

Advent in Biblical Perspective

The Messiah King

“Wonderful Counselor”

Isaiah 9:1–7

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Romans 11:33–36 says [33] *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

[34] *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?”*

[35] *“Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?”*

[36] *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.*

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.

This prophecy in Isaiah 9 is amazing and I’m grateful for those who encouraged me to tackle it for this Advent Season. Isaiah is writing this prophecy and I dare say of all of the 60 plus prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament this may be the one that is most foundational, most pervasive that works throughout so much of the New Testament – the Gospels where it is quoted and then beyond that where it is referenced and carried out in its inferences. Isaiah 9:1–7 was crucial in the writing of Handel’s Messiah which is how we will end the living festival, the living portraits of Christ this season. We hear in Handel’s Messiah the part of Isaiah 9:6–7a which 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. [7a] Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end...*

This text has infiltrated carols, hymns, concertos and oratorios. It infiltrates the New Testament where it is enhanced and expounded. My wife and I were looking through our past Christmas cards and 40 to 50 percent of them quote Isaiah 9. It is clearly the go-to text but here’s the key. Isaiah is writing this over 700 plus years before it’s fulfilled in Jesus. Plus, Isaiah has just spent eight chapters showing the consequences of sin and disobedience in the lives of God’s covenant people Israel. There is the pervasiveness because of sin of gloom, despair and anguish.

As I go back to try and understand the context of this Isaiah 9 passage where Isaiah emphasizes the consequences of sin and how it’s rendered gloom, darkness and all, one song kept coming back to my mind. This song came out 53 years ago when I was dating my wife. I had talked her into marrying me but I had two obstacles – her dad and mom. I understood their objections so I was on a full strategy to win them. One of the ways I did this was when she came home for the weekend from college, as we would date that weekend, I would offer to take her back to college so her dad didn’t have to make the trip. For me, that was not sacrificial at all for I delighted to take her but we had to be back by 12 o’clock because a lady armed with a bazooka was the house mother.

On Sunday night after church her parents would come home and watch two programs where one was Jackie Gleason and the other was my future father-in-law’s favorite program which I could not stand. I wasn’t a Christian yet so I didn’t mind lying about it. It was Hee Haw. It still lives on cable land and there was a section on Hee Haw every week where

Junior Samples and Roy Clark would sing a song. That song was ever before me and I can't get it out of my mind and her dad is over there shedding tears but as I am shedding tears it is for a different reason. Here is how the song went;

*Gloom, despair, and agony on me
Deep, dark depression, excessive misery
If it weren't for back luck, I'd have no luck at all
Gloom, despair, and agony on me.*

I feel so sorry for the young people of today for our music was so culturally uplifting. Who can forget 'sitting here la, la, waiting for my ya, ya' (by Lee Dorsey) or 'Who put the bop in the bop shoo bop shoo bop' (by The Platters)? Yet none of them matched Hee Haw.

I could not get that Hee Haw song out of my mind when I read Isaiah 1 through 8 and then I came to verse 1 of Isaiah 9, the promise of a Messiah King and a Messianic Kingdom. Isaiah has shown the decadence, the depravity and the decay of the kings of this world, what they have done in the Promised Land and how the people have followed these ungodly kings. It has been traced from the heights of David which has now descended to Solomon who by the end of his reign has placed idols of child sacrifice in the temple. Then there is the divided kingdom and except for periodic revivals in about the lives of five kings, each one took the people deeper and deeper into rebellion against God. The result was a pervasive gloom and darkness that surrounded, penetrated and permeated the people of God. God's answer was a King and a Kingdom – a Messiah and a Kingdom. There is no King like this King and no Kingdom like His Kingdom. Then Isaiah tells us what this King has promised to do, what all who are in His Kingdom enjoy and how He is going to do it. Then he tells us about the King who is going to do it.

I want to take a moment to review briefly those three promises and the three 'fors' which is how He is going to do it that we studied in the last study. Isaiah 9:1 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.* There is something to be understood here about these two tribes. There is Europe, Asia, Africa and the land bridge was Israel. So, whenever an empire rose, they would come down what was known as the highway of the sea and it would capture the bridge. The gloom that was there in the days of Isaiah had basically been produced by the unfaithfulness of the kings who had not honored the Lord but had exalted themselves, but as much gloom as there was and the promise there was going to be the answer the worse was yet to come, because right through those two northern tribes will sweep a barbaric, pagan empire called Assyria and will capture ten of the tribes as they will amalgamate them and take many into slavery.

Barely a century later another empire – the Babylonia Empire – will sweep down through those two tribes to the two southern tribes – Judah and Benjamin – and will desolate and make desolate Jerusalem. The anguish continues. No longer the temple. No longer the songs of Zion as they are taken into slavery for 70 years. Then will sweep as the Bible says like a bear this devouring animal, another kingdom that will gobble up everything and that's the Medo-Persian empire. Then comes the sweeping rapid empire of Alexander the Great and the Grecian empire and then finally the iron hand of the Roman Empire. This gloom and anguish are going to deepen for 700 years and will even include 400 years of silence – no word from God, no prophet.

In the midst of that, in the same place as Galilee, a King will come. In Galilee of the Gentiles, His hometown will be Nazareth and His adopted hometown for ministry will be

Capernaum. He will go around to Chorizan, Bethsaida, Magdala and all those cities. He would preach and teach. The first promise is sin's gloom will be displaced by the joy of the Messiah. Now in the same place that the gloom and anguish had come, it will become glorious for the highway by the sea will bear the footsteps of the Messiah, the King and this Galilee will become the place where joy will begin to dispel gloom.

Isaiah doesn't stop there. Isaiah 9:2 says [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.* The second promise is the people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. Sin's darkness will be displaced by the Light of the Messiah. God will finally speak after 400 years and the Word becomes flesh. The Light that lights every man comes into the world.

The third promise is in Isaiah 9:3 which says [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.* This Messiah will do such a work that there will be a harvest of redemption and no longer will the people of God be an off-sight remnant, but now a joyful multiplied, a royal nation that is taken from all the nations of the world. Now this multiplication of the Kingdom will take place. This Messiah King will accomplish this. He not only replaces the gloom of sin, the darkness of sin but He also displaces the dominion of sin by the triumph of this Messiah.

How is He going to accomplish this? He answers that with three 'fors' and we see them in Isaiah 9:4–6 which says [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.*

He will come in and with the remnant He will win the victory and the battle is the Lord's for there will be the emancipation of all of His elect from the oppression on sin for all of eternity. He will break the burden, the yoke, the rod that would oppress. The dominion of sin will be broken for He will do a work that removes the power, the penalty, the shame and guilt of sin. He does the work that will give a new heart in place of a sinful heart, a new record in place of an old sinful record.

Then He will do a second thing which is seen in Isaiah 9:5 in which He will triumph over all His enemies and our enemies and their weapons – their political power, military power, social power, all of their power. He will establish something much more powerful and that is the power of the Gospel that emancipates men and women from their sins through the righteous blood of Jesus Christ. When He comes again, having defeated His enemies, He will then destroy all of them – Satan, sin, death, hell, the grave and all of those weapons of the flesh will be cast into the everlasting fire of judgment. He will have won the war with His weapons – the sword of the Word handled by the Spirit of God into the hearts of men bring forth death to life instead of death, what Satan the liar has done from the beginning. In Him you can become a new creation in Christ.

Who is this Messiah? That is the third 'for' seen in Isaiah 9:6 – this Child was given to us – not just to Joseph (the adopted father) or Mary (appointed mother). He was given to us who have been in anguish, gloom, darkness, death, agony, under the dominion of sin, its guilt, shame and power – to us a Warrior King has been given. This Child, this Son has been born to us that we might be born again in Him. To us a Child is born – the humanity of this King. God is not

born for this is One who comes as a Man – from embryo, to death and a tomb and from it. He has a true human body and a true human soul. I Corinthians 15:21 says [21] *For as by a Man came death, by a Man has come also the resurrection of the dead.* This just isn't any man for it is God having come in the flesh.

The next statement in Isaiah 9:6 is unto us a son has been 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.* Immanuel – God with us, God one of us, God among us, God taking our place for us. That gloom is displaced with joy, darkness with light and sin's dominion is broken because He has triumphed over all of His enemies and the resurrection declares that.

Let's look further at Isaiah 9:7 which says [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.*

We find out He comes from the line of David. Here is a forever Kingdom – a Kingdom that cannot fail because the King of this Kingdom cannot fail. The zeal of the Lord will accomplish this. The same passion Christ displayed to go to that cross to redeem us, that same passion He is ruling and reigning for that Kingdom to be from all the nations as the Gospel goes to all the nations. He will not lose one of those and with that same passion He will bring all those people to Himself for all of eternity.

In Isaiah 9:6 we are given four throne names and these are names of regal entitlement - *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* Notice that it doesn't say 'His names shall be...' It just says His name singular shall be these four, so what is this telling us? Those four names make up the name of Immanuel – Jesus, in His regal glory. They are interdependent, interconnected and intra-dependent, intra-connected. In other words, you can't have His name without all four of those titles. He can't displace gloom with joy, darkness with light, death with life, the dominion of sin with the dominion of grace, unless He is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

Because He is the Wonderful Counselor, He knows what to do and how to do it. Because He is the Mighty God, He can do it. Because He is the Everlasting Father, He now has those He has begotten through what He does and now we who were enemies now have Him and we have peace for He is the Prince of Peace. They build on each other and if any one of them is not there the others can't be there.

Now according to Calvin, the King James Bible and Handel's Messiah one would say there were five and not four and that was because there is a comma after Wonderful that makes it; Wonderful, Counsel, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Why do we sing it like that every year? I think we're inaccurate on that. I'm not saying the Bible has errors. The Bible in its original autographs does not come with punctuation. It doesn't have periods and commas. That is what interpreters and translators put in. The King James Bible was wrong to put the comma after 'wonderful' for it should have been after 'counselor.' The New American Standard Bible and the English Standard Bible got it right and that is where it belongs.

Let me put something to rest here. We are not going to redo Handel's Messiah because actually Wonderful is a name for God. My grandmother taught me that every day when I came home from the first grade as she sat me on her lap and we'd sing the song *Isn't He Wonderful* as the lyrics went like this;

*Isn't He Wonderful, Wonderful, Wonderful
Isn't Jesus my Lord Wonderful!*

*Eyes have seen, ears have heard
It's recorded in God's Word
Isn't Jesus my Lord Wonderful!*

His Name is Wonderful but here in Isaiah 9 'wonderful is not a noun, it's an adjective. He is our Wonderful Counselor but that does not mean Jesus is your therapist. Over 2,000 years ago counselor was the second most important person in a kingdom. There was king who was number one and then every king had a counselor – the best one they could find. We study three of them in the Bible. One is where Pharaoh made Joseph his counselor. Daniel in two empires and five dynasties was a counselor. Nehemiah was serving as a counselor for Artaxerxes.

A counselor had a three-fold profile. He was to be known for wisdom. He was to be known as a strategist – a political strategist, economic strategists and most of all a military strategist. Number three they were trustworthy. They weren't governed by ambition for self but they were able to humble themselves. Now comes our King and He doesn't need to secure a counselor for there is no counselor greater than Him. He is Wonderful.

There is a young man in this church who is 8 years old and I was talking with his grandparents last week. They told me he was in class a few weeks ago learning about prefixes and he was particularly learning about the prefix -in. A prefix is something that is fixed in front of a word. He was asked to give a prefix to add to a word where the word will mean the exact opposite of what it means without the prefix. Without hesitating the 8 year old said 'Incomparable.' There is no way at 8 years of age I would have ever come up with that. Comparable can be compared to something and incomparable is the exact opposite for there is nothing to compare it to.

That is what the word wonderful means – incomparable. Who can be His counselor? Who advises Him? Who creates a better strategy than Him? Who is more trustworthy than the One who humbled Himself to take upon Himself humanity to the point of death, even death on a cross? He is His own counselor. He is a Wonderful Counselor. He not only knows what the problem is but He knows the strategy required and must be implemented to solve the problem. There is a virgin birth, a perfect life, an atoning death, an empty tomb, a resurrection, an ascension, promise of His coming again and there is an establishment of Kingdom now that exists because this King came not to bring judgment but in humility to bear our judgment, but this Kingdom is not yet in its fullness. Its fullness will be when the King returns and when He returns, He comes not simply to defeat His enemies, but He will destroy all of His enemies. See His wonderful wisdom, strategy, His humility, His trustworthiness and His desire that the Father be glorified. All that the Father gives Him will be saved.

Then He gives the strategy from heaven as He intercedes for us to take the Gospel to all of the nations that we might come to Christ and know His glory. Here in Christ is wisdom personified. 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.* Here is a Strategist that is incomparable. Here is One who is loyal.

Here's your takeaway. The Messiah King who needs no counselor to save His people from their sins and He is the same King who promises to be the ever-present Counselor in your life. How do you get rid of the gloom, darkness, the dominion of sin? He knows what needs to be done and the strategy to get it done. This One, when there was no way for us to be saved throughout all of humanity for no one was worthy to open the seals, who is worthy has come for He knows what the problem is, how to solve it and it's not a strategy of simply a plan, but the

strategy is Him – Himself. He is the One who wins the victory for His people and He pays the full cost that our debt is removed. And we are accepted in Him yet He doesn't stop there.

This One is Jesus. It is not our religious insights. John 14:6 says [6] *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* When you come to Him and through Him, He becomes the Way, the Truth and the Life for you. This is my identity. My identity is not my job or my ministry or in anything else, it's Christ. He is my life – He is life. Amazingly, He now becomes my Counselor. Is this true? I can't wait to hear His wisdom from His Word. I love to read it, to hear it preached. Do you?

It's not a coalition with the world that is going to take care of the gloom. It's not a pharmaceutical answer or a human education answer. The answer is Christ and He is there for you as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Then He will be with you always in life. I love the passage that talks about two on the road to Emmaus. They were gloomy and discouraged. This was right after the resurrection of Jesus. Here is what Jesus does on the first day after His resurrection.

Luke 24:13–27 says [13] *That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, [14] and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. [15] While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. [16] But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. [17] And He said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. [18] Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" [19] And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a Man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, [20] and how our chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. [21] But we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. [22] Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, [23] and when they did not find His body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. [24] Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." [25] And He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! [26] Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" [27] **And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.***

Jesus gave them wisdom and understanding of the strategy. He told them that the Scripture was all fulfilled in Him. Then it says in Luke 24:30–32, [30] *When He was at table with them, He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. [31] And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. And He vanished from their sight. [32] They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?"* Jesus opened their eyes and hearts as He opened the Scriptures to them – Himself. That is what God's people hunger for – for He is my Way, my Truth and my Life. Nothing is more important than my wisdom Strategist and wisdom Personified. He speaks by His Spirit through His Word as it is preached, displayed, studied and embraced.

Here's the reality. He knows the problem and the solution – virgin birth, rejected life, atoning death, resurrection, ascension, He is coming again. The world says that is foolishness.

We say Incomparable Counselor – the Way, the Truth and the Life. So where are you today? My heart beats for you. I know you are reading this but are you in Jesus?

Before I left Charlotte, North Carolina to come to Briarwood I had a debate every single quarter of the year with a guy who was an atheist and had a radio station that literally went from Maine to Florida. We actually become really good friends and he was the last guy I talked to when I left Charlotte to come to Birmingham, to plead with him one more time to come to Christ. I'll never forget our first debate. He said to me 'Harry, I really like you but you're obnoxious.' I said 'Why do you say that?' He said 'Because you keep telling everyone that if they don't trust Jesus they can't be saved and that's arrogant and obnoxious.' I said 'I didn't sit in a corner and come up with that for I am merely reporting to you what John 14:6 says so I'm reporting what Jesus said not what I said. I'm just an amplifier for I didn't come up with the message. I'm just giving it to you.' Then came the questions from Maine to Florida and that was an interesting time.

Then he said to me 'I just don't believe it.' I said 'Jerry, here's the fact – I do and you don't – so we have three possibilities. One, I'm right and you're wrong. Two, you're right and I'm wrong. Three, we're both wrong, but here is what's not possible. We both can't be right and the biggest decision you will ever make in your life is the Gospel message of Christ your Savior – is it foolishness or is it the Way, the Truth and the Life?' Then he said 'I knew you'd do that. You're not going to put me in your box.' I said 'I'm not trying to put you in a box, Jerry, for I'm praying you will be set free.'

Gloom, death, despair, the dominion of sin, its guilt and shame – gone! Today can be a forever life for you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You dear Jesus for all of Your wonderful, glorious grace. The One who at the moment of creation needed no counsel, in the moment of redemption needs no counsel, but You enable us to be counselors of others. You enable us to be filled with Your Spirit and Your Words so we can tell others of Your wisdom and Your strategy so that they can be saved, not through the strategy but through You the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Father, please allow Your people today to know what those disciples on the road to Emmaus enjoyed that day, can be theirs everyday as Jesus – You speak through Your Word by Your Spirit that our hearts would be lifted up – we would be liberated and the joy of salvation fill our soul for the joy of our Savior is incomparable. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Messianic King and His Kingdom

What?

Three Promises

1. Sin's Gloom displaced by the Messiah's Joy
2. Sin's Darkness displaced by the Messiah's Light
3. Sin's Dominion displaced by Messiah's Triumph

How?

Three "For's"

1. Emancipation from sin's oppression

2. Triumph over all His enemies and weapons
3. An unexpected and unlikely Warrior King

Life Takeaway

Wonderful Counselor

The Messiah who needs no Counselor to save His people from their sins is the same King who promises to be the ever present Counselor for His people...

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.