

THE MESSIAH

ISAIAH 9:6-7

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

According to the US Department of Agriculture a child born in 2012 - into a middle class home - over the next 17 years - will cost the parents a total of \$234,900.

That's a quarter of a million dollars to get a kid through High School - *not including any college expenses*.

To provide a child food, shelter, and other necessities it costs an average of \$13,800 per child, per year. For those keeping track, that's a 23% increase from 1960.

The USDA also says that kids get more expensive as they get older. A three year-old's toy car costs less than a 16 year-old's car insurance. Each succeeding year, teenagers cost \$1,270 more than the year before.

The biggest expense for growing families are *the housing costs* - additional bedrooms and bathrooms.

The study does say that “**economies of scale**” factor into the expense of having children. The more children in your family, the cost per individual child decreases. In other words, the more kids you have the less they cost per child... **Kid's are like donuts - cheaper by the dozen.**

So if you're a newlywed and you and your spouse have been thinking of Christmas presents... *here's a choice:* You can raise a child... or purchase a new Ferrari 458 Italia - *they'll both will cost about the same...*

Yet, the emphasis on the Promised Child in Isaiah 9 is not on *what He'll cost us*, but on *the value He'll bring us*.

Here's “**a Child, a Son**” whose shoulders are broad enough to carry all the responsibilities of government.

Imbedded in His name are possibilities galore. What kind of a baby is referred to as “**Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace?**”

This “*Child*,” this “*Son*” will sit on “*the throne of David*” and “*of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.*” Both these phrases are *biblical clues - Jewish code* - that alerted Isaiah’s readers to familiar promises. This was no ordinary Child - no random Son.

This Child will fulfill God’s promise to the Davidic dynasty. He’s the root that grows from David’s family tree. He’ll be an *eternal king* and rule a *forever kingdom*.

All the Hebrew kings were anointed with olive oil, but One King was to be *the anointed of the anointed*. He would be drenched with the spiritual oil of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, this King was given a special name, “*Anointed One.*” In Hebrew, it’s “*Messiah.*” In English, it’s “*Christ.*”

Think of it, *single or not - married or not - child-bearing or not...* there is a child in everyone’s future who’s been sent *save us*, and *bless us*, and *be great among us*.

In essence, there’s a Child who achieves such grand success, He grows up to take care of the family that bore Him. Generations to come stand on His shoulders.

This is like the football player who signs a big contract and buys his mom a new house... This is like the child who builds a business and employs his whole family...

This is like the son who lands a job at Augusta National and invites his dad to join him for a round of golf... **Rather than a drain, this Son is a wondrous gift!**

Unlike the average child that costs His family a quarter of a million dollars, Messiah will be a **blessing** to *the house of David* - and ultimately, *the entire human race*.

The Offspring that our text envisions - that mankind longs for - "*a Child, a Son*" is so great He'll lift humanity *from all ages, all continents* - onto his broad shoulders.

He'll orchestrate a wise, a kind, a just government, and finally bring the world a much-awaited peace.

And if you listen, you hear the yearning, the longing in Isaiah's voice, "*For unto us...*" Isaiah takes this promise personally. He's *our* Messiah. He's even *my* Messiah...

Harris Lenowitz, a Jewish literary professor from the University of Utah, put it this way, "*Who at different times in their life hasn't had a belief... that someone, a messiah, can help them and help the world? The messiah is the biggest answer to the biggest single question: 'Does God care about me?'*" And I agree, if God really *cares for us*; He'll send someone to *save us*.

The Messianic longing is a basic human instinct.

And all the centuries... all the atrocities... all the highs and lows that combine to make Jewish history since Isaiah, haven't dampened the hope of a Messiah. Even today, among all men, the Messianic hope burns brightly.

Twenty years ago Jewish science-fiction writer, Jack Dann, was convinced our cynical culture had abandoned its belief in the Messiah. But his views have changed...

He writes, “I would’ve said that the idea of a messianic message was dying out in the popular culture, that it was being overtaken by a more sophisticated secularism.

Obviously I was mistaken. More and more people seem to be embracing the idea that a Messiah will appear to fix everything.” People still long for a Savior!

Every human heart whispers, “*For unto us...*” We’re all still longing for a Messiah who’ll “*fix everything*” for us.

In these two verses, 9:6-7, Isaiah unfolds Messiah’s resume’ - and it’s extensive... *from His birth to eternity.*

Seven hundred years before the first Christmas. Long before a virgin girl, Mary, got news she would bear a Son. Seven centuries before she birthed that Child, and laid Jesus in a manger, the prophet penned these words.

Isaiah’s 66 chapters contain numerous pictures of Jesus, but here is perhaps the most vivid and complete.

Read this prophecy with unfiltered, un-biased eyes and the Messiah he speaks of can be no one else. Here we have a portrait of Jesus in the prophecy of Isaiah.

Verse 6 describes Jesus’ coming to us in a couplet. “*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given...*”

Notice first, God sent *a person* to be our Savior. Not an ideology, or a movement, or a spirit, or an attitude - *a person*. Today's secular Jews have turned the hope of Messiah into a mindset. It's progress and advancement.

Rather than a *man*, it's a *can-do* attitude for all men.

Yet this is not what Isaiah sees. Clearly Messiah is to be an individual - one of the human family - a man.

And this is vital; for God could've sent a seraphim to be our Savior - or crowned a cherubim. Messiah could have been a type of angel - an other-worldly creature.

But Messiah didn't come from the angelic ranks.

Instead, God insisted on "**a Child, a Son**" - one of us.

In fact, God could've sent a fully-grown specimen - like the first man, Adam - an adult from Day One. Messiah could've come with muscles, and some street-smarts, and the where-withal to protect Himself. *But not so...*

Isaiah predicts, "**A Child is born...**" God's Anointed One, the Redeemer of all mankind, subjected Himself to the birthing process, and breast-feeding, and naps, and potty training, and the first day of Middle School, and chores, and zits - *all that we associate with childhood*.

As "**a Child**" He developed, and learned, and grew. *His feelings got hurt and His feet got tired*. God blew His nose. He was just as human as you and I are human.

From the outset of His reign He wanted us to be sure of His love. That He didn't just come *to rule*, but *to care*.

For a child is more than just human. He is the littlest, and most vulnerable, and most dependent of humans.

And this is how Jesus chose to come. He disarmed us with His humility. Rather than tower over us, He took the low road - *a child*. **Before He reigns, He first relates.**

Isn't it odd, we spend most of our passing life seeking just the opposite... *to be big* - *to come off invincible* - *to be dependent on no one*. Our lives are dominated by *pride*, and *defensiveness*, and *self-sufficiency*.

But that's what Messiah came to save us from - not just oppressive regimes, but from ourselves. He came to teach us the loving way... *humility* - *compassion* - *faith*.

“For unto us a Child is born,” and “unto us a Son is given.” More than *one of us*, Messiah is *a gift to us!*

Jesus was born a child. But God is and has always been Father and Son. Thus, Jesus was the Son of God before time began. When He, the Messiah, came to us, He wasn't just **“a Child born”** - He was **“a Son given.”**

In taking on *humanity*, He never lost His *deity*.

Messiah was the perfect blend of *undiluted divinity* and *undistorted humanity*. He was truly the God-man.

Imagine, for nine months the Creator of land and sea swimming in Mary's amniotic fluid... When her water broke, for the first time in all eternity the Creator of the Universe had lungs to *breath in what He'd dreamed up*.

It was a monumental moment for God. I'm sure every angel in every corner of creation stopped in their tracks and gawked in stunned surprise. *What is God doing?*

But on Earth there were few who knew. The event that sent heaven into shock went unrecognized on the fallen planet. Only a few shepherds, and a faithful Joe realized Mary's baby was Almighty God incognito.

Not only had *a child been born, but a Son was given*.

And even after He'd been around a while, and had all grown up - even put His uniqueness on display - men on Earth were still reluctant to see the truth about Him.

He mocked their stereotypes. Jesus bucked the status quo. This Messiah became a threat to their authority.

For as Isaiah said, **"the government will be upon His shoulder."** Jesus Christ came to govern, not appease.

The Child born didn't just come to *ease our pain* - as *the Son given* He came to *take the reins*. From the beginning, Messiah's mission was to govern our lives.

My grandson, Colt, was the only baby I've ever seen born with biceps. He also has broad shoulders. The kid was ripped from the womb. His mom was on steroids.

I don't know if baby Jesus had literal biceps and a stout upper body, *but figuratively He did...* There's never been a baby born with broader shoulders. One day, the government of all the world will rest on those shoulders.

Jesus will right all wrongs. He'll put an end to social injustices and financial inequities. He'll end *corruption in our courts, violence in our streets, hostility in our homes.*

Some people believe it's up to the Church to build a utopia - or it's society's job to engineer a perfect world.

Not so! We shouldn't flatter ourselves. Messiah won't need our help. Before Jesus *slept in an earthly manger He sat on heaven's throne.* He's use to being in charge.

Jesus is King of heaven - thus, governing Earth is not too much for Him to shoulder. Messiah is not afraid of hard and stressful choices. He's qualified for the job.

While on Earth there were those who tried to make Jesus King, *but He refused.* He came the first time to establish a spiritual, not a political kingdom. He came not to reign over institutions, but to rule in men's heart.

This is what He continues to do today.

And He's made it our job to help. To love and disarm and serve and grace our way into hearts of people.

But one day Jesus will return. *Sure as shooting, He's coming back.* He's still the same God of love and grace that we've come to expect, but along with His *merciful heart*, He'll rule with a *strong hand* - even a rod of iron.

He'll deal with those who resist and rebel to insure a peace and prosperity for all who put their trust in Him.

“**And His name...**” The angel told Joseph, “**You shall call His name Jesus...**” Yet Isaiah informs us He'll be known by five added monikers: “**Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**”

And I love these names. These are name tags with a message. Jesus couldn't have five more fitting names.

Which brings up one of my pet peeves. Why in the world did my parents name me, “**Sandy?**” I should've been named “**Rocky**” or “**Golden**” - *something strong*.

Imagine, being named after a granular substance.

Shifty, shaky is my namesake. *Sand* gets in your swimsuit. It irritates your skin. “**Hi, my name is irritant?**”

Well, maybe my name is more fitting than I think.

But Messiah, our King Jesus, “His name will be called Wonderful...” There was nothing ordinary or run-of-the-mill - *let alone, boring and dull* - about Jesus.

He was and still is truly “wonderful” in every way.

Realize, in the Bible, this word “wonderful” is never once used of anything *that man is or that man does*.

It’s a word reserved for God. It’s a heavenly, god-like, *we might say “magical” quality* - that spices up all life.

When I sense His presence - or make hard choices in His name - He brings a “wonder” to my life. I sense that somehow my life matters beyond time and space.

Jesus sprinkles flickers of eternity into my routine world. Life isn’t as live-able without *Mr. Wonderful*.

Here’s our Messiah, “More light than we can learn, more wealth than we can treasure, more love than we can earn, more peace than we can measure, because one Child is born.” Thus, we call Him “Wonderful.”

And Jesus is the “Counselor” I desperately need.

Some Bible scholars put these two words into a single name, “Wonderful Counselor.” That’s fine with me, *for He is all that!* Jesus is a “Wonderful Counselor” in a world teeming with false and foolish counsel.

I read an interesting tabulation. Today “Our society boasts of 77,000 clinical psychologists, 192,000 clinical social workers, 105,000 mental health counselors, 50,000 marriage and family therapists, 17,000 nurse psychotherapists, 30,000 life coaches - and hundreds of thousands of nonclinical social workers and substance abuse counselors.” Since 1950 there’s been 100-fold increase in mental health workers in America.

But are we healthier? More sane and less tortured? Despite the increase in helpers around us... we’re not.

I heard it put, “A counselor is someone who helps you organize your hang-ups so you can be unhappy more efficiently.” *That’s a joke of course.* We should salute the many caring professionals who offer hurting folks valuable help. There are good, wise counselors.

But there’s something wrong when a surplus of help doesn’t put a dent in the problem... *We need Jesus!*

He is the expert *Counselor*. We need His truth, His forgiveness, His love. We need Him to point us to God. And to sort out our lives. And to deal with ourselves.

It’s interesting, man fell into sin because he listened to the wrong Counselor - *the advice of the serpent.*

We were ruined by a Counselor, but we’re also restored by a Counselor - this *Wonderful Counselor.*

His wisdom is higher than our wisdom. It's *divine*, not *earthly* wisdom. Actually, *the wisdom of God* is foolishness to man. It flows against the grain - against conventional wisdom. Jesus requires that we trust Him.

Then we're told the Messiah is the "Mighty God." In Hebrew it's "El Gibbor" - the "hero-God" or "warrior-God." Messiah has and will defend God's people.

And today, our society is desperate for heroes.

Heroes exemplify courage, and bring justice, and help us define our ideals, and provide us hope. Heroes are important. They point us in a good direction.

Yet I've read where 70% of Americans say they have no living heroes. *Where have all our heroes gone?*

A few years ago, on an episode of Family Feud, host Steve Harvey, asked the question, "When someone mentions *the king*," to whom might they be referring?"

Of the 100 people surveyed, here were their answers... 81 said "Elvis Presley" - 3 people "Martin Luther King, Jr." - 2 people said "The Burger King..."

Amazingly, only 7 people said, "God or Jesus."

I hope your King - your hero - isn't Elvis. *He ain't nothing but a hound dog*, he said so himself... And as noble as Dr. King was, he had his flaws... And the Burger King plays second fiddle to Ronald McDonald.

If you need a superhero, let me point you to Isaiah's Anointed One. Here's my hero - Jesus the Messiah.

He is the *"Mighty God."* Again, when Jesus came as a man and took on humanity, nothing happened to diminish His deity. Jesus maintained His superpowers. *But He laid them aside to live and die in our place.*

One day, when Messiah returns, He'll be armed and dangerous. He'll be wielding His mightiness again.

But in my heart of hearts, His most heroic act will still be that first Christmas, and the 30-plus years that followed, when love drove Him to be humble and lowly.

Jesus *laid aside* His glory *to take our side!* That's why Jesus, the *"Mighty God,"* will always be my hero!

And Messiah is also named *"Everlasting Father."*

In the Gospels Jesus did nothing to downplay this name. Numerous times He claimed to be one with the Father. On occasion He referred to Himself as *"I am."* The name God gave to Moses at the burning bush.

In John 10:30 Jesus said, *"I and My Father are one."*

Here it's no surprise Messiah is called, *"Everlasting Father."* *"A Son given"* is also the *eternal Dad.*

And the emphasis here is that Messiah acts like a Dad. He's a watchful and patient Father to His people.

A good dad realizes that his kids are a work in progress. He invests in their training and loves them despite their flaws and failures. This is the heart of Jesus - *and this will be His heart forever and forever.*

In fact, the only way a child can disappoint such a Dad is to reject His forgiveness and to resist His love.

And then fifthly, Messiah is called **“Prince of Peace.”**

I once read that over the last 4000 years of history only 268 have been lived in peace. And in that time over 8000 peace treaties have been made and broken.

The world we live in is overflowing with conflict.

From Isis fighters in Iraq, to drug wars in Mexico, to tension in the Ukraine, to Civil War in South Sudan, to unrest on the streets of Ferguson, Missouri... the world we live in overflows with violence. Currently, there exists over 30 armed conflicts going on in our world.

It reminds me of the little boy who was doing a history report. He asked his dad, **“Why do wars start?”**

His dad replied, **“Well it varies. Take World War 1 for example it started when Germany invaded Belgium.”**

The man's wife was nearby, and overheard his answer. She corrected him, "Tell the boy the truth. It began when someone was murdered." Dad snapped back, "Were you being asked the question, or was I?"

His wife stomped out and slammed the door behind her. After an awkward silence, the little boy said, "It's ok dad, you don't have tell me any more. Now I know."

The reason there's *unrest among men* is because there's *unrest within men*. Sin makes us selfish, angry, jealous, and proud. And only Jesus has the antidote.

We desperately need peace - our problem is that we seek it without its Prince. Messiah alone can spread seeds of love and spiritual rest. Jesus is our peace!

As the angels announced to the shepherds that first Christmas, "On Earth peace, goodwill toward men."

One day, the Prince of Peace will bring *peace to the Earth* - but today, He brings *peace to loyal hearts*.

The Messiah's resume' ends with a drumroll. Isaiah states, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever."

And if there's a doubter in the crowd, Isaiah closes, **"The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."** In other words, when it comes to our Savior and His salvation, *God will get er done!* He'll see to it Messiah comes...

And come He has! On that first Christmas morn, **"For unto us a Child was born, unto us a Son was given..."**

In February 1809, a conversation took place outside a remote Kentucky town. An old man asked his friend, **"Any news down t' the village Ezry?"** Ezry answered, **"Well, McLain went t' Washington t' see Madison sworn in, and ole Spellman tells me this Bonaparte fella has captured most o' Spain... What's new with you?"**

The old man replied, **"Nuthin', nuthin' a' tall, 'cept fer a new baby born t' Tom Lincoln. Nuthin' ever happens out here."** Of course, Tom Lincoln's baby grew up to be an important President... But how much more was this true on that first Christmas. **Nuthin' a' tall** ever happened in Bethlehem. Or so the world thought...

Yet the promised Messiah had finally come! Isaiah's ancient words had proven true. **"A Child is born, a Son is given."** And His shoulders are big enough to rule forever. Call Him, **"Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"** Call Him **Jesus!**

Receive Him into your heart this Christmas. Let the Prince of Peace rule over you, and give your soul rest.