



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Isaiah 9: 1-7

"The Child With Four Names"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. Good to see all of you here. This is the Christmas season and so we're going to have a text that is appropriate to that, Isaiah chapter 9. I'm going to read verses 1 through 7, but in the sermon itself we'll concentrate on verse 6 and verse 7,

<sup>1</sup> But there will be no *more* gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make *it* glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

<sup>2</sup> The people who walk in darkness

Will see a great light;

Those who live in a dark land,

The light will shine on them.

<sup>3</sup> You shall multiply the nation,

You shall increase their gladness.;

They will be glad in Your presence

As with the gladness of harvest,

As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

<sup>4</sup> For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,  
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.

<sup>5</sup> For every boot of the booted warrior in the *battle* tumult,  
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;  
And the government will *rest* on His shoulders;  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup> There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace,  
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness  
From then on and for evermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9: 1-7

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of studying it together. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank You for this time together. It's a great privilege to be with Your people. It is a time of the year when we remember in a special way the birth of Your Son—the giving of Your Son to be the Savior of the world. And so Father, we can spend this time well when we think about Him. It is very easy to get distracted by the commercialism of it. But we take this time this morning to focus upon Him and who He is and why He came and what the Christmas season is really about. And as we do that, we should also reflect on the fact that this is not something that is seasonal. This is something that is annual, yet it's every day of the year that we are to be reflecting upon the incarnation—Christ becoming flesh and coming into this world.

And so LORD I pray that we would focus our attention on that, that we would consider things from this text that remind us of that; and who He is and what He's

done—what You've done in giving Your Son for us. We give You thanks and praise for that. And we praise You for being the sovereign God of the universe. The LORD over time and space and sending Him in “the fullness of time”, as Paul put it, to come and do what He did—to become a child in order to be a man who would suffer in our place.

So Father, bless us with that and help us to focus our attention correctly on Him and may this be a time in which He's honored and we're edified through our time of study and worship together.

And so again, we pray You'd bless us as we give attention to that, as we turn to this great passage in Isaiah. Bless us. Build us up in the faith. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Sometimes novels have memorable first sentences, like *Moby-Dick*, "Call me Ishmael." Or Charles Dickens', *The Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

There are chapters in the Book of Isaiah like that. Chapter 42, "Behold My Servant." Chapter 40, "Comfort, O comfort My people", says the LORD. Chapter 9 begins, "There will be no more gloom." That's a good line—and good news. And it comes as a surprise, because the previous verse, the last verse of chapter 8, is about people being driven away into darkness and into gloom; and suddenly, no more gloom.

When Isaiah wrote, it was the worst of times—but it would become the best of times—that's the prophecy. It was good news for Israel at that time; and good news for the world now, living in gloomy, troubling times. If you only read or watch the news, you have reason to see gloom. But not if you read the Bible, because there we find hope. We find it here in Isaiah 9, and the prophecy of a child with four names.

Isaiah lived when there were “wars and rumors of war”, (Matt 24:6). The Assyrian empire had invaded the northern kingdom of Israel, devastated Galilee, and threatened Jerusalem in the south. Isaiah had reason to despair, but then chapter 9 begins with hope and the promise of a ‘great light shining on the people of Galilee’, (vs2), a people who had walked in darkness. There will be gladness and an end to war. And the prophet

unfolds all of this in the first seven verses. One of the great chapters on peace in the Bible. It is not an elusive dream. It is not an empty hope. —There will be peace on earth. Not because of human effort, not because of a military deterrent, or diplomats, or statesmen, but because of a child.

That's how Isaiah begins verse 6, "for a child will be born." This is no ordinary child. It is the child Isaiah prophesied earlier in chapter 7 (vs14), whose name is "Emanuel." In fact, chapter 9 is in the middle of what is called the *Emmanuel Book*, in which from chapter 7 through 12, a series of prophecies is given of a child with unusual names. In fact, the story of the child is largely told in His names, which have great meaning. Emanuel means 'God with us'. And in that name is revealed the hope of the world.

Here is the hope of the Galileans, who are described as 'walking in darkness'. He would live and walk among them. He's the LORD Jesus Christ. Matthew makes that clear. He quotes these verses in the fourth chapter, (vs16), of his Gospel as referring to Him. He is the Messiah, who according to verse 7, (*Isa 9*), will sit on 'David's throne'. He's Israel's king, who came into Galilee preaching repentance and the kingdom of heaven; He came as 'a great light in a dark place, proclaiming hope and salvation'.

That was a long time ago and we still have wars. And so we might wonder what all of this means. Is this a prophecy or just a wish for peace—the ideal—not the real, only a sentimentality? Well the answer to that is, "This is prophecy". And it is true, because when the LORD came, He did establish peace in the hearts of His people. And He laid the ground for peace throughout the world. That's the reason for the child. God became man, Emanuel, in order to make things right—to remove sin and bring salvation—bring eternal life. That is Isaiah's prophecy; God would become a child.

And this child is also a Son. "A child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us.", (vs6), The language describing His birth is unusual but carefully chosen. Jesus Christ was born as a child in His human nature. He was "born of a woman", Paul wrote in Galatians 4, verse 4, just as you and I were. So in His humanity, He was born a child. But

He was given as a Son, because as God's Son, Jesus Christ cannot be born; He is eternal, being of the same substance as the Father. He can only be given.

And so, it is often put that way in the New Testament. He was 'sent', He was 'given'. It is an indication that the child and Son is a man and much more. Now that's made very clear later in the verse where He is described as "Mighty God". It is the promise that the infinite would be joined to the finite, the divine to the human—when Jesus, (or perhaps better to say), 'the Son', or as John puts it in the first chapter of his Gospel, "The Word", was sent into this world.

Can we fully understand these things? No, we can't. There is great mystery in Isaiah's words, and in the LORD's incarnation, His becoming flesh, which is beyond the grasp of finite creatures. Spurgeon said, "Well might a gnat seek to drink in the ocean as a finite creature to comprehend the eternal God." If we could comprehend Him, He would not be infinite.

So Jesus Christ, as Son, was not born—He is given. And He was given as a gift. That was His own testimony, or the testimony of John, (and if so, the testimony of Christ through John), in that great statement of faith, "For God so loved the world, that He gave..." (and sent), "...His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." Now that's the message, 'No more gloom. Life and light, that's the reason He came.' He came to establish His kingdom, and to gather His people into it—to deliver them from darkness.

And that's indicated in the next line of Isaiah's prophecy, which states that the 'government will rest on the child's shoulders'. (vs6). That's a child with great shoulders. He is a king, and He will rule. Now every ruler has a title, and often an impressive name. "Charlemagne", "Charles the Great", "Peter the Great", "Lorenzo the Magnificent". But nothing can compare to the name of the Prince in Isaiah 9. He has four of them, and they are not only impressive, they have meaning. They reveal His character. We're familiar with them from Handel's Messiah, which followed the King James version with five names, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Probably though, there are only four names. The parallel between them requires that we understand them as four compounds or four combination of words, so that His names are "Wonderful Counselor", "Mighty God", "Eternal Father", "Prince of Peace". Unusual names, which reveal how amazing and complex this person is. He is a child, yet a counselor. He is a Son, yet a Father.

There's no contradiction or paradox here. Each name is given in order to reveal His person and character. And four are given because that cannot be revealed in one name. In fact, each of these names is an enlargement on His name, *Emanuel*. They are, as one writer said, "Glorious names, and names that should give the Christian comfort and strength throughout his or her life, in the worst of times, as well as the best of times."

Well, let's look at these four names. The first, Jesus is "Wonderful Counselor". That's good news. Otherwise we would be like those Galileans in verse 2 who walk in darkness. But in this dark world, this confusing world, we have a counselor. And He is no common counselor. He is called "Wonderful". That word is full of meaning. It's actually a noun, not an adjective. Literally it is "wonder". And it's used in the Bible of God's miracles. For example, it's used in Psalms 78, of the miracles that God did at the exodus, when He divided the Red Sea, and He led Israel through the desert in a pillar of cloud and fire.

So this child, the LORD Jesus Christ, is a "Wonder Child", someone beyond our comprehension, because of His deity, and one who does wonderful things, and gives wise counsel. He has been a counselor from all eternity. He was part of the eternal counsel of the Triune God, forming the plan of salvation, the creation of the world, and the providence that would govern it.

The world does not run-on mere laws, like a watch that someone winds up and lets run down. The LORD controls every wheel of the world. He governs history in all of its parts. And that means that He governs our lives, according to His perfect counsel. So, while life is filled with twists and turns that we don't understand, that can be confusing,

it is going in God's way. God's providence is full of mysteries but no mistakes. He planned your existence from all eternity, it fits within His all-wise counsel, and the Christian can be assured that all is for his or her good.

Again Spurgeon said, "God is too wise to err in His predestination, and too good to be unkind." We can be assured that in the counsel of eternity, the best was ordained that could have been ordained. If you could change anything, (and sometimes we want to do that; we don't like our circumstances, they're hard, they're difficult), but if you could change anything, you wouldn't make it better, you'd make it worse.

So we rest in His all-wise counsel. We may not understand it, but we know, by faith, that it's best and moving toward a great end. We have an all-wise guide in the LORD Jesus Christ, one who knows our condition. He knows our condition because He's experienced it all in His own life, in His humanity. And He knows how best to meet our needs. Whatever our situation, however hard and hopeless it seems, Christians have a Wonderful Counselor who does miracles for us. And as we follow His leading, He guides us in paths of peace. We have that assurance.

And the reason we have it is given in His second name. It makes plain what was only indicated in the first name, He is "Mighty God", *El Gibor*. Some have tried to reduce the meaning of this name and make it only a lofty title of a man. The word 'mighty', (*gibor*), is also a word that means something like 'hero'. And so some have translated it, God Hero, as referring to someone like King Hezekiah—faithful king who was a hero to his people. But the word El, it's a very common word for God, and all through the Book of Isaiah it is used of God Himself. And that's the meaning here. This child is everything that this name indicates—He is God. And because He is, He is mighty and strong to save. That's why He came into the world.

The great mythical hero of the ancient world was Hercules, famous for his strength. Stories were told about his 12 labors. One of them, the sixth labor, was cleaning the Augean stables. They had 3000 oxen in them and had not been cleaned for 30 years.

But Hercules cleaned them in a day. It was an achievement of great strength. —But it's a myth.

Christ is real. He is true, and He came to do something far greater than that, to clean the Augean stables of the human heart, and to purge the world of sin, not by becoming a strong man, but by becoming a child. This Mighty God "...emptied Himself", Paul told the Philippians, "...taking the form of a bond servant..." (Phil 2:7). Now He didn't empty Himself of deity. God cannot do that. "...He cannot deny Himself." (2Tim 2:13). As the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, He emptied Himself by laying aside the rights and the prerogatives of His deity. He became a servant. In fact, I think what Paul is saying there is He emptied Himself, meaning He became a servant. And as a man, as a servant, He lived under the authority of the Father, in perfect obedience to Him. And that perfect obedience led Him to the cross of Calvary, where He saved His people from their sins.

And in that, in the cross, we see both the wisdom and the power of the Wonderful Counselor and the Mighty God. Only God can find the lost. Only He can free the guilty. Only He could devise a plan in which the immortal became mortal—to die in our place, and save our souls. And only He could accomplish it.

The third name of the child is "Eternal Father". What an unusual name for one who is called 'a child' and 'a Son'. The child is the Father. But there's no contradiction here. Isaiah was not saying that the Son is the Father and the Father is the Son, and so confusing the persons of the godhead. This is not a description of Christ's relationship within the Trinity, but of His relationship to us. The Son acts toward us like a father. Psalm 103, verse 13 states, "As a father has compassion on *his* children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him." In other words, He loves us and He cares for us.

And His fatherly care for us is defined as eternal. He never stops caring for us. He never wavers in His love for His people. His love cannot grow because it's infinite. It's unlimited. There's no room for it to grow because it is it fills everything. It cannot diminish because it is unchangeable. 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, (yes),

and forever." (Heb 13:8). We change, but He does not. Our affection and faithfulness wax and wane, but He's always the same. Circumstances don't change Him. 'When we are faithless, He remains faithful.' (2Tim 2:13).

And in His great love for us, He never lets us go. He draws us back to Himself, always goes after us—after His 'lost sheep'. He called Himself "the good shepherd". (Jn 10:11). And that image of the shepherd expresses the idea here of the Father. He loves like that, concernedly and unconditionally.

His fourth name is "Prince of Peace". What a beautiful name. And it is His name because that is what He came to bring—peace to individuals and peace to the world. You used to see bumper stickers, really not all that long ago, that said, "Visualize World Peace". That's about all people could do. They can imagine it, like John Lennon, but they can't produce it.

John Foster Dulles was Secretary of State under Dwight Eisenhower. He was discussing the problem of peace in the world, and the relative success some nations have had with it. He spoke of the 'Pax Romana', the peace of Rome that lasted 180 years. And then there was the 'Pax Britannica' that lasted about a century. They produced relatively peaceful times. But then he said, "The world today is very different from the world of past centuries. It cannot be ruled." And I think there's a lot of truth in that statement.

But really, it's never been successfully ruled by anyone. Even the Romans could only keep the peace by means of the sword. It can only be ruled by God—Who rules it providentially, completely, from beginning to end. He is reigning and ruling over this world now. But some day He will establish His peaceful reign upon the earth through His Son, who will govern this world as the Prince of Peace. There will be a kingdom that comes in which it will be a golden age for this world, an age of peace. Christ will reign. His kingdom will be glorious, His kingdom will be endless.

That's where our passage ends; Verse 7, "There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or peace, on the throne of David and over His kingdom to establish it

and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this." That's the future. It is what time and the ages are moving toward. The kingdom to come, world without end, with righteousness, peace, and glory. —And it will come. The world has never known that, and the world can never accomplish it. But the LORD will. He's zealous to do that. It's how our verse ends. He is zealous to bring these things about. And nothing can frustrate the LORD.

So we should think on that. I think that's very important. That's our hope. It's our future. We should meditate upon that and reflect upon the fact that this world is going to be a peaceful, glorious world someday; history is moving in that way, and it will happen because this King is zealous for that.

But peace is not reserved for the future. It is the present reality of all who have put their faith in Christ. He is the Prince of Peace for them, for us—now. Paul wrote in Romans, chapter 5, verse 1, "That having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ." His death gained that for us, for His people—His elect. At the cross He paid the penalty for all our sins. He ended our hostility toward God, and removed His wrath from us. He made us friends. He made us sons and heirs of that glorious kingdom to come. He is our counselor, and wonderful in His wisdom. He is our God, and "mighty to save" (Isa 63:1), and protect. He's like a father with an eternal love for us that gives peace in troubled times.

The passage is, as I said earlier, familiar to us in part because of Handel's *Messiah*, which is often performed at Christmas. And so we tend to think of it as Christmas music. But the *Messiah* was first performed, not in December, but in April of 1742. And I think that is appropriate, because the subject of Christmas, the birth of Christ, is for all seasons. It's for every Sunday of the year—it's for every day of the week. It is an event that we will marvel over for all eternity, that God became man, that Mighty God became a little child—for us.

We may fear that we're slipping into the dark ages; but even so, God is in control. He has a plan that is unfolding according to His wonderful, wise counsel. And so we can have peace in troubled times; in the worst of times. Isaiah did.

But that peace is only for those who trust in Christ, as Savior, who died in the place of sinners, and conquered death in His resurrection. So if you have not done so, give yourself to Him. Believe in Him.

A story is told about the Greek statesman and philosopher, Salon. He was a wise and selfless ruler and on a certain day it was the custom to give him a present. So one came to him and gave him gold. Another came who couldn't afford to give gold, so he gave silver. One brought a fine robe; another some delicacy for food. But one of them came up and said, "O Salon, I am poor. I have nothing to give you, but I will give you something better than all these have given. I give you myself."

That's all the LORD wants from you. You have nothing else to give Him. Paul said, "Our best is rubbish." (Phil 3:8). Isaiah said, "Your righteousness is as filthy rags." (Isa 64:6). But all who come to Him and believe in Him are changed and made His children. So if you've not trusted in Christ, do that. Give yourself to Him. And who better to give yourself to than the one who is "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace?" May God help you to do that, and help all of us seek to serve Him faithfully. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You for this time together. We celebrate this great event once a year in this way but, as I said, we should think about the birth of Christ every Sunday and every day. We have a Savior who came into this world, "in the fullness of time". At the right time, the perfect time in Your providence when the law had served its purpose and men stood condemned. And He came in order to take that condemnation in Himself. And He died there on the cross. He suffered our death for us in our place. And then You raised Him from the dead.

And there too, we should think about that event, not just once a year, but every day. Because we live in light of that and we, as Your people, have that life within us now—Resurrection Life. —It's all a great gift.

So we thank You for the great gift of life in Your Son. We thank You for giving Him, sending Him, bringing Him into this world—and the life that we have in Christ. May we honor Him and You in the way we live. Thank You for Him, and it's in His name we pray. Amen.

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