

## HIS NAME IS WONDERFUL

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So says the song. But long before that song was written the prophet Isaiah predicted the same about the Messiah. Seven hundred years before Jesus' birth Isaiah wrote, "And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

How often the word wonderful crops up in our conversation about Christian things. "Wasn't it a wonderful service," we exclaim. "I experienced such a wonderful answer to prayer." "That's a wonderful book--you ought to read it." Or skim through the hymn book and you will notice the frequent use of wonderful. "Wonderful Grace of Jesus." "Wonderful, Wonderful Jesus." "His Name Is Wonderful."

All these wonderful aspects of the Christian faith stem from the wonderful Savior whose birth we celebrate at Christmas.

He is wonderful because He is supernatural. Actually supernatural is a regular meaning of wonderful in the Old Testament (see, for example, Judges 13:18). Though the Son of God became a man when He was born in Bethlehem, He did not begin to exist at that point in time. He always was the wonderful, supernatural God, one with the Father and possessing all of the attributes of God.

But many understand that the two words wonderful and counselor should be linked together to form a compound name, Wonderful Counselor. If so, then Isaiah is describing our Lord as the uniquely all wise counselor, the one who gives us intelligence in place of our ignorance, guidance in place of our groping, and counsel in place of our confusion. Later in his prophecy Isaiah declared that the Lord of hosts "is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (28:29).

He is also The Mighty God. Several words are translated God in the Old Testament, and they can refer to human beings, false deities or the true God. But this one that Isaiah uses is used only of the true God. In the very next chapter Isaiah uses this word synonymously with the "Lord, the holy one of Israel" (10:20-21). The seemingly helpless baby in the manger was the mighty God who would in a few years still the stormy Lake of Galilee, feed thousands of people, raise three unquestionably dead persons, be killed by wicked man and Himself rise from the tomb three days later. We can be assured then that He can give power in place of our weakness, strength and stability in a world that seems to be falling apart.

Everlasting Father literally means Father of Eternity, an epithet that assures us that our Lord is eternally a Father to His children to nurture, discipline, guide, guard, love, and to do all those things a father does for his family. He is no God 'way up there, who doesn't care, detached and unreachable. He is our Father, involved in the affairs of His family, and concerned about the welfare of His children.

The word peace in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament includes not only the idea of tranquility but also wholeness. The Prince of Peace will someday bring tranquility and wholeness to this earth. But now He offers those same things to individuals who trust Him. Through faith enemies of God can become children of God. Aliens can become citizens. Outsiders can become insiders and experience the harmony of being at peace with a holy God.

What a beautiful vignette of the Babe of Bethlehem, the Christ of Calvary, the Lord of life, the Giver of grace, and the King of kings.

So amid all the happiness of Christmas and the expressions of love for each other, let's not forget to express our love to our Wonderful Counselor, all-powerful God, ever-faithful Father, and Prince of Peace.