

Jesus: Wonderful Counselor

Isaiah 9:1-7

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Ames, Iowa

Nov. 28, 2021

We are going to step away from Acts for a few weeks as we move into the season of Advent. We will be covering the titles given to Jesus by God through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 9:6: *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.*

This morning we will be studying the title: *Wonderful Counselor*. The Lord Jesus Christ was given these titles through Isaiah's prophecy 700 years before His birth. When we read them, we tend to have very positive thoughts. When we hear them read at Christmas, we rejoice that *unto us a child has been born*.

God sent Christ to be born in a manger in Bethlehem, live a sinless life, die in our place and for our sin on the cross, and finally, He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. We should rejoice that we have been given such a wonderful Savior.

However, when we read the context of Isaiah 9, the titles have a humbling and even humiliating effect. In Isaiah 8, Isaiah basically calls the people of Isaiah's day hypocrites. They pretended to love God, but in reality, they did not love Him, nor did they trust Him. As Isaiah and Jesus said, *"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."*

One thing the title *Wonderful Counselor* teaches us is we are a people in need. We can be incredibly foolish. So, when we read a glorious text like Isaiah 9:1-7 at Christmas time, let's also remember that this prophecy was given because we have a horrendous problem—we are foolish sinners in need of a *Wonderful Counselor*.

Here is the main point: *We love the foolishness of the world until the Wonderful Counselor, the Lord Jesus Christ, shines the light of His wisdom in our hearts.* So, let's examine our text and see what the Wonderful Counselor teaches us.

To get the full impact of the prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-7, we need to get the context in Isaiah 8. In Isaiah 8:5-10, we see that Judah would be judged because they had turned from trusting in Yahweh and instead trusted in the kings of Syria and Samaria for protection. In Isaiah 8:10, Isaiah said the leaders of Judah were taking counsel together but not from Yahweh.

However, notice what Isaiah says in the last part of v. 10, *"for God is with us."* This last little phrase is a dagger in their plans. It is a reminder and a promise that God is with those who trust in Him and not with those who do not trust Him.

Then in vv. 11-15, Isaiah calls the remnant to trust in the Lord of Host alone. He counsels them not to be fooled by the foolish counsel of their leaders. Look at what Isaiah says in vv. 12-14:

"Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. ¹³ But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. ¹⁴ And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

You see, the foolish leaders were calling it a conspiracy to trust in Yahweh. Translation: *Yahweh is not going to help us, so we must trust in our wisdom, and the conventional wisdom of the day is to make an alliance with Syria and Samaria.*

Isaiah counseled the remnant of Yahweh not to be fooled by the counsel of their leaders but instead fear the Lord and honor Him as Holy. Notice what Isaiah said; he *said that when you fear the Lord above all things that He becomes your Sanctuary.* He also said in v. 14 that to trust in Him would be offensive to unbelievers in Israel and Judah and will cause them to stumble.

Man! Does this sound like our day or what? Isaiah's words prepare us to live in our own day and time where the very same thing is happening.

Then in vv. 16-18, Isaiah calls the remnant to hold fast to the word of the Lord. He says that their faithfulness to God's word will be a witness against those who abandon Yahweh.

Isaiah 8:19-22 concludes with a warning to the remnant. Isaiah told them that their fellow Jews would implore them to seek counsel from mediums and necromancers. But because those people are seeking wisdom in the darkness, they will go from bad to worse and be plunged into deeper and deeper darkness.

Then we get to Isaiah 9:1-7, and it is like everything has been turned upside-down and inside-out. Isaiah gives a prophecy that will be hope to those who walked in darkness because they will finally see the light.

Verse 2 says,

Those who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness.

Some translations translate the phrase "deep darkness" as "the darkness of death." In other words, those people who were trapped in the foolish counsel of their leaders were in such darkness that they might as well have been dead.

When we get to Isaiah 9:6, we get a picture of the hope that was coming. This is what the season of Advent does. It reminds us of our need and the promised One who meets that need.

Well, what was promised was not simply wise counsel but a promised child, a promised son, and the promised One who would be the *Wonderful Counselor*. Let me give you two principles that we will apply from this text.

1. First: We must beware of drifting along with the wisdom of this world. Whether you are a Christian or not, we all have the tendency to drift toward the dark side. This is what sin does to us. If you are not a Christian, then you are a prisoner to the darkness of sin.

The fact is we can all love darkness. As the Apostle John said in John 3:19-20:

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

No one is exempt from this judgment. We are all willing participants in the foolishness of darkness. Biblical Counselor Paul Tripp says:

"Sin reduces all of us to fools. In our foolishness we see the world inside out and upside down. We look at what is false and see truth. We look at what is foolish and see wisdom. At the epicenter of our foolishness is a street-level denial of

God—not a philosophical atheism, but a denial of our need for God and a belief that we can live life on our own.”¹

In other words, we are not philosophical atheists but functional atheists. We do not deny God exists, but we live as if He does not exist. We just float through life without seeking Him in prayer, reading His word, being with His people in worship, or fellowshiping with His people. We just kind of put our faith in Christ in neutral, and then we assume God without really denying Him. *We do what the people of Isaiah 8 did, and we honor God with our lips when in reality, our hearts are far from Him.*

What does this mean when we do this? It means we are drifting into the darkness of sin and functional denial of God. It means we may honor God with our lips, but our hearts are in love with something else. What needs to happen is seen in our second principle.

Second, our great need is to live in the *glorious light of the Wonderful Counselor—Jesus Christ*. Remember in our text that the Assyrian bullies threatened Judah. However, God’s solution was not for Judah to become a bigger, “*badder*”² bully. It was not to hire bigger, “*badder*” bullies. God’s answer for the Assyrian bully was a promised child who would change everything. As Ray Ortlund says,

God’s answer to everything that has ever terrorized us is a child.³

This is who we remember at Christmas time. The promised child is the Son of God.

By the way, when it comes to this prophecy in Isaiah 9:6, there was an *immediate* answer. However, most importantly, there was an *ultimate* answer that came in the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Jews think King Hezekiah was the fulfillment of this prophecy, but he was not. Hezekiah was a good king for Judah, but he was not the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy. He was not the *Wonderful Counselor*.

In the season of Advent, we look back at the ultimate fulfillment of the Promised Son of God. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise of the *Wonderful Counselor*.

The Hebrew word that is translated *wonderfully* can also be translated as *beautiful* and *supernatural*. This is Jesus. He is supernaturally beautiful. He is truly wonderful. He is amazingly truly God and man. His love for us is the wonder of angels.

Adrian Rogers, the longtime pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, said,

“Jesus is wonderful. Everything about Him is wonderful: His birth is wonderful; His life is wonderful; His works are wonderful; His words are wonderful; His death is wonderful; His resurrection is wonderful; His ascension is wonderful; His intercession for us is wonderful; His coming again is wonderful.”⁴

In addition to being wonderful, Jesus is a counselor. He is the source of wisdom. When we read Isaiah 9:1-7 and the fulfillment of this prophecy in Matthew 4:13-17, we learn that Jesus is the embodiment of God’s beautiful wisdom.

At Christmas time, we are reminded each year that Jesus is the incarnation of the beauty of God. He is the incarnation of the wonderful beauty of His wisdom to us. He is the supernatural counselor for us.

¹ Paul David Tripp, *Come Let Us Adore Him: A Daily Advent Devotional*, 74.

² I know “*badder*” is not a word and even incorrect grammar but it sounds good for my emphasis here.

³ Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr. *Preaching the Word Series, Isaiah: God Saves Sinners*, Series Editor, R. Kent Hughes, 99.

⁴ Adrian Rogers, *The Christmas Story According to Isaiah*.

He is not a counselor that we go and visit, and when we leave, the counselor stays in his office. No. Jesus is the *Wonderful, Supernatural, Counselor* who lives in us by His Spirit and by His word to love us and guide us in His truth.

Think of it this way. Perhaps you have had this experience. You are the parent of small children, and they are fighting in the next room or, if you don't have children, perhaps you have been babysitting, and the children begin to fight. So, you are in the Living Room, and you begin to talk through the doorway to the children, or you yell up the stairs or down in the basement, "*Stop fighting over the toys and share. Be nice to one another.*" Have you ever done that? I have. Let me tell you that most of the time, it didn't work. Do you know what I had to do? I had to physically get up and incarnate myself into the room and into the middle of their mess in order to solve the problem. My word had to become incarnate.

Jesus did that for us when He was born into the chaos of the darkness of this world. He broke into our world and put His flesh on His words of wisdom, and then sinners nailed His flesh to the cross because they hated His wisdom. They hated His beauty. They hated His counsel. They killed Him and buried Him hoping to shut His wisdom up in a tomb with a stone rolled in front of it, but they could not.

On the third day, the Wonderful Counselor came back to life. Then He ascended to Heaven, where He intercedes for His people. But He did not leave us alone without any counsel.

Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor who incarnated Himself into our mess, intercedes for us, and now lives in us. *Here are four means of grace that the Wonderful Counselor uses to counsel us:*

First, He counsels us through prayer. Listen to His counsel given to us in Philippians 4:5-7:

Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

So, prayer is the first means of the wisdom of His grace that is given to us.

Secondly, He gives us supernatural counsel by His Holy Spirit. He told His disciples in John 14:26:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Then in Romans 8:26-27:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

So, we see He gives us prayer and His Holy Spirit to counsel us.

Thirdly, He gives us supernaturally, godly counsel from His Holy Spirit-inspired word of God. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12 reminds us of the active power of God's word:

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

So, now we see that He has given us *prayer*, His *Holy Spirit*, and now His *Holy Spirit-inspired word*. Friends, our Wonderful Counselor has not left us alone, but He is with us.

Finally, He counsels us through His church. The Lord has given us His church and especially a local church with whom we covenant together to travel with on the journey on our way to the Celestial City of Heaven.

Hebrews 4:12-14 is an exhortation to the people of God in a local church. It says:

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

It is through the fellowship of a local body of believers where we are exhorted by one another with the wisdom of the Wonderful Counselor so that we are not hardened by the foolishness and deceitfulness of sin.

Likewise, the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 4:11-16 that it is in the local church where godly wisdom is given to lead us through the deceitful schemes of life that come at us like hurricanes.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus is Wonderful. His counsel is supernatural. His wisdom is glorious. He is absolutely beautiful. I think the question is: *Do you see Him as wonderful?*

The story is told of a man who was riding on a train one time. He was looking out the window, and he kept saying over and over, "*Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, simply wonderful.*" A man was sitting next to him who was a pastor, and he asked him, "*Why do you think everything is wonderful?*"

The man said, "*I've been blind for many years now, and I have just had surgery and had my sight restored. I am seeing things that I had long since forgotten how beautiful they are, and they are wonderful to me.*"⁵

Brothers and sisters, have you forgotten how wonderful Jesus is? I pray that this season of Advent that we will all remember and be refreshed by the wonder of Jesus. Friends, if Jesus is not wonderful to you, you

⁵ Adrian Rogers, *His Name is Wonderful*.

need something done to your spiritual eyes so you can see just how wonderful Jesus is. He is the Beautiful Counselor.