aram-Israel alliance would be broken by the Assyrians who would invade, plunder and capture them. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1052)
 2. Shear-Jashub's name (cf. Isaiah 7:3-16) testified that a believing remnant of the Northern Kingdom of Israel would return from its captivity in Assyria, Ibid.
 - D. Thus, Isaiah and his family would trust in the Lord to withstand any Gentile invasion as they would be part of the believing remnant in Judah and Israel, the remnant that would survive and return to their homeland.

Lesson: The solution to the incompetency in today's troubling rulers is the coming Messiah Jesus Christ Who will competently rule a united Israel and all the world in the Messianic Kingdom, Revelation 19:11-20:6. Meanwhile, believing individuals must rely on God for individual blessing in this life and hope for Christ's kingdom to come.

Application: (1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) May we like Isaiah and his family in antiquity live by faith in God for personal blessing as we hope for Christ's coming kingdom.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

God provides guidance for us in living by faith in Him to handle the issues of concern in our introduction:

(1) On the incompetence of our president, when evil king Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel ruled Israel, God sent His prophet Elijah to live with a widow and her son in Zarephath, a town in Jezebel's homeland, 1 Kings 17:9-24; Ibid., p. 524. While there, during an intense famine in that land, God provided food for the widow, her son and Elijah while keeping Elijah hidden from Ahab, and the Lord even used Elijah to raise the widow's son from the dead. God Who provided for Elijah in Ahab's wicked reign can provide for us in an era of similarly incompetent leaders.

(2) On the incompetence of government agencies, after God's prophet Elisha had directed the Shunammite woman whose son he had raised from the dead to sojourn in a foreign land to escape a famine that would hit Israel for seven years, she returned to beg wicked king Joram, son of Ahab, for her land to be restored to her, 2 Kings 8:1-3; Ibid., p. 552. Remarkably, just as she approached this king, he was being told by Elisha's wayward servant Gehazi of Elisha's resurrection of her son, and this wicked king was so moved by this coincidence, that he directed a certain officer under him not only to restore the woman's land to her, but to give her the produce that the land had yielded during the seven years of her absence from Israel! Even wicked rulers, wayward people and officials under them are under God's control, so we can afford to live by faith in the Lord amid incompetence in government agencies.

(3) On the incompetence of academia and corporate America relative to their DEI promotions, the lives of Ruth and Boaz in the book of Ruth reveal God's blessing in their time of the judges when immoral abuse in their area was so great that it led to civil war (Judges 19:1-21:25; Ruth 1:1-4:22) Ruth was from Moab, vulnerable to attack by evil men in the area since she was a foreigner, but God used Boaz to protect her and later to marry her so that she became king David's great grandmother. This all occurred because Ruth trusted in Israel's God, Ruth 2:10-17.

(4) On the incompetence of international climate summits and their participants, God actually ordered Israel to burn olive oil in the lampstand of the tabernacle at all times, using oil that was beaten from olives rather than crushed to produce greater brightness and less smoke (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Exodus 27:20-21). By way of application, God would sanction the burning of fossil fuels provided efforts are made to maximize use of the energy they provided while minimizing the harmful effects.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we then live by faith in God for personal blessing as we hope for Christ's coming kingdom.