

WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

Thus says the Lord our God:

Isaiah 9:1–7 (2016 ESV) — **1** But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. **2** The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. **3** You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. **4** For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. **5** For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. **6** 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**. **7** Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

This is the Word of the Lord!

The light that was promised 2,700 years ago, and actually beamed in that land of darkness 2,000 years ago, and continues to shine today, is rooted in the incarnation of the Son of God.

Hebrews 1:1–3 (2016 ESV) — **1** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days He has spoken to us by [no mere human prophet, but by] His Son [Jesus Christ], whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. **3** [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His [God's] nature, and He [Jesus] upholds the universe by the word of His [own] power.

TRANSITION: The Son of God is given four titles in Isaiah 9:6: *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace*. Over the next four weeks we are going to examine and explore each of these in turn. We begin with *Wonderful Counselor*.

THE EMPTINESS OF HUMAN WISDOM

Let's begin by acknowledging the emptiness of human wisdom. *Human* wisdom is *creaturely* wisdom. It is the wisdom and knowledge and understanding of created beings. Whatever wisdom and understanding we have – and we do have wisdom and understanding – is limited, not only by our sin nature, but just as much by our creatureliness.

Even if Adam had never sinned, and so had never gained a fallen, sinful nature, his wisdom would never have been anything more than the wisdom of a creature. It would have remained limited by his own experience and knowledge.

But, of course, Adam did sin, and his nature did become sinful, and his wisdom did become shaped by that fallen nature. We have inherited his sin nature and everything that goes with it, including the weakness and emptiness of his wisdom. It is impossible for you and I to think or reason apart from our sin nature. We have a built-in prejudice against God, and an equally built-in preference toward self. We frequently make judgments about things that we can't possibly know for certain, but have no doubt about. We don't just judge the actions of others – which we can mostly see – we also judge the motivations of others – which we can never see.

Now, it's true that human wisdom grows over time. We do learn, after all. But we live very brief lives, and before long whatever wisdom we gained is lost. We are able to pass on a lot of facts to others, but very little wisdom. And, as I said before, that wisdom is inescapably colored by our sin nature. Even the facts we pass on are usually shaped and colored by our sin nature.

TRANSITION: The weakness and shallowness of human wisdom makes divine wisdom an absolute necessity.

THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE WISDOM

So, we have a need for true wisdom, divine wisdom. Even before he sinned, Adam was in need of divine wisdom, and his fall proves just how necessary the wisdom of God was – and how hard it was to accept. God had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the day they ate of it, God said, they would surely die.

Now, they wouldn't die because the fruit was poisonous. They would die because they sinned against God, by disobeying His clear command. That is, they wouldn't die because of some natural process; they would die as a result of God's righteous judgment.

And they did die the very moment they disobeyed. They were instantly separated from God, and became shockingly self-aware. They immediately tried to cover their sin. They hid from God. Eve blamed the serpent; Adam blamed Eve and God!

We see that, even when supplied with the *facts* – that the punishment for eating the forbidden fruit would be death – Adam chose abandoned God's *wisdom*. He chose his own wisdom, rather than submitting to God's wisdom.

You see, wisdom is not merely *believing* the truth of God's Word; wisdom is *living* according to the truth of God's Word.

“You believe that God is one;” James says. “Good for you. Even the *demons* believe that – and they shudder at that truth!” (James 2:19).

Satan and his demons *know* more about the truth of God than you and I know, at least at this moment of our lives (perhaps we will know more in eternity). But their *knowledge* does them no good, because they refused to *live* according to the truth of God.

Adam made a clear-minded decision to abandon God's wisdom in favor of his own. The result was death. Adam's dominion over creation was lost; mankind would have to constantly fight the world to survive. Eve's greatest privilege – bringing forth human life in made in the image of God – would become her greatest pain, a physically and

emotionally agonizing process. All because human wisdom – even pure, sinless human wisdom – was insufficient.

TRANSITION: Adam's clear, deliberate decision to renounce God's wisdom in favor of his own ended in utter catastrophe, and proved beyond question the need for divine wisdom: If God's wisdom was necessary for Adam in his sinless state, how much more is it necessary for us today?

THE SOURCE OF ALL TRUTH

Wisdom is not only truth, but depends on truth. Truth is not a subjective concept, something that shifts and changes from person to person or from generation to generation. Truth is objective, measurable. What's more, truth is not merely a *thing*, but a *Person*: Jesus Christ is the *Way, the Truth, and the Life* (John 14:6).

We must understand this. All the fulness of deity was pleased to dwell in the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:9). In Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). In Him all the fulness of deity dwells *bodily* (Colossians 2:9).

This is because Jesus is the perfect, complete, full expression not just of what God *knows*, but of who God *is*. He is the eternal, living Word of God. That Word became flesh in the incarnation, and the the Word dwelt among men. They saw His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side – Jesus Christ – He has made Him known to us. (John 1:1-3, 14-18).

Jesus told His disciples that seeing *Him* was equal to seeing the *Father* (John 14:18). For you and I today, *knowing* Jesus is equal to *knowing* the Father. In fact, that is the very definition of eternal life:

John 17:3 (2016 ESV) — **3** And this is eternal life, *that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

The Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, who revealed to the apostles all that He had received from the Lord Jesus. The apostles sealed that revelation in Scripture, where it is unchanging, inerrant, and infallible, because it is the very Word of God.

TRANSITION: And we remember, don't we, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, is the Wonderful Counselor.

JESUS IS THE WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

"Wonderful Counselor" isn't flattery or exaggeration. In fact, "Wonderful Counselor" falls far short of what Jesus actually deserves. Beloved, it is not possible to overstate the worth and majesty and glory of our God and Savior. Instead of *Wonderful* we could use the words *Marvelous*, or *Miraculous*, or *Extraordinary*, and remain accurate and true. Jesus is the Marvelous Counselor, the Miraculous Counselor, the Extraordinary Counselor. He is infinitely more. In His beauty, His glory, His wisdom, His power, His love, His tenderness, His majesty, Jesus Christ is the Wonderful source of truth and wisdom for us.

Jesus deserves to be called Wonderful because of eternity past. The Nicene Creed puts it so very well: Jesus is “the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.” He has eternally been the outward expression of all that God is. If He had done nothing else, He would richly deserve the title Wonderful.

But Jesus also deserves to be called Wonderful because of the incarnation. The Eternal Son of God eternally existed as God, and yet He did not consider His deity something to fearfully guard. Instead, He emptied Himself by taking on the form of a servant; not a glorious, angelic servant, but a humble, flesh-and-blood human being. And once He had been born as a human being He lived a perfectly faithful and obedient life, obeying the Father to the point of death; not an honored, majesty death, but the lowly, despised death of a condemned criminal. (Philippians 2:5-8).

He who was the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, by whom all things were created, who was before all things, in whom all things hold together, made peace between God and sinners by the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:15-20). Oh, Jesus was so utterly worthy to represent God in that transaction! He is God Himself, the fullness of deity in bodily form! But that He would also represent depraved, fallen, sinful humanity, in all its despicable filth and perversion, is wonderful indeed! No one could help us but the glorious Son of God, but no one would have dared ask Him to stand in our place. And in fact, we didn't ask Him to take our place; He did it without us knowing that He was doing it. It was not the crucifixion that proved His Lordship, but His resurrection. (Romans 1:4).

Because of Jesus' faithful obedience, the Father raised Him up and exalted Him above all things and every creature, and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus Christ every knee ought to bow, and every tongue ought to confess, "Jesus Christ is Lord! Jesus Christ is High and Lifted Up!", to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11).

Jesus deserves to be called Wonderful because of who He is in the present. The wonderful Heidelberg Catechism says, "Jesus is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who fully reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of His body has redeemed us, and ever lives to make intercession for us with the Father; and our eternal King, who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and defends and preserves us in the redemption obtained for us."

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be with us to cause us to be born again, and to conform us to the image of the Son of God (Second Corinthians 3:18). Jesus gave us His Word, so that we have everything we need for life and godliness (Second Peter 1:3). Jesus Himself is not off somewhere, passively waiting for the end of time. He is, at this very moment, at the right hand of God, interceding for us, praying us all the way home, moment by moment and step by step (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). He is the one Mediator between God and Man (First Timothy 2:5-6). Appealing to any other mediator, whether a human being or a so-called "saint" in heaven, is a deadly, foul insult to the love and commitment Jesus Christ has toward His elect.

And, let's not forget, Jesus deserves to be called Wonderful because of who He shall be in the future. Sinful men think that the world will continue as it always has; nothing

will ever change. As far as they are concerned, there was no miraculous creation about 6,000 years ago and there was no global flood about 4,900 years ago. Everything can be explained through naturalistic means. If we can only get through this life without too much pain, death will be the end of everything, and it's no longer our problem. But the Bible teaches something very different.

The world will NOT continue for eternity without end. Physical death is not the end of our problems. No; the righteousness of God will be vindicated. The Son who came as a *Savior* in His first advent will come as a *Judge* in His second advent. Jesus was offered once to bear the sins of many; He will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but rather to save from the judgment of God those who are eagerly waiting for Him, and to deliver over to the judgment of God those who despise His name (Hebrews 9:28). The Lamb of God will come to fulfill all the purposes of God. The wicked will be condemned to inescapable judgment. The elect will be raised to live with Him in unending glory.

BRINGING IT HOME

It's such a strange thought that we can't get our minds wrapped around it. We might think of this world as being a book, and the epilogue of the book is eternity to come: "and they lived happily ever after." But this world, this entire, unmeasurable creation, spoken into being 6,000 years ago, is just the Forward to the Eternal Story of God's Redemption. The first chapter has not yet been published, although it is already written in the mind of God.

We can't begin to imagine what our Wonderful Counselor has prepared for us. As the

Scripture says, no eye has seen what He has prepared for us; no ear has heard of those things; no human mind has ever even begun to imagine what is to come to us through Jesus Christ.

All of that untold, unseen, unimaginable glory stems from the Living Word, the Son of God, our Savior, our Great High Priest, our Wonderful Counselor – our Precious Lord Jesus Christ!