

Wonderful Counselor

Isaiah 9:6 - Part 1
by Chuck Jones

Authors note: I was asked a question about Isaiah 9:6 by a faithful church member. He wanted to know what these names tell us about who Jesus is. My first intention was to give a sermon on the whole verse and move on to another topic. That plan was changed as I began to study the text. It became apparent that more than one study was needed. These four articles are the fruit of my study.

Let me lay a little background for Isaiah 9:1-7. The first five verses paint a picture of distress and oppression. The people are described as walking in darkness and having a great light shine on them (vs. 2). As a result of that light, the nation's joy has increased and they rejoice before God (vs. 3). The burden they once lived under is broken (vs. 4), and the implements of war have been burned (vs. 5).

These verses imply the time of the end. They point to the final deliverance of Israel, not principally to the birth of Christ. Verse six carries the good news that a child would be born who would receive the government and be given a name by the people. The names in verse six are the people's assessment of him.

Verse 7 is definitely pointing to the future as it says, *"from that time forward, even forever."* With this background in place, let's go to the name that this child will be called. The title "wonderful counselor" can be understood as two separate names or combined as one. It depends on a small mark in the Hebrew language. I'll take them separately and combined.

Wonderful

The Hebrew word here translated wonderful is an adjective, a description of a person or thing. "In the Old Testament it refers to things that are unusual, beyond human capabilities, and as such awakens astonishment" (TWOT, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament). We use the word "wonderful" in the same way. We say that things, people, panoramic views, or sunsets are wonderful.

In scripture we see that it is used in much the same way. *"Your testimonies are wonderful [beyond human understanding] therefore my soul keeps them"* (Psalm 119:129). Here the adjective, "wonderful," is describing the testimonies of God. Those wonderful testimonies, when kept, have a "wonderful" outcome. *"I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts"* (Psalm 119:100).

This takes us to the son who would be the king. Jesus did many things that caused people to be filled with wonder and amazement. Here are a couple of examples:

Luke 8:25 *“But He said to them, Where is your faith? And they were **afraid, and marveled**, saying to one another, “Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!”*

Matthew 7:28, 29 *“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were **astonished** at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”*

In all that Jesus did he was (and remains) wonderful. It’s more than just in counsel. When you see Jesus, if you are able to speak, you may hear yourself say, “You are Wonderful.”

Counselor

This is a term which is applied to one who gives counsel. The word in itself does not distinguish between good and bad advice, just that advice is given. You have probably received both types and after the fact found out which type it was. How can you know before? Where does good counsel come from?

The short answer is that it comes from God’s mind and heart. We are told, *“By pride comes nothing but strife. But with the well advised is wisdom”* (Proverbs 13:16). What a powerful verse! It speaks of both good and bad counsel.

Jesus is the chief counselor because God’s spirit was with him. Notice:

*“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. 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 of the fear of the LORD**. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked”* (Isaiah 11:1-3).

Absolutely, the best counsel originates with God, because, *“The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations”* (Psalm 33:11). Yahweh's word or counsel, which is His purpose and design, stands forever. It may go out of fashion for us, but it is always the best. Wise counsel comes from the word of God.

John’s gospel opens with; *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. It was in the beginning with God”* (John 1:1, 2). John is simply rephrasing Psalm 33:11. Some have inserted “Jesus” in John's first two verses, but that doesn’t fit with *“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by **the breath of His mouth**”* (Psalm 33:6).

The “word” is the counsel of Yahweh that stands forever. Jesus comes into the text of John 1 in verse 14, *“And the Word became 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.”* The word, purpose, counsel,

decrees, plans and design of God inhabited a man. Notice the results: “*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has declared Him***” (vs. 18). Just as Moses received the law (and passed it on), Jesus showed us grace and truth (vs. 17).

We can look further into John’s gospel to see how he explains this to us:

John 5:19, “*Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner."*

John 5:30, “*I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.*”

John 6:63, “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*”

John 14:10, “*Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who **dwells in Me** does the works.*”

Because Jesus spoke the counsel of God, he is the Wonderful Counselor. Indeed he was wonderful in everything he did.

The Apostle Paul followed that example, “*Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you **the whole counsel of God***” (Acts 20:26-27). Dispensing the whole counsel of God is not an easy task. All of the Apostles, and countless believers after them, suffered for doing just that.

You too, can be a wonderful counselor. You can speak the whole counsel of God. First, you have to let God’s counsel invade your life and let it take over, as Jesus did. We are told, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*” (Colossians 3:16).

When the word of Christ takes effect you will then be, as the Apostle Paul says, “*Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another*” (Romans 15:14).

Follow the example of Jesus, as Paul and others have done. Let the word of God become flesh in you!

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