

# The View from Below

A number of sermons at the Feast of Tabernacles this year touched on a particular subject. As we went through the Feast, some people made comments to me about this subject, which led me to question how much they really understood about the subject of discussion. The subject was that of government: the government of God.

We know we have to be under the authority of Jesus Christ, who is under the authority of God the Father. In Colossians chapter 1, there is a Scripture which sets up our understanding of the whole aspect of the government of God; which shows the very pre-eminence of Jesus Christ; the position that God has given to Him in terms of His government -- and our relationship with Him.

***Colossians 1: 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;***

Our calling is to walk worthy of the Lord; to walk in a way which is worthy of the calling that we have had. We are to please Him fully, not just in part.

We please Him by being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. The consequence of that is that we will be ...

***11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;***

***12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.***

***13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,***

***14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.***

***15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.***

***16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.***

***All things were created through Him and for Him.***

***17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.***

***18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.***

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body. He is the firstborn. He is the image of the invisible God. All of these things are stated about Jesus Christ. He is the Head of the government of the Church. He is the Head of the Church.

What is the purpose of the structure within the Church?

***Ephesians 4: 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,***

***12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,***

There is a building up of the Body of Christ into something solid and enduring.

For what purpose?

***13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;***

We are to become like Him. That is the purpose of the government that exists within the Church. We are under authority -- so that we can come to that perfection.

***15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ -***

We have a responsibility to become Christ-like. The pre-eminence of Jesus Christ in the government of God is understood. But if our view of the government of God is simply about hierarchy as an end in itself, we are missing an important part!

We live in a world in which people accept no authority. People want to define what is authority for themselves.

At the other end of the spectrum we find people who simply say; *"You tell me what to do, and I will do it"*. History is littered with the tragedy of such lives. September 11th is a case in point. Some felt they were under a government, and that that government could tell them whatever it wanted them to do, and they would do it for them.

Does that represent the government of God? No! That is NOT the government of God!

You might say if a person is of that persuasion they have placed themselves under a dictatorship. It may be a benign dictatorship. It may be a beneficent dictatorship. But it is a dictatorship all the same.

Let us look at a section of God's Word which deals with the government of God. It highlights the fruits, the characteristics of the government of God, that we need to be looking at, so that we can become like Christ. That is the purpose of our gathering together. That is the purpose of us congregating together on the Sabbath. It is to learn, so that we can grow to be like Christ.

What is Jesus Christ like, in terms of the government of God? The particular section of Scripture that I would like you to turn to is in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 8 talks about the lack of light in this world; the darkness that exists in this world.

***Isaiah 8: 20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.***

You and I seek the light of God.

***21 They will pass through it hard pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward.***

***22 Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness.***

That is very much indicative of this world at this time. It is in darkness. It does not know where the solutions are to come from.

***Isaiah 9: 1 Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, As when at first He lightly esteemed The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, And afterward more heavily oppressed her, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles.***

This verse is mentioned in Matthew's gospel, talking about the beginning of the preaching of Jesus Christ.

***2 The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.***

Jesus Christ came to provide a light to this world, of which we are the recipients, of which we also are to be the carriers of the torch of the light to this world.

Verse 3 picks up a section that Matthew did not recount. It really relates to the Second coming of Jesus Christ:

***3 You have multiplied the nation And increased its joy; They rejoice before You According to the joy of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.  
4 For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian.  
5 For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning and fuel of fire.***

This is talking about some of those climactic events prior to the return of Jesus Christ. They do not necessarily relate to where we are going at this point, but we will come back to those to show a contrast.

In verse 6 is a beautiful prophecy relating to the coming of Jesus Christ:

***6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.***

It talks of the coming of Jesus Christ, and what sort of Person He is going to be; what He is charged with doing, and how the zeal of the Eternal of Hosts is going to accomplish it.

It then talks about the downfall of Israel.

Let me read to you these verses from the Tanakh, the Jewish Publication Society translation:

***Isaiah 9: 6 A child has been born to us, a son has been given us and authority is settled on his shoulders.  
7 He has been named "The Mighty God is planning grace; the Eternal Father a peaceable ruler".***

Oftentimes we read verse 6 and wonder what all the words that are strung together are. Are these names of Jesus Christ? I think the Tanakh does a better job of making a sense of those words. God's name was placed upon Jesus Christ. He was the Son of God.

Rather interestingly in Britain we have a Queen. We also have an heir to the throne. You know him as Prince Charles. But if you hearken back to the days of his marriage when he married Diana in 1981, he had about six names! He had the names of a whole group of English kings before him, in the hope that he would be better than all of them!

People are given names. They are given a multiplicity of names, to show an association with what they have been named.

This association is given in Isaiah 6. But it is not just an association. It is also an insight into what God is doing!

The Mighty God is planning grace. The Eternal Father is a peaceable ruler. These are interesting insights into the government of God.

If you analyse this section of Scripture, you come up with three or four distinct characteristics that exist within the government of God. You might say that they are fruits of the government of God. They differentiate the government of God from other forms of government.

We don't have the time to look at all of them today. We will look at some of them at a future time, God willing.

But the one that I would like to focus upon is the very first one. That is: where does Jesus Christ see Himself in relation to the government of God?

We have just read the apostle Paul's comments, that in all things Christ might have the pre-eminence. He is the Head.

Where do you expect to find the head? At the top? But where did Isaiah say it was going to be?

***6 ... the government will be upon His shoulder.***

Is it not rather a strange idea that Jesus Christ is UNDERNEATH the government of God? The word that is translated "shoulder" infers the nape of the neck -- sitting right on the shoulder.

Looking at that, and understanding that location about the whole mythological concept of Atlas carrying the world on his shoulder, one has to wonder who he was trying to mimic? Was he trying to mimic God's intention for His Son to carry the whole government upon His shoulder?

The word that is translated "shoulder" is derive from a verb which means "to laden an animal -- to put a load upon an animal's back". Any animal that does that has to have a good shoulder to be able to carry that load.

Jesus Christ carries the government of God upon His shoulder.

The apostle Paul understood that as well.

***Hebrews 1: 1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,  
2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;***

The concept that we have read in Colossians 1 is restated here in Hebrews.

***3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,***

How do you UPHOLD something if you are on top of it? The word "uphold" is derived from the Greek word "phero" from which we derive our word "ferry" -- a device for carrying cargo, traffic etc. The word means "to carry". He upholds, He carries everything by the word of His power.

If He is carrying it, where is He in relation to it? Not on top of it! He is its means of support. He provides for it.

Paul, having talked about the greatness of Jesus Christ said ...

***Colossians 1: 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.***

What does "consist" mean? It is a nice old King James term. There are very few alternative ideas in more modern translations. Some translators use the term "subsist". But the concept of the word is to bring together, or hold together something in its proper or appropriate place or relationship -- to hold together.

Jesus Christ is holding it all together! He has a relationship with everything.

We have to ask ourselves about the perception that we often have of Jesus Christ, as the head of government under the Father, being at the top of the pyramid. Maybe God sees it from a different perspective. Maybe God has turned the pyramid upside down!

That is very much what Jesus Christ said to His disciples. There is a very short step from what we have read here to Luke 22 where Jesus Christ was having His last Passover with the disciples. He talked about His own departure, what was going to happen to Him, and the way in which He was going to be betrayed. As He talked about that ...

***Luke 22: 20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.***

***21 "But behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table.***

***22 "And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"***

He introduced the concept of His betrayal. The disciples immediately became concerned about who it was.

It is surprising how quickly the mind accepted betrayal as a fact, and then moved on to the next thing: who is going to take His place? Who is going to be in charge now?

***23 Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing.***

But then they immediately carried on ...

***24 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.***

"I am not going to do it. I am going to be the leader."

We can see them trying to elevate themselves one against the other. Jesus Christ had to come back at them, correct them, and show them that their concept of the government of God was a false concept. It was a wrong concept.

***25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'***

The world is full of nations that are governed from the top down, just as in the time of Jesus Christ. The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over their subject people.

I have worked in countries around the world in which bribery and corruption are an endemic way of life. The word "benefactor" means what it says -- because everyone has their hand out.

*"If you want something done, pay me, because I have got the means to make it happen or not. If you want it to happen, you pay what I want, or else nothing happens."*

It is a cruel, merciless, grinding system. It destroys people.

Jesus Christ said that is not the way it is to be amongst God's people:

***26 "But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.***

***27 "For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves?"***

What is your perception? If you go into a restaurant, you sit at the table, you are paying the bill, you are providing the tip, and if the waiter does not do a good job, he suffers. If he does a good job he may benefit. You are in charge. You have the credit card or the cheque book.

But Jesus Christ said ...

***27 ... Is it not he who sits at the table?***

He is the one who is the greatest. That is the normal perception. But He said ...

***27 ... Yet I am among you as the One who serves.***

The greatest is going to be the one who serves -- the one who is at the bottom!

You might say there is a fundamental difference between the government of God, and governments that exist in other forms. The government of God is based upon service.

It is interesting that the term "benefactor" means a prince, or patrician -- someone who had status in society, someone who was to be looked up to, respected, honoured and revered.

They talked about being the "greatest". The Greek word is derived from another word, "megas". It is interesting in terms of Church history that in Acts 8 we find a man called Simon Magus!

Let us have a look at "The Great". The Bible does not call him "Simon Magus". He is known in history as that. The term simply means "Simon the Great".

***Acts 8: 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.***

***6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.***

***7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.***

***8 And there was great joy in that city.***

But there was also a very black cloud!

***9 But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great,***

This man was elevating himself. He astonished the people. What did he want? He wanted them to look up to him, to give him credit, to be a benefactor.

***10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God."***

***11 And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.***

This man came into conflict with the apostles. He considered himself to be great! He was the antithesis of what Jesus Christ said was to be the role of a Christian -- to be a servant. He had elevated himself. He had used His powers to elevate himself over these people, and literally hold them in captivity.

In times past we have made comments about government being from the top down. Obviously days change. I look around the audience today and I see a lot of people who are younger than myself, who have never experienced life in the military (nor for that matter have I). My number came up and I had to go along for a medical. Thankfully the eye specialist said I could not go even if I wanted to. I was very glad and grateful about that.

But at one time I worked in an area in which young men were still involved in doing military service. It was a great problem, a great difficulty for them in many ways.

I remember, on one occasion, giving a Bible Study about the epistle of John. Afterwards a young man wrote to me, setting out something that he had learned from the Bible Study. He made the comment that oftentimes we hear about the government of God being like the military. He said he had been in the military and he found the idea of the government of God being like the military repugnant! He said, "*You taught me something that I have never appreciated before: that God is a God of love! God is a God who has concern for His people.*"

The military, in the ultimate sense, does not have concern for its people. They are there to do the will of the politicians. Oftentimes throughout history they have become simply cannon fodder.

The Bible does use the military in certain contexts. It uses it in terms of our own personal discipline: that we are to be like a soldier, that we are to arm ourselves with the armour of God so that we can fight against our enemy. We are given offensive weapons.

The Bible does use the military in certain contexts, but it does not use the military in terms of the concept of the government of God! The Bible uses a different concept.

We find it in 1st Thessalonians chapter 2. Here, the apostle Paul expresses what we have read to date, in terms of a very human, a very understandable scenario. He talks about the way in which he came to the Church in Thessalonica:

***1 Thessalonians 2: 1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.***

***2 But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.***

***3 For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.***

His presentation to the people in Thessalonica was the antithesis of that of Simon Magus in Samaria. There was no attempt to trick people, to deceive people, to literally exercise control over people as Simon Magus had done.

***4 But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.***

***5 For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness - God is witness.***

***6 Nor did we seek glory from men ...***

"We were not seeking to aggrandise ourselves. It was not to make us great!"

***6 ... either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.***

***7 But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.***

Here is a very human example of what we have been talking about. Why is Jesus carrying the whole government of God on His shoulder?

Who is in charge between a mother and a nursing baby? Who is the boss? Ultimately speaking it is the mother. She has the pre-eminence. When all is said and done, she gave birth to the baby. The mother is ultimately the head. But what does a mother exist for? The mother exists for the TOTAL BENEFIT of the child!

Her life is given. Her nights are disrupted. Her days are transformed. For her benefit? Yes, at times to stop the baby crying! But her life is given to SERVE that little nursing child. It is a situation in which only the mother can be involved, because it is a nursing mother! Her routine is dictated by the child. She exists to serve the child.

If a mother has multiple children, she will probably find that very few of them are the same. Each of them has a different character to it, different needs, that make their own individual demands upon her. The mother is the servant of the child! She exists to serve the child -- or should! I am talking about wholesome relationships.

I realise oftentimes in this day and age we have abusive relationships between mother and child, between father and child. I am talking about a wholesome relationship -- the way which God intended it to be between a mother and a child. The mother ends up serving the child. The child knows nothing except hunger and discomfort.

A midwife once told my wife and I that a baby is "an alimentary canal with a megaphone at one end, and no responsibility at the other"! We have all been there!

A mother exists to serve that little child, and to help give it the best direction in life. It underlines a fundamental difference between the government of God and any other government you want to look at! The government of God is firstly based upon serving one another, upon concern for other people. It is a different government than anything we ever hear of today.

Jesus Christ is the head. He is the head because He is prepared to serve you and me!

My responsibility is to serve you. Your responsibility is to serve one another. The same is true in a family. What is the role of a husband? To serve the family! To take care of the family, to provide for the well-being of the family, whatever way that may be.

It is not there to take advantage of the family. In fact, in terms of the government of God, if I, as a minister, seek to take from the Church, or I have an abusive relationship with the Church of some form or another, I have put myself outside the government of God! It does not matter that I have the title of a minister. I have put myself outside of the government of God, because the government of God is not an abusive relationship.

A husband who abuses his family is not conducting himself according to the government of God, because he has put himself outside it. He has ceased to serve. He has ceased to use his position to serve and take care of the family. He can go around and make all the noise in the world he likes, about being the head of the family, but he has no credibility, because God was the One who said he should be the head of the family -- on God's terms, not man's terms.

A proper loving relationship of serving one another, have care of others, is the basis of the government of God.

In many cases where prayer requests go out, those who are sick are overwhelmed by the response they received from their brethren -- from parts of the world that they have never set foot in themselves -- from people they are not likely to meet this side of the First Resurrection. When we care for one another like that, when we carry one another's burdens like that, we are serving one another. We are exercising part of the government of God, and that is good.

We had a situation recently in which a comment was made about a person who was sick with a very serious disease and who was not part of the Church. The individual could not get over the number of people from the Church of God who wrote to him and expressed their anxiety over his sickness. The man was amazed because, at times, he had set himself up as being an enemy of the Church of God.

We are seeking to serve people. We are seeking to give of ourselves. We have a responsibility.

But Paul does not end there, because little children don't remain nursing children for ever. They grow up and they need solid food. Their mind starts to work and they can be taught and instructed.



***1 Thessalonians 2: 8 So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.***

***9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.***

***10 You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe;***

***11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,***

***12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.***

The metaphor suddenly grows up. Now Paul is not talking about a nursing child any more. He is talking about a father with his children. He talks about how he exhorted them, or appealed to them. He urged them and encouraged them. In some cases the term can also mean "to console, or conciliate" -- to speak to in a friendly manner. That is what is incorporated within the concept of exhorting someone.

He said; *"Like a father, I gave myself to you, appealing to you, exhorting you, encouraging you, showing you the way that it should be"*.

He talked about not only exhorting, but COMFORTING them. He consoled or encouraged them.

He also said he CHARGED every one of them. The concept of charging has nothing to do with credit cards! It is rather a concept of witnessing, or conveying knowledge -- of teaching, of giving of oneself to teach. He said this is the right function of the father: to teach.

It is a very, very short step from there back into Deuteronomy 6 where God told the children of Israel that they were to teach these things to their children. The role of a father was to be one who was a teacher, who gave himself to his children.

God, having told the Israelites that the law was to be in their heart, said ...

***Deuteronomy 6: 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children ...***

There is a responsibility of a parent to teach God's laws to a child.

***7 ... and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.***

You might say that teaching is to suffuse every aspect of life -- to be part of the total life cycle of a person.

***8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.***

***9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.***

The law of God was to be part of their total being.

A father serves his children by teaching them the way of God. That is part of the responsibility that is placed upon his shoulders. If he seeks to use his children, he is really abusing them. He is not providing for them in any shape or form.

So we have this aspect of service -- of being a servant. Jesus Christ was the greatest servant. That has not always been the case amongst us. Some people have been given a responsibility, and it went to their head. The responsibility became authority over others -- telling them what to do -- rather than an opportunity to serve them, to give to them.

Oftentimes we do not think too much about government. I can remember at one stage a very long time ago, we had a comment in the Church that the Catholic Church had two things right: one was marriage and divorce, the other was government.

Actually they have both of those things wrong! Why did we even consider that the Catholic Church had government right? I think our view on government was too restricted.

Yes, the Catholic Church is governed from the top down. But have you ever stopped to think how Satan governs? I talked a little while ago about benefactors.

***Luke 22: 25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship (dominion) over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'***

Satan's government is characterised by God by the use of terms such as bondage and oppression. Where is the government from? It is government from above! It is not godly government.

Satan uses all sorts of ploys to bring people into bondage, to bring people under oppression. Oftentimes he has people thinking they are absolutely free of any authority and that they can do whatever they like. Satan has got them in his grips. They are under his oppression.

So there is a lesson to be learned.

***Isaiah 9: 3 You have multiplied the nation And increased its joy; They rejoice before You According to the joy of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.***

Something is happening here. Something that is cause for great celebration.

Why?

***4 For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian.  
5 For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning and fuel of fire.***

Let us read these verses from the Tanakh:

***Isaiah 9: 3 You have magnified that nation, have given it great joy. They have rejoiced before you as they rejoice at reaping time, as they exult when dividing spoil.***

It is a time of great rejoicing.

***4 For the yoke that they bore, and the stick on their back; the rod of their taskmaster you have broken as on the day of Midian.***

Where is this world? What does Isaiah say about this world? It is in darkness. It is under an oppressor. It is under a taskmaster. It is in bondage to sin, and it is in bondage to a taskmaster who beats up on it. It is an abusive relationship. It is not the relationship that God desired for His creation.

***5 Truly all the boots put on to stamp with and the garments donned in infamy have been fed to the flames, devoured by fire.***

How does God see society today? He sees it trampled down. He sees one group of people trampling down another group of people.

We have the current situation of Afghanistan. The Taliban have had their chance. The Pashtun are very concerned that the Northern Alliance have not had their chance. Why? Because they know they are going to put on boots to walk all over the rest of the population. This has to be a time for the hurting to stop.

That is the concept that exists within Satan's world. That is what Satan's world is like. The boots that are put on to stamp with, stamp people downwards; oppress people with. The garments donned in infamy will eventually be fed to the flames and the government of this world will change. It will change because Jesus Christ is the head of the government! As head of the government, He exists to serve the creation of God.

It is an incredible point to stop and consider what we have been called to do. Our responsibility is to SERVE the rest of humanity.

I love the story of Joseph. We don't have time to go into the whole story, but notice that before Jacob, his father, died, his brothers came to Joseph fearfully. Joseph told them not to be afraid:

***Genesis 45: 5 "But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.***

They never learned that lesson. It was a very hard lesson for them to learn. They saw Joseph as second in charge of Egypt, with boots big enough to grind the rest of the ten of them into the dust, and make mincemeat of them.

Joseph said; *"That is not what God called me here for. God called me for the very opposite -- to save your lives"*.

When Jacob died and was buried, the brothers came to him again.

***Genesis 50: 15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."***

"Now is the time he is going to get even with us. Now is the time he is going to grind us up for cat food, and may actually repay us for all the evil that we did to him."

***16 So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying,  
17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you."' Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.***

He wept because he saw they just could not see what God was doing. They could not see things from God's perspective! They saw it from a carnal human perspective of: *"He's in charge. He's got the big boots. He can grind me into the dust, and I am frightened for my life"*.

Joseph wept because they understood so very little.

Why should they be any better than the disciples, and perhaps from our own selves?

***18 Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."  
19 Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?"***

*"Is it my responsibility to pass judgement on you, and to destroy your life?"*

***20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.***

He had been sent ahead to serve the rest of humanity, to save humanity alive.

You might say that the work that we are a part of is very much like the work that Joseph was involved in -- saving peoples lives.

***Matthew 24: 22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.***

You and I have been called to serve people, to learn a little bit more about what Jesus Christ is like.

So the starting point of the government of God is not only that Jesus Christ is in charge, but that He is the chief servant, and the government therefore is based upon serving one another.

Another element of it is that it is a government of peace. That is an interesting point to consider.

***Isaiah 9: 7 Of the increase of His government and peace ...***

The end result of the government of God is that of peace, of well-being for all of humanity. Of that ...

***7 ... There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever ...***

The term "judgement and justice" is a very critical one in terms of the government of God. We will look at those terms on another occasion. They re-occur in Isaiah chapter 11 where it talks about a root coming out of Jesse. They are a hallmark of the government of God. They are part of the fruits that have to be the result of our being part of, and under, the authority of the government of God. They are part of the fruits that have to be evident in our lives, as we place ourselves under the authority of Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church.

*...Peter Nathan  
08 Dec 01*

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