

“WONDERFUL”

ISAIAH 9:6 part 1

In the town hall of Copenhagen there stands what is claimed to be the world's most complex clock. And I believe few would dispute that claim. It took over 40 years to construct this timepiece at the cost of millions of dollars. The clock has 10 faces, over 15 thousand parts, and it is accurate to two-fifths of a second every 300 years. This clock computes the time of day, the days of the week, the month and years, and the movements of the planets for twenty-five hundred years. Some of the parts that were put into this clock were not designed to move until 25 centuries had passed. As one stands before this great masterpiece of design, he is amazed at the wonder of it. What a testimony to the brilliance of design! What an example of patient dedication and craftsmanship!

But with all of its wonder, the fact remains that this clock is still imperfect. Even though it is the best that humans can make, someone 750 years from now is going to have to adjust that clock one second. The reason for the necessity of that adjustment is that there exists an even more wonderful clock- one that has been made by divine hands rather than human ones. This mighty astronomical clock called the universe with its billions of moving parts from the smallest atom to the greatest star continues to keep perfect time century after century, millennia after

millennia. It is perfectly accurate so that all human time is measured against it. Its wonder is beyond our capabilities because it has been designed by God himself.

The term "wonderful" is perhaps one of the most overused and undervalued terms in our language today. In its original designation, it was self explanatory. Wonderful- full of wonder. That which inspires complete astonishment and awe. That which leaves our mouth hanging open in disbelief, which causes our eyes to widen and sparkle. The Hebrew word used by Isaiah translated "wonderful" carries this idea with it. It literally means "to separate or to distinguish". It implies that which is completely separate from the normal, that which is completely distinguished from the ordinary. This was the first of the names that the prophet Isaiah under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit chose to give to the incarnate son of God, Jesus Christ.

As we focus our thoughts on this special Christmas season of the year, we would like to look at our Savior Jesus Christ through the names given to him by the prophet Isaiah in the 6th verse of the 9th chapter of the book that bears his name. We know that names were of critical importance to a Hebrew person. One's name indicated character, attributes, being. Several hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah saw his coming, and he gave to us names that would characterize being of the Messiah.

He would be called Wonderful- showing his distinctiveness in our lives.

He would be called Counselor- because he came to help us with decisions in life.

He would be called Mighty God- for he alone is strong enough to deal with all of the demands of life.

He would be called Everlasting Father- because he came to give us a new dimension in life. Because he came, we can become part of eternity.

He would be called Prince of Peace- for he is able to comfort disturbances in our lives.

During these next 5 Sunday mornings, we would like to look at the Son of God as revealed by the names of Isaiah- the one who is able to meet all of our needs in life.

READ Isaiah 9:6-

ISA 9:6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Bertrand Russell claimed that "at least half the sins of mankind are caused by the

fear of boredom." Now we realize that he was not trying to make a statement of scientific fact, but rather he was asserting his belief that most people are bored with life, they are looking for something, anything to spice up their lives. Sin claims to have this ability- to add spice and excitement to life. Henry Thoreau defined a city as "hundreds of people being bored together."

Now these statements are quite a commentary on our world today, are they not? Even if they are exaggerated, it cannot be disputed that many people are bored today, they have lost the wonder of life. And so they search for something that will bring excitement to their life.

They look to their occupations for challenge and excitement. But more and more we find that we are living in a mechanical world that is becoming progressively less personal. And all too often, when we look to our vocations for fulfillment, we find that life loses meaning. We have become machines, parts in the corporate operation. There is no excitement, no wonder there.

Many others look to commercialism and the luxuries that surround us to bring spice and wonder to life. New appliances, the latest in technology, adult toys to bring a measure of wonder to life. Even though philosophers for centuries have been reminding us that we cannot enjoy the things that money can buy if we lose the things that money cannot buy, these people continue to pursue materialism as

the means to finding wonder in life. But they find in the end that making a living has replaced making a life, and searching for the newest fad has replaced discovering eternal truth, and there is no lasting excitement or wonder there.

Still others try to lose their lack of wonder in busyness. If my life could only be packed full of activity, then I wouldn't have time to be bored. So they schedule work, meetings, social events, join sporting teams and clubs, trying to pack activity into every waking moment. But our lives can become so full that they are empty. There is no time for contemplation and meditation. There is no time to pause, no time for wonder.

Isaiah said prophetically that the Son of God, Jesus Christ would be called Wonderful. That Jesus Christ would be so totally unique and distinct that he would fill the world with a sense of amazement and wonder. And any person who joins in personal relationship with Jesus Christ can be filled with wonder.

How is wonderful an apt name for Jesus Christ?

1. Consider first of all with me the wonder of his birth. We are just now entering a holiday season that is 10 times older than our national holidays. The birth of Jesus Christ evoked such wonder from the world that they realized that such an event had to be celebrated.

Isaiah spoke indirectly of the wonder of Christ's birth in the very careful

wording that he used in the first part of Isaiah 9:6: He wrote "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given". When Jesus Christ was born into the world a new child took on life. Mary went through the human process of delivery just as any other mother would, and a male child, completely human took a breath for the very first time. But this was not just an ordinary child. For this child was the eternal son of God who could never begin life at birth. So Isaiah says that a son was given. God gave his son to mankind through the means of the incarnation. This child was not only completely human, but he was also completely divine. Christ was the God-man.

How could the one who created the entire universe and made the animals and first people to be living creatures gasp for his first breath and demonstrate signs of life? How could the omnipresent God who filled the universe with his presence be found in the tiny form of that 6-10 pound baby? How could God ever become a man? How could Christ's name be anything else than Wonderful given the wonderful nature of his birth?

2. But consider also the wonderful life that he lived.

Wouldn't you have loved to walk with Jesus just one day of his public ministry? What a wonderful life he lived. Walk with me just one day in his amazing life.

It is now the wee hours of the morning. Jesus Christ exhausted from all of

the teaching & healing episodes of the day before is sleeping in back of a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. A vicious storm arises suddenly threatening the buoyancy of the small vessel. The disciples, some of whom were veterans of battling storms on this very sea, battle the rising waves but they soon realize that they are fighting a losing battle. The disciples shake Jesus awake accusing him of not caring that they are going to drown. Jesus he calmly stills the raging sea and brings the boat to dry land safely.

Now the sun is beginning to peak above the hills on the east coast of the Sea of Galilee. As Jesus and the disciples land their small boat on the shore near the region of the Gadarenes, they are greeted by some kind of inhumane looking creature. He doesn't have a stitch of clothing on. He is bleeding from different cuts that have been self-imposed all over his body. And he is crying out making all kinds of hideous sounds. It's obvious that the citizens of that area have tried to contain him because there are broken chains all over the place. But he's free, running around, and he is a scary sight. When asked, he identifies himself as Legion because of the many demons that are controlling his actions. Jesus calmly takes control of the situation and commands the demons to depart from this poor man's body. The demons rush over into a herd of pigs that are grazing on the other side of the hill, and the pigs stampede down into the lake drowning

themselves. Within the hour, the owner of the pigs are there having an emotional conversation with Jesus and the disciples. Jesus and his followers leave the area and begin to walk down the road at the request of the leading Gadarean citizens.

While they are walking along the road, a man named Jairus comes up to them. They can tell from his appearance that he is a wealthy, probably influential leader. As they talk with him, they find him to be a synagogue ruler. But Jairus in his emotionally distraught voice tells them of his daughter who is very sick, probably close to death. Jesus begins to follow Jairus to his home.

But on their way, a woman who had been hemorrhaging blood for 12 years reaches out and touches Christ in faith. Jesus stops and draws her out to public confession.

The Lord then continues on to Jairus' home where he finds that Jairus' daughter has already passed away. Jesus then dismisses crowds and takes the parents, and 3 disciples into the room where the recently deceased 12 year old is lying. The Lord raises her from the dead right there. And the household is turned from mourning to rejoicing.

What an incredible day- wouldn't you have loved to walk with Jesus that day. Calming a storm- showing complete control over nature. Casting out many demons- showing complete victory over the enemy. Healing a sick woman with

the inherent power of his person, without even his conscious knowledge- showing complete victory over sickness. And finally, raising the dead- showing complete victory over death itself.

Is it any wonder that Mark said these words in conclusion- "And all the people were amazed". They were amazed because of the wonder of Christ's life. He lived a wonderful life- one filled with incredible amazement. Certainly, the name wonderful is fitting for one who lived such a life as His.

3. But consider further the death that he died. It was not a normal death- it was a wonderful death.

The legal trial that Jesus Christ endured broke almost every Roman and Jewish law of justice. He was unjustly accused. Yet without legitimate charges, without coherent witnesses, without a legal trial and conviction, Jesus Christ was judged worthy of death by execution, crucifixion.

But even that death would prove to be a wonderful one- completely unique and distinct from any other human death.

As Christ began his agonizing atonement, darkness fell upon the face of the earth- from 12 noon to 3 in the afternoon, complete darkness.

During this period of time, when the Savior of the World was paying the penalty for our sins upon that cross, His appearance was changed from that which

even appeared to be human.

At the moment of his death, the veil in the temple separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was ripped in two from the top to the bottom.

As Jesus breathed his last upon the cross, tombs opened and bodies of many departed saints who had died before were raised back to life again. Matthew records how that they appeared to many people. Think of that!

So wonderful was Christ's death that the pagan Roman guard who was in charge of the crucifixion was terrified and he exclaimed, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" This eyewitness recognized that he had just witnessed a unique death- it was wonderful.

4. But finally consider the wonder of his resurrection. No person to that point in history had ever conquered death by his own power. Oh, yes, some, a few others, had been raised from the dead by some prophet exercising the power of the Spirit of God, but no one had ever been able to conquer death personally. Death remained an undefeated foe, with a string of consecutive victories over mankind.

But then came the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God. He had predicted that he would come back to life again. He had predicted that as Jonah had been 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth, so he would be dead only this long as well. He had publicly proclaimed that he had the power to raise up the temple of his

body again in 3 days after it had been destroyed. And he had not died like most men. Death had not conquered him. No, the Bible clearly says that he gave up his spirit. He chose the time of his departure.

And now, on the predicted day, Christ came forth in glory from that tomb. He rose from the dead. Finally, someone had conquered death. Death would never again be an unconquerable foe.

Yes, wonderful is a most fitting name for the Lord Jesus Christ because who he was and everything he did was filled with wonder. He was born with a wonderful birth, he lived a wonderful life, he died a wonderful death and rose from the grave in wonder.

Someone wrote a short tract entitled “The Incomparable Christ”. “More than 1900 years ago there was a Man born contrary to the laws of life. This Man lived in poverty and was reared in obscurity. He did not travel extensively. Only once did He cross the boundary of the country in which he lived; that was during His exile in childhood.

He possessed neither wealth nor influence. His relatives were inconspicuous, and had neither training nor formal education.

In infancy He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature, walked upon the billows as if pavements, and

hushed the sea to sleep.

He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for his service.

He never wrote a book, and yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about him.

He never wrote a song, and yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all the songwriters combined.

He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students.

He never marshaled an army, nor drafted a soldier, nor fired a weapon, and yet no leader ever had more volunteers who have, under His orders, made more rebels stack arms and surrender without a shot fired.

He never practiced psychiatry, and yet He has healed more broken hearts than all the doctors far and near.

Once each week the wheels of commerce cease their turning and multitudes wend their way to worshiping assemblies to pay homage and respect to him.

The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone. The names of the past scientists, philosophers, and theologians have come and gone; but the name of this Man abounds more and more. Though time has

spread over nineteen hundred years between the people of this generation and the scene of his crucifixion, yet He still lives. Herod could not destroy him, and the grave could not hold him.

He stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged by angels, adored by saints, and feared by devils, as the living, personal Christ, our Lord and Savior.”

Certainly the name “Wonderful” is an apt title for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Can you and I share in the wonderful nature of Jesus Christ? We certainly can, and it is God's desire that we do.

Whatever Jesus touched during his life he blessed and made wonderful. When he touched an infirmed body, he brought his wonderful healing power to it. When he crumbled some common bread and fish, he wonderfully multiplied the food to feed thousands. When he touched a heart with a nugget of God’s truth, that person’s life was changed and set free. And so it is today that when the Lord Jesus Christ touches a life, he fills it with wonder. When Jesus took a little seed, that seed suddenly became a meaningful sermon representing the word of God. When Christ touched a blinded eye, that eye suddenly was opened to see the beauties of the world around. When Christ took the ordinary necessities of food in his hands, bread and the juice of the grape, those elements were transformed into a blessed

spiritual picture of his body and blood.

And when Jesus Christ touches a life today, the seed of God's word grows in a person's heart. Eyes are suddenly opened to spiritual truth. A relationship is born with the one whose name is wonderful.

We cannot know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and be walking in obedience to his leading without having a life filled with wonder. We cannot because his name is wonderful. And just as Jesus Christ amazed the world every day that he physically walked this earth, so he will continually amaze us as we walk with him in his will.

As we approach this Christmas season, let's not lose the wonder of it in the materialism and the commercialism and the busyness that is pushed upon us by the world around us. These cheap counterfeits do not bring true wonder into our lives, but rather they leave us exhausted, cynical and disillusioned.

Rather let us go to the one whose name is wonderful. Let's make sure that our relationship with him is what it should be with sins confessed, walking in his will. And let's allow him to fill us with wonder as we consider Him- for His name is wonderful.