

# And He Shall Be Called...

## Wonderful Counselor

Isaiah 9:6

Would you pray with me..

“What’s in a name?” William Shakespeare argues, “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” And he has a point. Our names were given to us long before our parents know who we are, sometimes before we are even formed in our mother’s womb. I had Isabella Grace picked out before I even knew I was pregnant. The boys weren’t quite so easy, but those are stories for another day! Names don’t determine our personality, our likes or dislikes, or what we’ll be when we grow up. Call a rose a weed and it’s still going to smell just as sweet.

But when we are talking about biblical names, there is a whole lot packed into a single name and they almost always have intentional meaning attached to them.

- Sometimes they tell the the story of an individual’s birth - like Isaac whose name means laughter because his mother laughed when she was told she would have a child in her old age.
- Sometimes they relay a message God wants to communicate - like Hosea’s children, born to his wife Gomer, each one communicated a message from God to the people of Israel.
- Sometimes they establish an affiliation with God
- Sometimes they are changed to establish authority or to indicate a new beginning or new direction in a person’s life. Abram’s name was changed to Abraham; Jacob became Israel, Saul of Tarsus became Paul.
- And sometimes they point to the future, they prophecy someone or something that is yet to come, that’s what we are going to look at today.

Isaiah was a prophet of God born in the Southern kingdom of Judah who prophesied from approximately 740-686 BC. His prophecy focused on the

Southern Kingdom, during the time the Northern Kingdom fell to Assyria. Through Isaiah, God reveals the full dimension of His judgement and the eternal beauty of His salvation. Israel would be punished, but they will also be redeemed through a coming Messiah. And throughout the 66 chapters of the book of Isaiah, we see numerous prophecies of the Messiah that is to come.

- He will be Immanuel - God with us.
- He will be born to a virgin in the town of Bethlehem.
- Though Israel now walks in darkness, they will someday see a great light.

This advent season we are going to be exploring four of the names Isaiah prophesies over the coming Messiah in 9:6. The series is entitled, “And He Shall Be Called...” And today we’re looking at the name “Wonderful Counselor,”

Please stand and read with me Isaiah 9:6

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.

Some of you may be surprised to know that in my heart I am a rule follower so I have 3 points for you today.

1. What’s in a name?
2. How Jesus fulfills this name
3. Why it should matter to you

### **1. What is in the name?**

Isaiah starts with, “And He shall be called Wonderful Counselor” But what did he mean by that? Was this supposed to be two different thoughts? He would be called wonderful AND he would be called a counselor? Or was it two words combined to indicated one title?

To be sure Jesus IS wonderful. That word can absolutely stand alone as a name of the coming Messiah. And there are a few Bible translations (like the KJV, NKJV, MEV) that insert a comma between these two words which make it read like two separate descriptors. The Hebrew bible doesn't include helpful things like punctuation, so it is possible this is what Isaiah meant. See kids, punctuation IS important - even in texting!

However based on how the rest of the names in this verse are laid out, it makes the most sense to read these two words as one name. He will be called Wonderful Counselor, and that is how the vast majority of Bible translations have interpreted these words. So while we will look at both of the words, we are going to treat them as one name.

Isaiah wrote this prophecy during a tumultuous time in Israel's history. The dominant world power of the time, Assyria, was very much on the attack. The northern Kingdom was falling, God's people were heading into captivity and Isaiah was urging the Israelites to remember that the Messiah was coming to establish His Kingdom. Isaiah's prophecy was intended to give the people of God a hope that they desperately needed in a time that felt chaotic and hopeless.

I don't know about you, but the more I read Scripture, the more I study the cultural context of both the Old and the New Testament the more I realize there truly is nothing new under the sun. The world that Isaiah lived in, was very much like the world Jesus lived, and it's very much like the world we live in today. The people of God are the minority, a small remnant, living in a culture that is primarily pagan or anti-God, it feels like every where around them is darkness. But Isaiah wanted to remind the people of his time, what I want to remind you - things are not hopeless. Though we may now walk in darkness, there is a great light. A great light that came to this earth as a baby in a manger and who will one day come again.

Isaiah emphasizes in this verse that this Messiah would come as a child. Not just God COME to earth, but God BORN on earth, both human and divine. God would not defeat Israel's enemies by using larger, more powerful armies - he wasn't raising up some powerful military leader, but sending a child born in the lowliest of places. And this child, this son would be called Wonderful Counselor.

## WONDERFUL

We use the word “wonderful” when things are pleasant, lovely, or the least bit likable. But that doesn’t quite capture what Isaiah is saying here. The Messiah wouldn’t just cause us to be “full of wonder.” He would be so much more than that. The Hebrew word in this passage *pala* literally means “incomprehensible.” Jesus is wonderful in a way that is boggling to the mind.

We see that same word for “wonderful” used in [Judges 13:18](#) when Samson’s father, asked the LORD what His name was. The angel of the LORD responded, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” Some versions read, “why do you ask my name, It is beyond understanding; too wonderful for you to understand; beyond comprehension.” That is the full meaning of the word that is translated as wonderful in Isaiah.

Scholar John Barnettt writes, “The Hebrew word *pala* [‘Wonderful’] indicates ‘something uncommon or out of the ordinary.’ It reflects ‘a phenomenon lying outside the realm of human explanation; that which is separated from the normal course of events; something that cannot be explained.’

It is wonderful, it’s incomprehensible.

## COUNSELOR

The second part of the first name that is given to the coming Messiah is Counselor. In its historical Hebrew usage, this word is used to picture a king giving counsel to his people. We see it also used Micah 4:9, Micah says to the captives in Babylon, ‘Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished?’ This counselor, this king is a wise and trusted ruler who gives good counsel and has wisdom to share. Like a King Solomon only an incomprehensible version of that.

So while Isaiah doesn’t outright call this coming child a king - there is no doubt that the Hebrew audience would have heard this term Wonderful Counselor as a kingly title.

Isaiah is essentially saying... unto you a child is born, unto you a son is given and he will be an incomprehensible, mind-boggling king, a wise and trusted ruler, unlike any you have ever seen before. He will be a wonderful counselor.

## **2. How does Jesus Fulfill this Name?**

So how do we know that this verse, this particular name is a prophecy that is fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth? How is Jesus a Wonderful Counselor? Well, there is no doubt that Jesus counsel is often mind-boggling. He tells us it is the poor and the meek who will be blessed, and the rich will be punished. He condemns the religious leaders of his day and pardons the sinners. He tells people to love their enemies; to turn the other cheek when their attacked; and to rejoice in their suffering. His words, his wisdom and his counsel are absolutely mind-boggling, incomprehensible to our limited human understanding- and it's wonderful. Jesus' kind of wonderful is awe-inspiring and superior to any other kind of wonderful we might think we can find.

As far as a counselor, a wise and trusted ruler, Matthews 5:48 describes Jesus as perfect in every way. Paul writes in Colossians that Jesus knows all wisdom and knowledge. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus always chose the right path. And James tells us to just ask and we will receive wisdom from Him. The New Testament consistently points to Jesus wisdom, faithfulness, trustworthiness and Godly Kingship.

Matthew Henry writes, "Justly is he called wonderful, for he is both God and man. His love is the wonder of angels and glorified saints; in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, he was wonderful. A constant series of wonders attended him, and, without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness concerning him."

Henry further states, that Jesus, "...being counseled by God, gives great counsel to his people. He cares about our welfare and holds extraordinary wisdom. We can consult him, and he directs our paths."

This is our Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor. But I want to make sure you really see this, so we are going to look briefly at one of my favorite examples that I think proves Jesus truly is the Wonderful Counselor Isaiah was prophesying about in Isaiah 9:6.

It's found in John 5, Jesus is in Jerusalem and he goes to a pool called Bethesda where he encounters an invalid lying next to a pool that is said to have healing powers. Now this man had been sick for 38 years, and had received no healing, no one had been able to help him. He had no reprieve from the illness that held his body captive - for 38 years. Can you even imagine?

How many of us can relate to that? Maybe it isn't a physical ailment or sickness that controls your body. In my experience - sin can have just as much power over me as the most debilitating of illnesses. And here's the truth - confessions of a pastor - it is rare that during the time of confession when I'm praying, that I confess a NEW sin. Don't misunderstand me, there is something new to confess every single day, but honestly it is most likely to be newest rendition of a sin that I have been battling with, held captive by, most of my life. Like Paul, there are some things, some thorns in my side, some lies I believe, or idols I hold to, or behaviors I cling to that I just can't seem to shed. They have been around for longer than 38 years. And over and over and over again, I confess my sin before God and truly desire to repent, and then the very next day find myself back in the exact same place. Am I alone in that?

I am 100% the invalid in this story. So when Jesus looks at the man by the pool and asks him, "Do you want to get well? Do you want to be healed?" I feel those words in my soul. And do you see the incomprehensible, mind-boggling wisdom in that? I mean of course he wants to get well! Who wouldn't want to get well? We all want to get well, don't we? Don't we? I mean we probably would, if we could. Unless getting well means giving up what we know, who we think we are, the sin that defines us, comforts us or distracts us. Maybe I don't want to get well. Maybe this sin is who I am, who I know myself to be, and I'm not sure what life would look like with out it.

And so, just like the invalid, I am quick to offer up excuses to Jesus, reasons that this sin will always be a part of me. "Well, I can't get to healing by myself." Because it turns out maybe I don't want to get well. But like the Wonderful Counselor - the incomprehensible, mind-boggling, wise and trusted ruler that He is, Jesus looks at the invalid and tells him to get up and walk. Jesus makes him well, even when the invalid is not able to say for himself that healing is what he wants.

I love this story, and let me be clear - this isn't just a story. This is really true, this man really existed and had a real life interaction with Jesus, the living God. I cannot wait to talk to him in heaven. But how does this prove Jesus IS the Wonderful Counselor Isaiah was pointing to and not just a miraculous healer?

Well, it is certainly incomprehensible. No one but God could do this, could bring healing to a man trapped in illness for decades, who isn't even sure he wants healing. It truly IS mind-boggling. If you allow yourself to think about it outside of the familiarity of the story, this is truly amazing. It is wonderful in every way.

And what we find out right after this man gets up and walks away is that this happened on the Sabbath, and the man who hasn't walked in 30+ years gets reprimanded by the Jewish leaders for carrying his bed on the Sabbath - forget that fact that this man hasn't walked in decades, he's carrying a mat; let's focus on that! And of course, Jesus gets in trouble for healing on the Sabbath. But Jesus' response to the Jewish leaders is what proves that He is THE Wonderful Counselor, a wise and trusted ruler.

But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. John 5:17-18.

Jesus is God, equal in nature and substance and glory, equal to God himself. Ruler of all creation. He is a Wonderful Counselor, an incomprehensible, wise and trusted ruler. And He doesn't stop at just healing the invalid by the pool, when Jesus see him later that day in the

temple, Jesus counsels him. He tells the invalid to sin no more, and points the man to the holy living that we are all called to. And while we don't really know the rest of this man's story, I imagine he spent the rest of his life, praising Jesus and telling everyone he could about the incomprehensible, wise, trustworthy guy who healed him.

Jesus interaction with the invalid by the pool, His interaction with each of us demonstrates that he is an incomprehensible, mind-boggling, wise and trusted ruler. He is a Wonderful Counselor.

### 3. Why does this matter to YOU?

There are a few reasons this should matter to you.

#### 1. First off, **A Wonderful Counselor is someone we can listen to.**

As someone who is wise and trustworthy, Jesus knows the next right thing to do and He can give us strength to do it. The man at the pool offered up excuses, reasons why his life could never change. But Jesus responded with "Here's what you need to do. Here's the action you need to take. Here's the next right step for YOU." And - here's the really important part - Jesus gave him the strength to do it!!! The man wasn't just sitting there being lazy. He could. Not. Walk on his own. But Jesus gave him the strength to pick up his mat and walk away. He'll do the same thing for you if you let him.

He doesn't demand we get things right before he will help us. He came to the man in his broken state, and he comes to us in our broken state. And he helps us up and shows us the next right thing to do, and don't miss this, when Jesus is telling you to do something- He will ALWAYS give you the strength to do it!!!

Now He doesn't always show you the whole picture of what he is asking you to do. Oh, how I wish He did!!! My life would be SO MUCH easier if I could just see down the road where Jesus is taking me. But He doesn't (usually) work like that, at least not with me. I believe He wants us constantly listening to Him, constantly asking, "What's my next step? What do I do next?" And when you ask Jesus that question, AND you



listen to his answer, this incomprehensible, mind boggling, wise and trusted ruler, will guide you every step of the way. AND He will give you the strength to follow through on what he is asking you to do. Because Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor we can listen to Him.

## **2. A Wonderful Counselor is someone we can trust.**

Let's face it, things don't always go the way we want or expect them to go. But Jesus is trustworthy, and because He knows all things. He knows that even when things in our life seem out of control or destined for destruction, God can work all things for our good. He knows that even when someone plans harm for us, God can use that for good. Because Jesus know this and SO much more than we could ever understand- because He is a Wonderful Counselor - we can trust Him. The man by the pool had no reason to believe anything had changed. The circumstance hadn't changed, Jesus didn't lay hands on him, pray over him, carry him to the pool of healing or anything that would indicate that something had changed. But when Jesus spoke, when He told him to get up and walk, the man trusted Him. He believed Jesus knew something he didn't know. He trusted Jesus word, and he stood up and walked.

When Jesus tells us to rejoice in our suffering, we can trust that there is something worth rejoicing in. When he tells us not to worry about tomorrow, we can trust Him that He has tomorrow taken care of. When he tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, we can trust Him to protect us. When our kids wonder from the faith, we can trust Him to guide them back. When he tells us to stay in a marriage that is hard, we can trust Him to carry us through.

And when that thing that he is telling us to do seems counter-intuitive, maybe "incomprehensible" or "mind-boggling" because it goes against every fiber of our being to do it, we can trust Jesus. He knows more than we do; He sees things we can't see; He understands things we don't get. Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor and you can trust Him.

## **3. A wonderful counselor is someone we should obey.**

When Jesus was talking with the Jewish authority after healing the man by the pool, He made it very clear that God was His father. He was God, He had authority that we in our humanness just don't have. Jesus is King; he

is Ruler of this earth. And as ruler He is the voice of authority that we are to obey.

I don't know definitively that this is true, but I feel like our current culture has a really hard time with authority right now. I feel like we push back on words like obey or submit, or even sin. We don't like people telling us what to do or how to act or what to think. And I get that. I do. But here's the thing. You will fall under the authority of someone or some thing. You will. It will either be someone who wants what's best for you, or someone/some thing that wants to destroy you. It's your choice. You can either choose to obey a wise and trusted ruler or you can take your chances with someone else. Jesus is a Wonderful Counselor and you should choose to obey Him.

A few thousand years ago Isaiah prophesied a child who would be born. The world would call him Wonderful Counselor. He would be an incomprehensible, wise and trusted ruler. That child was Jesus. And because he is a Wonderful Counselor we can listen to Him, we can trust Him and we should obey Him.

Let's pray.