

Msg. #1 (of 4)
GOD IS WITH US

“WONDERFUL COUNSELOR”

*–The supernatural guidance of Jesus Christ–
Isaiah 9:6*

Introduction:

We live in a culture that is increasingly uneasy with the meaning of Christmas. Have you noticed? Nobody really wants to say “Merry Christmas” anymore. It’s all about “Happy Holidays” for most folks these days.

Whether it’s out of one’s desire to for political correctness or just the secularization of what was once sacred—really—it is just another reminder that **“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize Him (Jn. 1:10).** Boy is that true today, too!

But I think there are people around us who are searching for the meaning of Christmas even if the truth is being suppressed. How is the meaning of Christmas being suppressed? In the same way that Paul proclaimed in the first chapter of Romans: By the **“...godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them” (Romans 1:18-19).** Since God’s Word is true, we know that there’s a fierce undermining going on in our culture and world pertaining to truth—including the true meaning of Christmas.

Just how plain is the meaning of Christmas? Let me remind all of us just how plain it really is. It is captured beautifully in the words of Isaiah the prophet: **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).**

Could it be any more plain! The prophet tells us *who* the Christ will be—and *what* He will be called. First, notice who He will be: **“For to us a child is born...”** Isaiah is telling us that the Christ will be born as a human being. The miracle of the Child to be born will be that he will be the God-man. God visits us in the form of a baby. When the angel announces to Mary that she was going to give birth to a son, Mary asks, **“How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (Lk. 1:34)** The angel answers, **“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35).**

This miracle child will enter humanity becoming in every way like us. He will experience hunger, physical fatigue, joy, sadness, pain, being misunderstood, rejection, love, friendship, emotions, temptation—yet, without sin. Jesus was one-hundred percent human—that’s the miracle of this child who was born to Mary.

But remember, Jesus is not just any human. Jesus was also fully divine. **He’s God with us.** Isaiah continues, **“...to us a son is given...”** This prophecy, proclaimed hundreds of years before His birth reveals the amazing truth that this child that was coming existed *before* His actual birth. He was already God. He was the Word made flesh. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning...The Word become flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:1, 14)**

Jesus was human, and the pre-existent Son of God from eternity. But notice also, He was a *King*. And not just any king. He was the King of Kings! Isaiah forecasts his reign: **“The government will be on his shoulders” (Isa. 9:7).** This points to a time even beyond his first coming when Christ will reign over the entire world. Until then, His kingly reign operates in the spiritual realm and in the hearts of all those who are being transformed by following Him.

Advent is a season for considering the amazing truth of Christ's coming to us—but not only as a newborn baby, but as our King who reigns in righteousness over the entire world. In the glitter and commercialism of Christmas, we often simply don't see the bigger picture. We celebrate the birth of our King—but we anticipate His glorious reign on earth! This is the major tenet of the Advent season—*Christ has come; He's coming again!*

But let's go back to Isaiah's prophesy and take another look. This child is *called* something...when babies are born, it's natural to want to call them something. We give them names. So when it came to naming the Christ-child—the angel's announcement was clear to both Mary and Joseph: ***“You are to give Him the name Jesus...”*** (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31, meaning “Savior”). The child born, the son given...whose shoulders would bear the responsibility of Sovereign rule of the world was given the name, *Jesus—which means, Savior*. But we know there are many, many more names ascribed to Jesus throughout the Bible. His name is Jesus but for our advent series this year, we want to draw our attention to just four of the special names Jesus is given to us here in Isaiah, and in the context of realizing that this one who is being described is “God with us” Immanuel.

Everyone should know what is behind Jesus' name. We call him Jesus, but Isaiah revealed Him as... ***“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*** These powerful designations are all wrapped up in His name.

We want to see Jesus as our *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace!* Each of these titles serve as a special moniker for helping us understand who He is and what He means to us. I have a suspicion that some of us here today need a special kind of *guidance*, a new infusion of *power*, a timely provision of *love* and a *peace* that passes understanding. These titles remind us of what we have in belonging to Jesus.

So today, we're going to drill down a bit into what it means that Jesus is, “Wonderful Counselor.” Why is he called, “Wonderful Counselor?” There's a couple of things worth considering here...

I. Jesus should be known as Wonderful Counselor because there's something about Him that is incomprehensible.

What I mean by that, is...

A. Jesus is our one true wonder.

There is difficulty in translating this phrase from the original Hebrew. Early scholarship viewed it as independent from the word, “counselor.” The word “wonderful” in the original Hebrew is used in the noun form rather than the way we might view it as an adjective. By telling us that He will be called, “Wonderful” he is pointing out that Jesus is incomprehensible—beyond human conception or natural occurrence—something that is indeed *marvelous*.

Therefore, to merely place it alongside of another word would unwittingly reduce it's essential meaning. Seeing it not as an adjective but as a noun offers us special insight into our Messiah's nature. And coupled together with the word, counselor raises it's meaning to an even higher level!

What's being conveyed here isn't that Jesus just does wonderful things or counsels wonderful things per se (though we know he does) but that He is throughout a *wonder himself*. Big difference. He is beyond human description. His ways defy our human reasoning and comprehension. He is in totality, the marvel of all marvels.

We trace this word and it's meaning in the OT to the book of Judges, chapter 13; the story of Manoah, Samson's father who inquired of the visiting angel of the Lord after being told by him that he and his wife, though sterile, were going to have a child. So Manoah asks the angel of the Lord, ***“What is your name, so that***

we may honor you when your word comes true” (Judges 13:17)?

The text continues with the Angel of the Lord’s reply, ***“Why do you ask My name? It is beyond understanding” (Judges 13:18)?*** The KJV translates this verse, *“Why do you ask my name seeing it is wonderful?”* The angel of the Lord speaks of something incomprehensible—mysterious—beyond our human understanding. Incidentally, most Bible scholars believe that references to the “Angel of the LORD” throughout the OT depict an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. If this is the case, the Angel’s response to Manoah makes perfect sense. His name is Wonderful.

Let’s see it in another location in the OT. This is the word used when David assessed God’s amazing supernatural knowledge of his own life: ***“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain” (Ps. 139:6).*** Before David finishes this Psalm, he goes on to reflect on the work of God in creating human flesh: ***“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Ps. 139:14).*** What David is admitting to his own soul is that there is something unsearchable, even incomprehensible about the God He knew.

Let’s stop right here. Do you know what one of the most powerful things about Christmas is? It is celebrating the infinite, incomprehensible, mysterious truth that defies human explanation. Too many of us are celebrating a “no-wonder” Christmas. For many people, Christmas is just another time of the year to get together with friends, eat great food, spend more money than we can afford, go to a few extra church services and then we pack it all up and get ready for the New Year. No mystery. No wonder. No miracle to be celebrated at all. But Jesus is supernatural—beyond reason, incomprehensible and something in the season

should cause us to enter into the awareness of that wonder, don’t you think? Maybe we should take a little time during this season to just let our imaginations be filled with the beauty of our Savior’s incomprehensibility!

We should call Him wonderful counselor because He’s incomprehensible. Here is another reason...and it completes our thought...

II Jesus should be known as Wonderful Counselor because He has wisdom that can’t be found anywhere else.

The prophet Isaiah deepens our understanding of the promised Messiah: ***“The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD...” (Isaiah 11:2).***

This exclusive wisdom is not something he learns or is given Him. He Himself is the embodiment of all wisdom and counsel. Rightly did Paul proclaim: ***“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” (Romans 11:33-34 formula quotation from Isa. 40:13).***

This is why Jesus Christ is our Wonderful Counselor! The Apostle Paul speaks of this when writing to the Colossians, ***“My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:2-3).***

This is why the Prophet Isaiah links “wonderful” with “counselor.” They go together. The Hebrew word for “counselor” presents the idea of “one who has the right plan.” When a King or military leader, faced an enemy, he would offer *a*

plan of deliverance. This was considered the King’s counsel. This description of Messiah reminds us that He is our supernatural strategist. He is a deliverer that is in a league all His own. He is not just “counselor.” He is the ultimate counselor!” He possesses an incomprehensible and perfect plan to deliver all who come to Him.

Let’s take a second to ask an important question: Where do you need deliverance in your life today? Where is a plan needed? Some of us are at our wits end because we’ve tried everything and NOTHING has worked. Even Christ-followers can easily try to solve their own problems on their own—without ever getting the kind of wisdom and guidance that could be theirs—if they were to just trust in, and look to Jesus *and ask him for it*. Let’s not forget how God’s wisdom has ultimately delivered us:

A. God’s wisdom formed a perfect plan to deliver us from the peril of sin and death.

As far back as the garden, where Adam and Eve sinned against God, we hear of the vision of God’s plan of deliverance. Addressing the serpent God speaks: **“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15)**. Even before we were born, God’s wisdom and plan were underway to rescue us from the wrath and judgment we deserved.

Check out a few Scriptures which remind us of this amazing wisdom and plan of God that He initiated so long ago: **“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...” (Eph. 1:11)**.

And again, **“...who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time...” (2 Tim. 1:9)**

All I’m wanting to drive home here is that the wisdom of God was what formed the perfect plan to save us from our sins—and that plan was in motion before the beginning of time. And having said that, let me now remind you that...

1. Jesus is the centerpiece of God’s plan for our deliverance.

“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship” (Gal. 4:4-5).

This is all wrapped up in the name, “Wonderful Counselor.” The child who was destined for birth in Bethlehem’s manger was God’s appointed *deliverer*—for you and for me. He was God’s plan to deliver a sinful world from the peril of sin’s curse. Jesus doesn’t bring us the plan...HE IS THE PLAN! Jesus said, **“I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6)**.

I can hear Jesus inviting someone right now: *“Come to me if you know you are still in your sins and you need deliverance!”* And why should you come if you hear his voice? Because He WILL deliver you...and ONLY He can deliver you! His plan is for you to escape the judgment you deserve. So come, won’t you?

If, as a believer, you are facing a crisis which demands knowing which way to go, you can come to the Wonderful Counselor and He’ll show you! If He was wise enough to form a plan to deliver you from sin and death, don’t you think you can trust Him for guiding you now?

The greatest proof of human depravity is how people seek the advice of all kinds of people and places while completely forsaking and ignoring the WONDERFUL COUNSELOR. People consult psychics, astrology, mediums, witches or seek some paranormal experience—they pour tons of money into a psychiatrist or psychologist or earthly counselor while never consulting the one true wonder-maker-planner strategist who

alone—and with the help of those who belong to him—can give them wisdom or counsel for whatever they are facing. All the while, Jesus, our Wonderful Counselor simply invites us. He says, “I will prove myself to be faithful to you. I’m Wonderful Counselor.” And by saying this, I’m not lumping counselors, psychologists or other mental health-care professionals into those known as psychics, astrologists, witches and the like...but I am saying that even with those who might offer some forms of help for the guidance we sometimes need in life, if the ultimately counselor has not been brought into your situation, you are truly missing out on the best resource you could possibly have!

For those of us who have called Him Wonderful Counselor, we have confidence in a few important things:

a) He counsels us through His word: ***“Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors” (Ps. 119:24).***

I tell people, when they sit down and open their Bibles, they are getting “counsel” from God Himself. Are you opening God’s Word daily to hear what God wants to say to you about whatever your situation is at the moment?

b) He counsels us through His indwelling Spirit. Jesus promised His followers: ***“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth...” (John 14:15-17a).*** Note: Jesus promised another—*of the same kind* of counselor as Himself—to be with us always. That counselor is the Holy Spirit.

If we belong to Jesus, every moment of every day we have a resident counselor living inside us. He moves us toward certain things and moves us away from other things—if we are listening and following His advice. My day just goes so much better when I follow the Spirit’s advice. When I don’t, I see a lot of things starting to break down and even unravel.

c) He counsels us for the best outcome and direction for our lives.. ***“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” Ps. 23:1-3***

In the OT, I love the pillar of fire and the cloud that led the children of Israel to the promised land (See also, Ex. 13:21; 14:29; and 23:20-23) and in one section we read, ***“See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says, Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion since my Name is in Him. If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you...”***

I think it’s pretty obvious who was “in” the fire and cloud. It was Jesus himself. And just like he led the children of Israel to the promised land, he can lead you, too, don’t you think?

d) He counsels us all the way to the end of our earthly lives: God’s guidance can be trusted to protect us all the way to the end of our lives! Ps. 48:14 ***“For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.”*** And, ***“You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory” (Ps. 73:24)***

So this Christmas...and every season let’s see Jesus as Wonderful Counselor! Perhaps today you are in need of supernatural guidance. Look no further than Jesus. This is who he is. And today you can know him through placing your faith in Him.