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### And the government will be upon his shoulder

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# Chancel Drama

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## **“And the government will be upon his shoulder”**

### **Context:**

This chancel drama represents meditation on Isaiah 9:6, particularly the phrase: “and the government will be upon his shoulder.” Rome, the most powerful government in the Rome, exercised a monopoly on the use of force through crucifixion. The cross struck terror in the hearts of the people. Our Savior carried a cross and was nailed to it.

Various medical experts have provided graphic accounts of the physiological effects of crucifixion and pain endured by our Savior. It should also be noted that our Savior endured scourging prior to crucifixion. One of the scourging instruments was a whip with leather tails. To each leather tail was attached a bone to tear open the flesh.

This chancel drama assists those gathered in reflecting on our brokenness, the brokenness of this world and how God the Father sent His Son to enter this brokenness to suffer the most humiliating and excruciating deaths for mankind. Rome, the most powerful government in the world, exercised the power of taxation, vanquished the world with its military might and subdued the population through the threat of crucifixion.

As this chancel drama unfolds, from the time he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, the most powerful government in the world was on the shoulder of Jesus. Jesus did not come into this world to overthrow earthly governments. Recall how Jesus said his kingdom was not of this world. As you participate in this chancel drama, meditate on what Christ’s death and resurrection mean for you. We live in highly charged political times. One cannot escape politics and government. Yet, all government rests on Christ’s shoulder for he is King of all. That means, he is your King, your Savior, your Lord.

### **Remarks:**

- a. During the entire chancel drama, a cross will be on a young man’s shoulder in the chancel. Since the cross is heavy, I suggest three young men take turns bracing the cross.
- b. Speaker 1 will serve as a narrator.
- c. The group will respond on cue with “And the government will be upon his shoulder”
- d. The speakers will say their parts positioned behind those gathered.
- e. All Bible verses used in the drama are from the ESV.

## Chancel Drama Begins

**Speaker 1:** Isaiah, mighty seer in days of old, through the eyes of faith, prophesied how a child would be born but this would not just be any child. Isaiah said:

**Speaker 2:** For 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 Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** How can this be? How could the government be upon the shoulder of a child? Through eyes of faith Isaiah continued to prophesy.

**Speaker 3:** “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.**” Isaiah 11:2

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** This is not just any child—this is not just any son about whom Isaiah prophesied. Through the eyes of faith, Isaiah said:

**Speaker 4:** “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the **virgin** shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** This son, born of a virgin and called Immanuel—God with us, would have the government upon his shoulder. Isaiah saw this through the eyes of faith, do you?

**Speaker 5:** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. Luke 2:1-7

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** The registration decreed by Caesar Augustus was for taxation. Even in the womb, this son to be born of a virgin would have the government upon his shoulder. Isaiah saw through the eyes of faith how this son would walk alone on a path—a path of unspeakable suffering and death out of love for people oppressed by governments and crushed by their sins. This son would be rejected by the very people he came to free. He would be betrayed by one considered a friend. He would be forsaken by his own Father.

**Speaker 2:** “He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their  
faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. Isaiah 53:3-4

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** What Isaiah saw through the eyes of faith was witnessed by a man called Matthew. Matthew recorded how this son, called Immanuel and Jesus, was hated by the religious leaders of the day. A man named Mark recorded how the religious leaders delivered Jesus to the governor of the most powerful government in the world for trial. A man named Luke recorded how the religious leaders wanted Jesus dead. A man named John recorded how when the governor saw no guilt in Jesus, the religious leaders accused Jesus of insurrection and said:

**Speaker 3:** “If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”  
John 19:12

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** So much for justice. A governor of the most powerful government in the world was afraid. The governor could not shoulder the burden of government thereby demonstrating that most powerful government in the world was impotent before an angry mob. The governor ceremoniously washed his hands of the burden. He said:

**Speaker 4:** “I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.” Matthew 27:24

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** A man named John recorded the hypocrisy of the religious leaders when they claimed loyalty to Caesar—the government.

**Speaker 5:** “We have no king but Caesar.” John 19:15

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** From the moment the religious leaders delivered Jesus to the government, the government’s soldiers humiliated him. A man named Matthew said:

**Speaker 3:** “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.” Matthew 27: 27-31

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** Isaiah, mighty seer in days of old, through the eye of faith, prophesied how the government would be upon the shoulder of a son. Now a man named John said:

**Speaker 2:** “So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.” John 19:16-18

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** The most powerful government in the world imposed death by crucifixion on a cross. Jesus told his followers that he would be crucified and that they, as his disciples, would also bear a cross. A man named Mark said:

**Speaker 2:** And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. Mark 8:34-35

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1:** As Jesus carried the cross to Calvary, a man named Luke said:

**Speaker 4:** “And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.”  
Luke 23:26

**Group:** “And the government will be upon his shoulder”

**Speaker 1: Politically,** crucifixion on a cross represented the most powerful government in the world. But the most powerful government in the world discovered it was on the shoulder of One more powerful than itself.

**Perceptually,** crucifixion on a cross meant public humiliation. **Medically,** crucifixion on a cross constituted a horrible death and was preceded by scourging with a whip made of leather tails, each with bones at the end. **Spiritually,** crucifixion on a cross marked how the government would be upon the shoulder of a Savior. From womb to the tomb the government was upon his shoulder.

**Speaker 2:** What are you carrying on your shoulders? Have you ever felt as if the government was upon your shoulders?

**Speaker 3:** Taxation, regulation, laws, litigation, incarceration, fines.

**Speaker 4:** What does the cross mean for you? Christ carried it. Christ was nailed to it. Christ died on it. What does the cross mean for you?

**Speaker 5:** A man named Paul said: “I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal

body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:50-57

**Group:** Amen!