

IV. Advent in Biblical Perspective

The Messiah King

“Everlasting Father”

Isaiah 9:1–7

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Isaiah, having described the oppression of God’s people in the opening chapters of the book of Isaiah we see the contrasting word ‘but’ beginning in Isaiah 9, meaning in light of what has happened in the life of God’s people this is what will be. Isaiah 9:1–7 says [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.

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I am grateful to the pastoral staff who recommended I use this passage of Scripture for this Advent season. It has been an extraordinary blessing in my life and I hope it has been meaningful for you as well. I’m grateful for God’s patience in helping me work through the study of this passage and praying you are blessed as you work through it. I think it’s accurate to say of all the 60 plus prophecies in the Old Testament of the Advent of Christ, His redeeming work and the consummation of that work, that this one is the most prominent, most pervasive and most penetrating. It is referenced and quoted in the New Testament and the tentacles of its impact, influence and insight can be seen running through out the New Testament – this prophecy of Christ, the Messiah King and His Kingdom that is going to come. This prophecy gives us the statement of what He will do, how He will do it and who He is.

Isaiah has made it abundantly clear that this is the King who will come to emancipate His people from sin and not just sin, but the consequences of sin. He will liberate them from sin’s darkness, death, despair and dominion so it no longer rules over His people. Will they until He comes in the second Advent have to deal with remaining and besetting sins? Yes, but they no longer live under the dominion of sin and in sin, even though we still have sin living in us until He comes again. This King who comes to liberate us has done so by liberating us from our sin and defeating His enemies to emancipate us from sin’s darkness, despair, ever present discouragement, dissipation, dominion and death. This is what He promised to do and has done. This is the Kingdom blessing – He will break the rod of sin’s dominion, liberate us from its bondage and set us free with His glorious redeeming work.

How will this King do it? He will defeat all of His enemies – Satan, death, grave, and hell – even as He ransoms us from the wrath of God because of our sin and defeats the enemies of God for our liberation. Who is this King? Infant – lowly, Infant – holy, holy, holy. Holy not only means pure and righteous, but it means unique, one of a kind, something that is sanctified as distinct, incomparable. This is the King who comes. How will He accomplish it? He will accomplish it through His Son – unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. God’s plan is to become one of us – Son of God, Son of Man – in order to emancipate us by taking the place of us, removing our sins from us upon Himself and then giving us His righteousness that is pure. That is what He came to do, was purposed to do and promised to do.

It’s one thing to make a promise and it’s another thing to keep a promise. Would this King be able to keep the promises of His Kingdom? The assurance comes by declaring His name. Did you see how it was said to us in the text? Isaiah 9:6 says [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.* Name is singular and then comes four names. It’s actually one name with four highlighted royal throne titles. There are 280 names/titles given to God in the Bible.

One of my children called me and asked me if I could give them the 280 names/titles. I told them I could give them some but I probably couldn’t give them all of them and they said they needed them. I said ‘why?’ They told me I would believe how highway 280 was today and they needed to meditate on every single one of them. It’s the same reason I’ll never for get there are 280 names/titles of God in the Bible. I certainly can appreciate the ingenuity. Yet Isaiah inspired by the Spirit of God pulls four of them together. For instance, when a king or queen is introduced, they read all the names/titles that they have and currently the queen of England has 40 of them.

Isaiah by the Spirit selects these four. The first being Wonderful Counselor and it doesn’t mean therapist. Counselor was a position in the court. Daniel occupied this role for five dynasties and two empires. Nehemiah occupied this role under Artaxerxes. Joseph occupied this position for Pharaoh. Kings had counselors. There were three things about the counselor. One he had to be wise. Two he had to be strategic – know how to deal with political, economic and military issues and thirdly, he had to be loyal, trustworthy. Who is Jesus? He is a King that doesn’t need a counselor. He is His own Counselor and He is incomparable. For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has become His Counselor (Romans 11:34)? He not only knows what needs to be done to set His people free from their sins and accomplish the mission the Father has given Him to save His people from all of their sins for all of eternity and He knows how it needs to be done. How is does it need to be done? It doesn’t need to be done by a coalition, accommodation or association, but by the Incarnation. A Child will be born to you, the Son of Man in His humanity – the Son will be given to you – the Son of God in all of His glory. He is the Wonderful Counselor.

It’s one thing to have the strategy but can He fulfill the strategy? In football, it’s one thing to put a brilliant game plan on a blackboard with x’s and o’s but can you deliver it? Wisdom Personified – the Word becomes flesh. John 1:14 says [14] *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, **full of grace and truth.*** He is also the Mighty God. Luke 18:27 says [27] *But He (Jesus) said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”* It is secured by Him. This is the Almighty. It is El Shaddai who has come.

When Isaiah 9:7 says that the zeal of the Lord will accomplish this, it's not simply that Jesus is passionate to do the will of the Father to save us, it is also that He is able. He not only has the wisdom in His passion, but He has the power to accomplish His passion. Therefore, He is the Mighty God to save us. In the hymn *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, we sing about the angels in the fields of Bethlehem and the first verse says;

*Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"*

Another word for host is multitude and it doesn't just mean a lot. Host was the word in the Old Testament for army. You are going to see a Baby in the manger and the host of the angelic who is engaged in the ever present, spiritual, cosmic war, will be proclaiming the Captain of the Lord of Host of the army in that manger. This Captain of the Lord of Host has come to do battle to save a people who need to be saved but don't want to be saved and He will defeat all those enemies in the cosmos to save them from their sins.

What will that mean – this Wonderful Counselor, this Mighty God? It means Everlasting Father. I am a very simple person. I have been preaching on the fact that a Son has been given and now the names are given for that Son. When I was growing up, I had a father and there was no mistake that I wasn't him. I was his son and son was different than father. Until I leave and cleave and God gives me a family, I was a son in that family. The son is not the father. I never remember my father getting up on a Sunday morning asking me 'son, where do you want to go to church today?' I was the son and I was to be taught by my father. The Bible says for fathers to teach their children as they rise up and walk by the way side (Deuteronomy 11:19).

Here is Isaiah we have this Son that is given. John 3:16 says [16] *"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."* Who is that Son? He is the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. Is He a Son or a Father? Here's the key. There are two suggestions to solve our dilemma for us. Why do we call the Son, Father – Everlasting Father? One suggestion is He is called the Everlasting Father because of the unity of the Trinity in the essences of the Persons. John 14:8–11 says [8] *Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."* [9] *Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me, Philip? **Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father.** How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"* [10] *Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does His works.* [11] *Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."* For a number of years, I parked there at the suggestion of the unity of the Trinity enhanced by the second suggestion.

The second suggestion the Son is called Everlasting Father is because of the identity of the Trinity with the fact that all three Persons have the same attributes. It is not that the Father has more attributes than the Son and the Son has more than the Spirit. There is an equality of God in terms of the attributes of God so therefore since They have identical attributes then that is why you can say the Son is called the Everlasting Father. So it has to do with unity and identity

and those answers are not wrong in and of themselves but I do believe they miss the point of the text. I don't think that's the answer of why it is used in this Isaiah 9 text.

The answer comes in the fact that in front of us are four royal throne names to help us understand the Name of Jesus. We are told in Matthew 1 that His name is to be called Jesus, the name above every name and at that name every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:9–10). For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved (Romans 10:13). Here is Jesus, the Name by which we must be saved, the Name that is above every name and the Name at which every knee shall bow – Everlasting Father – this is a throne name, not a familial name. This is a throne name that borrows from a family name and responsibility. This is not unusual.

There are some negative examples of this. We fought this world war against a despotic empire, a fascist empire, that was moved under the direction and control of a dictator and that dictator took all of the names of the previous kings of that nation and applied them to himself but the one he made the church and the citizens say or call him was Führer, which means father (supreme leader). You are dependent on me – I'll take care of you. Whenever I look at the abdication of faithfulness of a confessional church in Germany in those years I go back to a particular meeting where they met with Hitler and he said 'Don't worry, I'll take care of you for I'll be your Führer' and that's where they put their trust in that king.

We also see it used in other ways and is used much less beneficially. It's part of the titles of the kings and queens of England. If you get the chance to talk with Queen Elizabeth she would be called by custom and manner – mum which is mother and if it was a male king, you could call him father. That was a title. In our own country (US) we don't have kings we have presidents and we had a pretty good one that could have been known as King George which was George Washington but he is also known as father of the country. Everlasting Father is a royal throne name – where this King with His strategy to save His people as the incomparable Counselor (Wonderful Counselor) and as a Mighty God, when He wins the victory that we are dependent upon He will not use Everlasting Father for tyranny but will use it as a Good Father.

What does a father do? A father does three things Biblically. A father is called to provide. I Timothy 5:8 says *[8] But if anyone (man) does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (infidel)*. Two, he is to protect and thirdly, he is to lead, sacrificially with a servant's heart. He is to lead or shepherd and the shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. This King who is incomparable in His wisdom, mighty in power to save, does not exploit His people or tyrannize His people, but this One who came in the Advent, ascended, who led captive a host of captives and now in glory gives gifts by His grace to His people. This King is no tyrant. This King provides, protects, directs, guides, leads, and is a Shepherd to His people.

I want to give you two brief illustrations of this personally out of my life. Growing up there was my mom, dad, me and my three sisters. My dad was in minor league baseball and it's not a very profitable enterprise so we were classified not totally poor but we would have been on the lower side. I remember finding a dollar bill and my mother found a way for us to eat out that night. It was called McDonald's. In 1960 you could buy four hamburgers for 60 cents, two French fries for 20 cents and two drinks for the rest. We all split that in the back seat. That meant my dad many times was always trying to work a deal for a car. One car he had made a deal on we took to see relatives at Christmas and we always drove at night. One thing my dad forgot to check when he bought this car at the auction was the fuel gauge and it just didn't work. It said full but actually it was empty.

This happened back in the late 1950s when I was a kid and that meant there were no interstates – just two-lane roads in the middle of nowhere, forget light, just pitch black dark, going into the low country going into Charleston, South Carolina. We ran out of gas on the side of the road at 1 am. There were hardly any cars and those that came out as my dad is standing out beside the car waving at 6 foot one, would just gas it when they saw him as they went right by him. I leaned out the window and said ‘Dad, maybe if I stand out there with you they would be more likely to stop.’ He said ‘That’s not a bad idea, so come on out here.’ I got out to stand beside him and he put his coat around me for it was December and when he did that I felt a little bit better but I could hear every noise of every animal around there. I kept thinking, ‘who would stop – it would either be something close to an angel or an axe murderer.’ Someone finally stopped who was very gracious and yes, we finally went on.

Secondly, it wasn’t long after that that we moved to Charleston and I was in the second grade. We lived about a mile and a half from the school I was going to attend in the second grade so my dad and mom one Sunday afternoon walked me to that school to show me how to get there. When you got to the circle you had to know which road to go down to get to the school. My dad said ‘now you can walk this way to school, right?’ I said ‘Yes daddy I can do that.’ One thing about Charleston is that they have fog every morning for almost the entire fall season. The morning I started walking to school the fog was so dense and as I started around the circle I couldn’t tell which street it was so I walked around it a second time and then just picked one that I thought was it but I was wrong so I get lost in North Charleston. I’m convinced I’m lost and I was convinced that I was going to fall off the edge of the world. Then I look up and there was my dad with our ’54 Chevy opening the door for me to get in. He said ‘Son, are you lost?’ I said ‘Yes dad.’ He said ‘Get in, I’ll take you, let’s go.’ My dad rescued me.

What did my dad do? He provided, protected, guided and shepherded. Earthly fathers do that to varying degrees of effectiveness, success and with righteousness, but Jesus is your Kingly Father and He knows what to provide for you to save you from your sins – it’s Himself at the cross. He knows what to do to take the guilt of sin away – it’s Himself at the cross. He knows what to do to break the dominion of sin – it’s Him at the cross who binds the strong man, who defeats the domain of darkness and He takes the keys of the Kingdom to set you free in Christ. He has not come to tyrannize but to save. He has not come in exploitation but in salvation in emancipation for your liberation from sin and all of our enemies. When He comes again those that He has defeated He will destroy.

Just as the text says He’ll roll up war and throw it into the fire, along with the weapons of the world. Here is the One who went into the fire for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Here is the One who took the torments of hell on the cross for you and then will be with you, the Everlasting Father. His Kingdom knows no end. His Kingdom is forever. All empires and nations have their shelf life. This Kingdom and this King and His zeal to save His people is forever. The increase of this government shall know no end and this government which is upon His shoulders will sustain it for He is the mighty God and the everlasting Father as He redeems us from our sins.

Here is the takeaway. Jesus Christ saves us from our sins, not by accommodations of sin and My enemies or negotiations or coalitions, but by His Incarnation which is a straight line to His crucifixion and from the crucifixion will come the resurrection, and then the ascension. Even now He intercedes for you. When Jesus came into the world the Pharisees had already created a deal with Rome. The Zealots were looking to the ways of the world to accomplish

emancipation. The Herodians had already signed peace treaties. This Savior King has come to save you. As the hymn, *He is Able to Deliver Thee* says;

*Tis the grandest theme thru the ages rung;
tis the grandest theme for a mortal tongue,
tis the grandest theme that the world e'er sung,
our God is able to deliver thee.*

Chorus:

*He is able to deliver thee,
He is able to deliver thee,
tho by sin oppressed, go to Him for rest,
our God is able to deliver thee.*

*Tis the grandest theme let the tidings roll
to the guilty heart to the sinful soul;
look to God in faith, He will make thee whole,
our God is able to deliver thee.*

This Son who came to be among us – One of us – to take our place for us, this is the One who goes to the cross to save us. This is the One who is resurrected and He was delivered up because our transgressions. He was raised because of our justification. This same Jesus who is ascended and intercedes for you will come again in a consummation. He saves us, secures us, seals us, sanctifies us and He is the One who came to seek us.

Remember the prodigal son coming home to the father – don't forget the father coming to the prodigal. This is the Savior who came to us to save us. As I think back on the two illustrations I gave from my childhood, I remember all the anxieties I had. I was walking in darkness. I was overcome by the darkest of darkness around me. I didn't know what was going to happen next. Even though all those fears were ready to take hold of me, I was ready as a child to sense my safety because my father was there. I know he'll provide, protect and guide me.

We have King who in His Incarnation committed to His humiliation. In His humiliation He was humbled to be found as one of us and humbled to the point of death for us. He will save us, secure us, seal us, sanctify us and even now He is declaring to you – Come to Me. I don't know where you are spiritually today. There is likely someone reading this who hasn't come to Him. Today, God's Son, our King has come to us to save us and that's why we sing Joy to the World. This day you need to come to Him – right now – run to Him. Come to Him whose great power is there to emancipate you and liberate you from sin even as He has defeated His enemies. Don't negotiate, humble yourself, come to Him, put your trust in Him and He will exalt you at the right time.

Romans 8:31–39 says [31] *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.[35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

[37] *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor*

things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Come to Him for He is your Redeemer. I know there is a lot out there in the world that will get you excited in the exhilaration of what the world offers for a moment, but actually what you just bit into is nothing but vanity. In Christ there is everlasting joy. You have a King who provides, protects and will guide you so fix your eyes on Jesus and come to Him who came for you. Run to Him for He has come to save you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You O God for the glory and majesty of our Savior Jesus Christ, our King. He is a King who needs no counselor, for is the incomparable Wonderful Counselor. He is the King who needs no coalitions for He is the Mighty God. He is the King who is our Everlasting Father. His Kingdom is everlasting for our King is everlasting and He loves His people. He loves to save us, secure us and seal us by His blood and with His Spirit. He loves to sanctify us. He loves us so much He seeks us. O Lord, we come to You and praise Your holy Name, because You are our Redeemer, our Provider and our Protector. In You is our salvation and in You is our refuge. Guide us O great Savior. We are yours and praise Your Name You are ours and You are all we need. May Your preeminence be declared and the joy of our salvation fill our soul, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

FOUR THRONE NAMES

Wonderful Counselor

Mighty God

Everlasting Father

Prince of Peace {note}

Everlasting Father {note}

LIFE TAKEAWAY

Jesus Christ saves us from our sins not by accommodations, negotiations or coalitions but by His Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Intercession.

Wonderful Counselor – Mighty God – Everlasting Father – Prince of Peace