

Moments *for* You

Volume 59, Number 4

Theme: Isaiah 9:6

unto US a
CHILD
is **BORN**,
unto US a
SON
is **GIVEN**



THE INCARNATION

“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

These powerful statements from Isaiah resonate with the description of our Savior, Jesus Christ. His birth was foreshadowed. His sacrifice had been planned from Eternity past. He was willing to leave the glorious presence of God the Father to take on human flesh.

God became man and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1,14).

What if there had never been an incarnation? What if God had not become man? Where would we be and what difference would it make? There would be no sinless sacrifice to pay the penalty of death for the sins that separate man from God. There would be no resurrection after death into the glorious presence of God.

Because He came, we have access to the Father through the Son. The penalty of our sins was paid by the only One qualified to do so. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Because He came, we also have a model by which to live: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in

Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

George Frideric Handel’s 1741 oratorio, *Messiah*, captures the birth of Christ magnificently. At the end of the manuscript Handel wrote the letters “SDG”—*Soli Deo Gloria*. Yes, yes, yes—to God be the glory forever and ever—because He came.

—Gail Seidel, adapted

THE ETERNAL SON

“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given” (Isaiah 9:6).

This verse, so popular at Christmas time, presents two truths: the Son of God is *fully human* and *eternally Son*. The first part says He became man—“a Child is born.” When Luke wrote that “unto you is born this day ... a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11), he conveyed the same message. Both the Hebrew and Greek words for “born” refer to child-bearing.

The latter part of the verse says that the “Son is given.” The reference here is to eternal sonship. In Hebrew, the word “given” does not refer to birth or beginning, but to “bringing forth with purpose” the Son who already existed. John recorded His being brought forth in these words: “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17).

Our Lord did not *become* the Son of God—that He always was, is, and will be (Hebrews 13:8). But He did become man. The Son is as eternal as the Father. He is God’s expression of eternal relationship and purpose. Thinking about this helps us grow in our appreciation of the Son coming from glory to die for our sins (John 17:5; Hebrews 1:3), and returning to glory taking many sons (including us) with Him (John 17:24; Hebrews 2:9-11).

The whole truth is not just that “a Child is born,” but also that “a Son is given.” Those who focus on the first part may only enjoy His coming for the Christmas season. Those who also grab hold of the second part can enjoy His coming for all seasons—even for eternity.

—Larry Ondrejack, adapted.

MESSIAH FORETOLD

No Old Testament prophet had more to say about the promised Messiah of Israel than the prophet Isaiah. In a period spanning at least 64 years, Isaiah (whose name means “the salvation of Jehovah”) was God’s spokesman to Israel during the reigns of four kings—Uzziah (or Azariah), Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Isaiah predicted a coming messianic age marked by world peace. He foresaw a government in the last days that would turn the eyes of the international community on Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1-4). He also described the coming of a Servant-Ruler who would bring a mysterious blend of power and suffering (Isaiah 53; 61:1-3). But the character of this coming Servant is most clearly stated in Isaiah 9:6, where the prophet declared: “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name

shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

While it was clear that Isaiah was predicting a coming world leader and the inevitability of a messianic age, what could not have been seen until after Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection is that Isaiah was actually predicting the arrival of the Son of God.

THE BIRTH OF MESSIAH

“*Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.*” Because of such prophecies, generations of Jewish women dreamed of being the mother who would give birth to the promised and long-awaited Messiah.

Ever since the Bethlehem arrival of Jesus, it has been clear that this prophecy anticipated far more than the birth of an eventual world leader. We can now see in the phrase “unto us a Son is given,” the entrance of God’s own Son into the human race that He had created.

THE KINGDOM OF MESSIAH

“*And the government shall be upon His shoulder.*” Isaiah saw the day when a son of Israel would bear upon his shoulder the weight of world leadership. In chapter 2, Isaiah predicted that in the last days the house of the Lord would be established in Jerusalem. He said the Lord Himself would “judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4). Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, says that on that day an angel of God will declare, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ [or Messiah]; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

THE CHARACTER OF MESSIAH

“... and His name shall be called ...” Remember, Hebrew names are significant. In this final portion of the verse, the prophet used a marvelously descriptive set of names to unfold to us the very essence of the person of the Messiah. Each name gives a different window through which to view the Son of God who was to become the Son of man for us. These names shape our understanding of who God’s Messiah is. They can help us develop a personal relationship with Him, and show us in moments of fear where to find Him.

WHAT DO YOU CALL HIM?

Jesus asked His disciples two questions: “Whom do *men* say that I am?” and “But whom say *ye* that I am?” (Mark 8:27-29). The first question is significant because it allows us to get a read on the minds of people around us. The second question, however, is eternal because it is only by acknowledging Jesus Christ and responding to His gift of forgiveness by faith that a person can live forever.

Isaiah made it very clear that when the promised Messiah would come, He would fulfill the matchless titles he had prophesied: “Wonderful,” “Counsellor,” “Mighty God,” “Everlasting Father,” and “Prince of Peace.” Jesus came into the world and proved beyond a doubt He was the Messiah by fulfilling all those requirements. He was God in human flesh, come to display deity and redeem humanity. And on the strength of His ability to fulfill all these things, He made this claim: “No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6).

This is the claim of the Bible, and the heartbeat of the Christian faith: Jesus Christ is God and He came into the world to save sinners. What is your response to that claim and to the

evidence that He is the only deliverer for sin-laden, lost people who are the object of God’s love? Will you receive His gift of forgiveness and be saved?

If you are already saved, having been rescued from your sin and its just punishment, will you live under His perfect will and wisdom so that He may guide you into a life that pleases Him? May it ever be so, for He brings peace wherever He reigns!

—Condensed from *The Amazing Prophecy of Names* by Bill Crowder.

THE CHRISTMAS-CHILD

Christmas is too wonderfully magnificent to be confined to one solitary, fleeting day. There is a deathless significance in this Child of Christmas, a permanent and divinely bestowed gift of God, which brings perpetual happiness, immeasurable and unspeakable, both here and hereafter.

If you have never permitted the star of faith to guide you to Bethlehem; if you have never opened the door of your heart to receive the Christ-Child; if with Herod-like determination you have steadfastly tried to stifle the glorification of the Babe in Bethlehem, I ask you to follow the lowly shepherds to that glorious Child in Mary’s arms.

Seven centuries before the heavenly messenger aroused the drowsy Judean shepherds, Isaiah, the evangelist of the Old Testament, strikes at the very heart and center of a Christ-conscious Christmas when he identifies this Christmas-Child by these five glorious names: “Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

WONDERFUL

Isaiah calls the Christ-Child, first of all, “Wonderful,” or, as we can emphatically reproduce the original, “The Miracle.” Daniel Webster was

once asked whether he could understand Christ. He declared, "If I could comprehend Him, He would be no greater than myself. I feel that I need a super-human Savior." The Christmas message is thus not an appeal to reason. Rather, it is an appeal to the truth of God's love; it is the mystery of God's becoming man; Divinity putting on humanity; the Creator appearing as creature; the eternal Son of God incarnate as the Son of Man.

This Babe in the manger is the super-human solution to the great and universal problem of sin. When the stern demand of God's holiness tells you, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4); when it continues, "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23); and when it points the finger of accusation at you, "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7)—then to every one who humbly and gratefully accepts Him for who He is, the wonder of wonders is accomplished, and they are all assured of this: "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Here is the glorious wonder of this wonderful Child—there is no sin too great, no offense too vile, no wrong too oppressive to be removed freely and completely and for all time by His priceless, deathless love.

COUNSELLOR

The second blessed name is "Counsellor." I believe that for many, the need of a capable, competent counsellor has never been as great as it is today. You who have gone on year after year with a smug sense of self-satisfaction and with a good deal of confidence in your money power, your brain power, your social power, but who have found that this house of cards in which you have enshrined your happiness has been puffed over by bank failures, financial reverses, and unemployment, and

who now look around for someone and something that can lift you out of the labyrinth of hopelessness and helplessness—you can find a divine Counsellor today in Bethlehem.

Here is a Counsellor who is concerned first and foremost about the soul that lives on after the trinkets of this world crumble into disappointing dust. Here is the faithful and efficient Counsellor, who tells us, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33); that is, get right with God. Remove the barrier that separates you from God and that keeps you away from the inner happiness which alone makes life worth living. And when you come and ask, "How can I get right with God? How can I remove the impurity of sin from my life?"—great and wonderful Counsellor that He is, this Christ tells us, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). There is no sorrow too deep to be healed by the balm of His consoling love. Believe Him, when He calls out to you, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

MIGHTY GOD

The third name of this Wonder-Child is "The Mighty God." Here, then, we have Christ who—from the lowly beginning at Bethlehem until the bitter, heart-breaking end at Calvary—claimed to be, proved to be, and was declared by God to be, God manifest in the flesh. He had to be God to offer substitution for the overpowering weight of sin and its consequences. He had to be God to give humanity a hope that was stronger than human power, truer than mortal truth, more hopeful than earth's strongest hope.

I sometimes wonder whether we realize, even as far as this is humanly

possible, the practical meaning of this sublime truth, that God became man, that He lived and walked and had His being here on earth, in the closest contact with sin-stained men. What unutterable love, what indescribable mercy, what unfathomable grace! And what surpassing promise! For does not He who once trod the paths of men give to those who know Him and who love Him and who have been reconciled by His atoning blood the assurance even in today's turmoil, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? Think of this priceless Christmas-gift of God's grace, Immanuel, "God with us." God with us to turn the night of sin and sorrow into the brilliancy of a radiant day! God with us as the all-sufficient, all-embracing Friend, Guide, and Savior, now and forevermore!

EVERLASTING FATHER

Yes, "forevermore," because Isaiah's fourth name for this helpless Infant is "The Everlasting Father." The highest achievements of human ambitions rise only to fade. They are here today and gone tomorrow. But I want you to look with me at this Pillar of the Ages, this changeless Christ for a changing world—Him who is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8), and find in Him the everlasting Rock of Ages to which you can cling with unending and undying assurance. Friends and their favors may change; your hopes and plans may be shattered and crushed, but here in this Child is God's answer to your search for eternity, the solution of the mystery of the grave, the promise of Him who says, "because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19); whose eternity is the unfailing pledge of our life after death.

Think of the other word, "Father," and remember that behind all the

love that this word expresses and the confidence that it inspires, leading us to come to Christ as loving children come to their loving father, there is the majesty of power, the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the very revelation of God to mankind. When Christ complied with Philip's request, "Lord, show us the Father," He answered, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). My friends, I pause to ask you, Have you seen the Father in Christ? Remember, if you think you have seen God in any other way; if you think you can accept God without accepting Jesus Christ; if you try to stifle the appeal of the Bible by asserting that you believe in a "Supreme Being" or in "the Great Creator" or in "the Father of us all," and exclude Christ from all this, then you do not know the meaning of Christmas, and you do not know God.

PRINCE OF PEACE

But the sweetest note of the Christmas message comes in Isaiah's last name for the Christ-Child, "The Prince of Peace." Above all the hatred of a war-torn world, the Christmas anthem "Peace on earth" goes out into the world to tell men that the only way to establish peace with our God and peace with our conscience is to come to Christ and to believe that He has effectually and forever removed the discord that exists between the holiness of God and the unholiness of men; that He by His incarnation, by the poverty and suffering to which He as the Lord of lords and the King of kings subjected Himself, satisfied the claims of divine justice and offers to all the benefits of that momentous peace treaty between heaven and earth that has been signed and sealed by His very blood.

What greater cause of rejoicing, even in heaven, than this, that some

of you who are still at war with God, who are still allied with the forces of sin and hell, come to accept peace—the peace of the world, but the peace of the soul that Christ Himself offers. Thus, and thus alone, can Christmas be to you what it should be—the birthday of Christ, The Prince of Peace, not only in Bethlehem, but also in your innermost heart. Amen.

—Dr. Walter A. Maier, adapted

THE PROMISED GIFT

I read several years ago about a woman who hurriedly purchased 50 Christmas cards without looking at the message inside. She quickly signed and addressed all but one, and then dropped them in a mailbox. Just imagine her dismay when later she glanced inside the one unmailed card and read these words:

***This card is just to say
A little gift is on the way.***

No doubt there were 49 people wondering what happened to their presents.

How different was God's promise to us! Many years before the Savior was born, the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah, saying, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). And in verse 6 of chapter 9 we read, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Did God keep His word? Indeed He did! Galatians 4:4 states, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son."

As we commemorate the birth of Christ, let's thank God that He meant what He said. He not only promised, but He also gave. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15)!

—Richard DeHaan, *Our Daily Bread*

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q. What does it mean in Isaiah 9:6 where it says, "the government shall be upon His shoulder"?

A. It was prophesied in Genesis 49:10 that the Lord would reign: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." The Word of God says in Matthew 28:18, "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

How right it is that the Lord Jesus should reign. We read in Revelation 19:16 that He is the "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Isaiah 9:7 tells us that "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."

Which government does the Lord hold on His shoulder? I dare say, He holds all of them! Over 200 times in Scripture, the Lord is called the "God of Israel." The Lord certainly reigns over all human governments. Daniel 4:17 says, "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."

Christ certainly governs His church as we read in Colossians 1:18, "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence." The Lord Jesus shall also rule on the earth during His thousand-year reign. Matthew 25 tells us of the judgment of the nations at the end of the Tribulation period to determine who will enter this kingdom. We read in Matthew 25:32-34,

“before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

I'd like to draw our attention to one point about the power and tender love of our blessed redeemer. Isaiah 9:6 tells us that, “the government shall be upon His *shoulder*.” Yet, when rescuing one of His precious lambs, we read of the Lord in Luke 15:5, “when he hath found it, he layeth it on his *shoulders*, rejoicing.” While the government is on His “shoulder,” His dear lambs are securely and tenderly held on His “shoulders.” Not only does He hold us on His strong shoulders, He rejoices in our salvation. May the thought of the Lord's love, power, and care cause us to lift up our voices in praise to our wonderful Savior!

—AnswersFromTheBook.net

WONDERFUL

“His name shall be called Wonderful” (Isaiah 9:6).

Here is a name that is an adjective, so we may use it not only as a name by itself, but also as descriptive of all His other names. The more we know Him and love Him, the more we shall delight in this.

If we know Jesus as our Savior at all, we shall be quite sure that He is a Wonderful Savior. And as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we shall find more and more, year by year, and even day by day, what a Wonderful Friend, and Wonderful Gift, and Wonderful High Priest, and Wonderful everything else He is.

When you see a wonderful sight, don't you want others to see it, too? And if you cannot bring them to see it, don't you want to tell them about it, to try to give them an idea of it? So I think one proof that we have really found Jesus is that we shall want others to come and see what a Wonderful Savior we have found.

Jesus is Wonderful in what He is.

Even the angels must have wondered to see the Son of God, whom they all worship, lying in a manger as a little baby. But I think they must have wondered more still when they saw Him “taken, and by wicked hands ... crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23). They must have marveled indeed then at the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, yet He was not dying for them but for you, so you may say, “Thy love to me was wonderful” (2 Samuel 1:26).

Everything that He did was wonderful. Isaiah said that many would be astonished at Him (Isaiah 52:14). To see how this was fulfilled, look in the Gospel of Mark, where it is recorded fourteen times that the people were astonished or amazed at Jesus. (Mark 1:22,27; 2:12; 5:42; 6:2,51; 7:37; 9:15; 10:24,26,32; 11:18; 14:33; 16:8). Their testimony was: “He hath done all things well.”

And His words were not less wonderful. Look in the 4th chapter of Luke, and you will see how even those who did not love Him “wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” and were “astonished at His doctrine” and “amazed” at His powerful words (Luke 4:22,32,36). If we wonder at His gracious words to us now, how much more shall we wonder when we see Him on the throne of His glory, and hear His own voice.

—Adapted from *Opened Treasures* by Frances Ridley Havergal.