

What's in a Name?**Isaiah 9:6-7**

My nephew and his wife recently had their first child. Like many parents before them they labored over what to name the little tyke. They settled on a couple of names if the baby was a boy and then a couple names if the baby was a girl. They each picked out a name they would like. For a birthday present my nephew's wife gave him the privilege of selecting the name. He chose Austin Matthew, Matthew being his name. At the baby shower she expressed some disappointment that he chose the name he liked rather than the name she liked.

What's in a name? Have you ever thought about how much effort your parents put into naming you? Some spend a long time looking through the baby name dictionary to come up with just the right combination of first and middle names to go along with the last name. Some prefer to stick with family names. My twin brother is named after a great grandfather on Mom's side of the family. I'm named after my father, although I am not a junior or a second. My other brother has a middle name in keeping with another grandfather on my Dad's side of the family, my sister's middle name is after our Mom and the youngest bears the first name of a very close friend and mentor of Dad with a middle name after our grandfather.

It used to be that naming someone held significance. It was an important decision. It often defined character. When the first son of Isaac was born he had lots of hair and so was given a name fitting that character – Esau, which means hairy. Adam literally means ground – he came from dust. Jacob means supplanter which means to put under the sole of the foot, to trip up, to take the place of through force or plotting. You will recall that at birth he held onto the heel of Esau and later deceived him out of his birthright. Naomi renamed herself Mara which means bitter.

Today it seems more like a popularity contest: what is in vogue, what's trendy. Here are the top five names chosen for a boy and then the top five names chosen for a girl for the year 2011.

Mason, Liam, Noah, Ethan, Jacob
Emma, Olivia, Sophia, Isabella, Ava

Do you know how you got your name or its meaning? I looked mine up on the web.

Howard means guardian of the home. In the ranking of boy names it comes in at 1,494 for 2011? Think about some of the famous Howie's.

Howard Kosell – famous sports announcer

Howdy Doody – famous TV personality even if he was puppet.

Howard Hughes – multimillionaire

Howie Long – NFL football player for the Raiders.

Howie Mandell – actor and game show host

Howie doin'

Paul is my middle name and means little. I am the shortest of the four boys. In 2011 it ranked 190th as a name given to newborn boys.

Wideman, as I have told many of you is a strong German name. The etymology of the name began with the meaning of huntsman coming from two words – forest + man. I read one definition that cited the meaning as being “one who took care of church property.” I guess it was inevitable that I became a pastor. The literal meaning is broad man or little fat man. Just let your imagination create an image of what that might look like.

Names are what we know people by. Though we may not know their meaning, they do come to be associated with the kind of reputation we portray. Consider with me from our text in **Isaiah 9** some of the names given to our Savior before His birth. This passage was written 700 years prior to the advent of the Messiah, the one whom Joseph was instructed by the angel seen in a dream that the baby Mary was carrying was to be given **“the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their**

sins...and they will call Him Immanuel – which means, ‘God with us.’” (Matthew 1:21, 23)

Isaiah spoke like no other in Old Testament times regarding this one for whom we celebrate at Christmas, this Christ child. In these two verses we get a snapshot of the ministry of this one who would come to save His people from their sins, to seek and save the lost and establish an eternal kingdom. You will notice something unique about how Isaiah portrayed the Messiah. He is writing without the perspective of a gap between His first coming in verse 6 and His second coming in verse 7. As far as Isaiah was concerned the coming of Messiah was all one event. The New Testament clarifies His coming at two distinct times. One has already been fulfilled and the other is yet to come. Taking a closer look at the Messiah we get a good description of the character and person the Messiah through the names given to Him.

In Jesus’ day, many knew Him only as the son of Joseph or the carpenter’s son. It would be like us saying about David “that’s the pastor’s son”, or of me “that’s Howard the mechanic’s son or that’s Tim, the engineer’s son. Today the name of Jesus is generally used as a swear word, it has become a name of derision and contempt. It is used with little reverence. Regardless of how others use it, it is the name that is above every name, the name at which one day every knee will bow and tongue confess in worship that He is Lord. From this passage let’s take a moment to consider the person behind this name. We see first the nature of the Messiah.

I. THE NATURE OF THE MESSIAH – v. 6a

Notice that this One whose name is above all names has been born, He is a child, an infant, a human being. He cried, He cooed, He hungered, He slept, He soiled His diapers, he spit up. He did all the things normal babies do.

Isaiah spoke of His birth earlier when he wrote **“The virgin will be with child and will give birth**

to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.” (7:14)

This prophetic verse speaks about the uniqueness of his birth, that He will be born to a virgin, someone who had never been intimate with a man in a physical relationship. This woman would conceive a child. From those Old Testament prophecies many Jewish girls dreamed of being the one chosen to bear the Christ child.

When Mary, who had been chosen because she was highly favored by God, was told by the angel that she would give birth to the Messiah, she questioned how it would take place since she had never been intimate with a man. The response from the angel was that it would be a miraculous birth one in which the Holy Spirit would make it happen. It is the only time in history this would occur. It was necessary that it be this way since the sin nature of man is passed on through the seed of man. The child would be born without sin, something that would be necessary if the child were to grow and be the sin offering man needed in order to restore his severed relationship with God.

Micah 5:2 further prophecies the location of His birth when he writes: **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me One who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”**

Here Micah locates the town of Bethlehem as the place where the Messiah would be born. But notice also that the prophet spoke about His origin. He had no beginning, He was outside time, but entered into time through the conception to a virgin in a little town of Bethlehem. Only God could do the miraculous. Only God could become man.

Speaking about Christ and His character Paul in writing to the Philippians spoke of Christ as **“being in very nature God, but did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made**

Himself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (2:6-7)

That’s what Isaiah and Micah were talking about. John verified it in his gospel when he wrote that the Word was in the beginning with God and the Word was God and Word became flesh, speaking of course about Christ (**John 1:1, 14**).

By reading the accounts of Jesus’ birth in **Matthew 1** and **Luke 2** we verify that the virgin did give birth to a child in the town of Bethlehem just as was foretold. The person Isaiah spoke about is God Himself, the Son, who became flesh to dwell among us. The place where He was born was Bethlehem. But no Old Testament prophet gave the time of His birth. We are given a glimpse of the time and purpose of His coming in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. **“But when the time was fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5)** It was God’s timing.

This One who created the universe and rules it was born to us, given by God at the time of His choosing, a time when by faith in this One given, would release us from bondage to the Law. He was not born to seek and save any other part of creation than us. He was not sent just for one particular nation or social group or gender. He was born for us. He did not come down to earth to live among us as God, though He was every bit deity. He was God in the flesh. He did not cease to be God when He became man as we read in **Philippians 2**. He was made in human likeness. He entered into the human race. He was like us in every respect with the exception that He was sinless. It was only in this way that He could become what we needed Him to be – our Savior.

The self-existent Creator became a newborn babe. He who needed no one to care for Him suddenly became one who was totally dependent on the care of another. He was a child, a child born to us, for us

Notice an important distinction given by the prophet. This Son was given. We are reminded from the very words of Christ Himself that **“God loved the world so much that He gave (emphasis mine) His one and only Son.” (John 3:16)**

Before He became a Son to Mary, He was already a Son. He was the Son of God, bound in eternity past with the Father, bound in eternity yet to come with the Father. But this Father gave Him to us as a gift. The purpose He gave was to **“seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)**

That the government will rest on His shoulders indicates for us that He will become a ruler. Prophetically, Isaiah was speaking about the future reign of Christ when He will return to earth and establish the long anticipated kingdom and rule the earth after which He will reign in the new heavens and the new earth. **Revelation 11:15 states: “The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ (Messiah), and He shall reign forever and ever!”**

That the government will be on His shoulders speaks both to the blessings of a ruler and the burdens of a ruler. Blessings will come as He receives the adoration and praise of His subjects for His care of them. Shoulders speak of strength and the burdens that are born on them, the weight of leadership over those people that He cares for. We could say that it was His shoulders that bore the weight of mankind’s sin so that by our faith in Him we could be free of that burden and debt we could not pay. **1 Peter 2:24** notes that **“He bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.”**

As Isaiah was writing this prophetic word, Israel was under the leadership of an immoral and incompetent king. Some have taken these words to refer to a coming king in Israel who would lead them with integrity, but we find these words to be referring to no one else other than the Messiah. As

we see in verse 7 His kingdom will be one of justice and righteousness.

The world is still looking for such a ruler. **Matthew Henry writes that “Christ being born and given to us is the great foundation of our hopes, and foundation of our joys, in times of greatest grief and fear.”**

The nature of the Messiah was to become a child. Notice next the names of the Messiah.

II. THE NAMES OF THE MESSIAH – v. 6b

In this passage there are 8 words arranged in pairs. Each pair of words speaks of something that is truly divine, something that can describe no one else. The first word defines some aspect of His character while the second word has a functional description, the role He will have. The first is about who He is while the second is about what He will do.

In the first pair of words we see that His name is a comforting name.

A. It is a Comforting Name

The Messiah is a **“Wonderful Counselor”**. The literal translation is “a wonder of a counselor.” Referring to the Messiah, Isaiah will write in **11:2** that **“the stump of Jesse will have the Spirit of the Lord on Him and He will be the Spirit of counsel and of power.”**

He is wonderful. That words means a phenomenon lying outside the realm of human explanation. We could use the word miraculous. On one hand it from our perspective there is the miracle around His birth. Then throughout His ministry years He performed many miracles. People were amazed at what He did. Even His death and resurrection are miracles that lie outside human explanation or ability. They are miracles to us but not to the Lord. Everything about Him is miraculous, wonderful. The miraculous is still possible today through the

Lord. His counsel is without equal, it is without misdirection or deception. When we seek His counsel on a particular matter we don’t need to go get a second opinion. In our life time we face many difficult decisions. We often will talk over some of those decisions we’re facing with others to get their opinion. As the greatest counselor, have we taken the time to inquire of the Lord for His counsel? We are more prone to look in so many different places for answers all the while forgetting the one who is a Wonderful Counselor. His counsel is the definitive answer for what is right and wrong, what is moral and immoral. Seek His counsel.

I recently read an article regarding the U.S. Attorney General who was giving testimony about the fast and furious campaign. He was asked about comments and emails for which the senator who was asking the questions wanted to know if he was lying about some of those comments. The response given basically boiled down to this: Depending on the circumstances and the motive behind what is said, if comments were made without premeditation, it was not lying. They were not intended to deceive.

Psalm 1:1

We should think twice about seeking counsel from someone whose advice is suspect, advice that may have ulterior motives, advice that allows for its recipient to be deceived in the moment depending on the circumstances, advice that is relative. The counsel given by Messiah will always be truth because He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. His counsel will never change and will be truthful because He does not change and is always truthful because He is truth personified.

Knowing that should bring us comfort both for today and for the future. It brings comfort today because we can seek His counsel for every life event we face and be comforted in knowing that His counsel will be true. It brings comfort for the future, because we know that He will keep His

promises. We should be comforted because His counsel is consistent with His nature. Who He is and what He does are wonderful because they are beyond human capabilities. This counselor will teach God's ways. From **Job 38:2** we see that God has no equal with regard to the counsel that He gives nor is there anyone with whom He seeks counsel. From His counsel we also are comforted by His words of forgiveness. He is able to help us with our problems and to shoulder our burdens.

“Come to Me all who are heavy burdened and I will give you rest” says the Wonderful Counselor. James adds that if we lack wisdom, if we need counsel, let him ask of God who gives to everyone who asks, liberally. (**James 1:5**)

Romans 11:33-34

His wisdom is beyond comparison. His ability is beyond equal.

Because He is the Wonderful Counselor, His name is a comforting name.

We next see that His name courageous name.

B. It is a Courageous Name

Isaiah further describes Him as **“Mighty God.”** It's a compound word in the Hebrew – El Gibbor. El is the singular form of Elohim and in the Old Testament it referred to the one true God. Hosea uses the term to distinguish God from man. Isaiah uses the term to predict that this one, the Messiah, is far more than a man. He is the One who was in the beginning with God, but also was God Himself. He is the one by which all things were created and without Him nothing was made that was made.

The word mighty implies victory in battle. Isaiah uses it to reveal that the Messiah has already been victorious, that He has already conquered His foes. Death and the grave were His enemies, but He overcame them by His power. He is mighty to save. The word also means hero, or doer of great things.

It speaks about someone doing mighty acts for someone else who could not do them in his own ability or strength. His deeds are worthy of honor and praise.

Moses could not have led the people out of Egypt were it not for the mighty hand of God leading.

Joshua could not have brought about the defeat of Jericho were it not for the mighty hand of God.

Elijah could not have won a great victory on Mt. Carmel against the false priests of Baal were it not for the mighty hand of God.

David could not have defeated the battle hardened giant Goliath were it not for the mighty hand of God

Lazarus could not have been raised from the dead were it not for the mighty hand of God.

You and I cannot hope to overcome when we face temptation or trials of various kinds in this life were it not for the mighty hand of God.

You and I cannot hope to attain eternal life with God were it not for His mighty hand at work to secure a home in heaven for us.

We live in a world that delights in and is desperate for finding heroes, someone who steps up and delivers in some way. The Messiah is that mighty God. No one can match His might. If you are looking for someone to depend on, someone to help navigate through the storms of life, look no further than this one who is the Mighty God, the child who was given to us, the child who is the Christ. Of all the miraculous events He performed, His mightiest act is His power to save us to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25). As Mighty God He not only changes us on the inside, His power can change us on the outside as He transforms our character into His own image through our yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Only God Almighty can take the old man and change him into a new man. **Have you allowed Him to do His mighty work in you?**

His power saves.

His power sanctifies.

His power helps us to do all things through Him who gives us the strength. (**Philippians 4:13**)

His power emboldens our witness (**Acts 1:8**).
 Eternal security is kept by His might (**I Pet. 1:5**)
 Rightly so, He bears the name Mighty God. That
 He is mighty and victorious should give us courage
 to press on and follow Him.

*Forever caring for His children's pain.
 Creator and Sustainer of our lives;
 Protecting us throughout these days of strife.
 A Child! A Child is born for us, and Everlasting
 Father is His name.*

The third name we see from the pen of Isaiah is that
 of Everlasting Father. It is a changeless name.

It is a comforting name,
 It is a courageous name,
 It is a changeless name,
 It is a caring name.

C. It is a Changeless Name

“Everlasting Father.” Here is an infant, a new
 born baby being described as an everlasting or
 eternal Father. He has always been in existence and
 always will be. He is the epitome of who we seek,
 He embodies the characteristics we desire but fall
 short of ourselves. The image of this Father is
 characterized by His compassion, His loving care,
 His protection, His guidance, His support, His
 encouragement.

We find ourselves at times in great need of One
 who can act as a Father through the difficulties we
 go through in life. There is both peace and rest and
 security in that name, Father. As a nation Israel was
 going through a very difficult time. Isaiah reminds
 them that they have a caring, compassionate Father
 who not only knows their needs but is capable of
 meeting their needs. They need only to follow Him.

And notice as well that this is an eternal
 relationship. It is everlasting. It never ends. It will
 continue without end. Just as He Himself is eternal
 so is His watchful Fatherly eye on those who look
 to Him. Because He is eternal He is able also to
 give us eternal life. As our Eternal Father He
 invites us to bring to Him all the baggage we carry
 around and give them to Him for Him to carry.

D. It is a Caring Name

The fourth name is **“Prince of Peace.”**
 The word prince speaks of Him as one coming from
 royalty implying that He is a ruler. The writer of
 Hebrews in chapter 1 and verses 3 and 8 speak to
 His royalty when the author states that after He had
 dealt with the penalty and punishment of sin sat
 down at God's right hand on high and that this
 throne, this rule will last for all eternity. No one
 will be able to take the throne or His title from Him.

The prophet Isaiah further states that His reign will
 be one of peace. Until His reign there will always
 be wars between nations and within nations. It is
 unavoidable. But His reign will be different. Peace
 will be attributed to His rule. The care He will
 provide for the people under His rule will bring
 about peace in their hearts. Paul clearly states it in
**Romans 5:1. “Therefore having been justified
 by faith, we have peace with God through our
 Lord Jesus Christ.”**

His rule isn't just to bring about the absence of war,
 it isn't so we can all live in harmony with one
 another. It's not just so we will get along with our
 neighbors so we can sing around the camp fire. It's
 not just to establish earthly peace. This peace He
 gives at its core is for us to be at peace with God. I
 recently read that Time's man of the year award
 they give out each year isn't just one person this
 year. Time's man of the year was given to the
 protestors. Anyone who stood against the

*A Child, a Child is born for us;
 A Son is given unto you and me.
 He is the Gladness of eternity;
 for He was born to set all people free.
 Everlasting Father is His name;*

establishment in protest from Wall Street to the Streets of Cairo were classified as the man of the year according to Time Magazine. Christ's rule will bring about peace to all. His rule will be such that no one will be able to complain about the way things are being run. His rule will be one of fairness and righteousness. We see in verse 7 that it will be a rule of justice. There will be no corruption or deception under His authority. The peace that He will give to us ought to bring joy and hope to our hearts. He will remove everything that would otherwise cause our hearts to fear and give us peace. He gives us peace for eternity with God and He gives us peace for earthly things as well, peace when facing storms. **Do you recognize and acknowledge Him today as the Prince of peace?** This child will bring peace that will last forever.

It was the angel who proclaimed to the shepherds **"peace on earth, good will to men."** It was good news for all men!

He has a wonderful name, a life giving name, a name that is above every name. A name that when spoken we will fall down in worship.

Isaiah speaks about the nature of the Messiah.
Isaiah speaks about the names of the Messiah.
Isaiah speaks about the nobility of the Messiah.

III. THE NOBILITY OF THE MESSIAH – v. 7

As we have just noted, here also we are left with the description and length of His rule. It will be established forever and His rule will be interrupted by those who would attempt to usurp His throne. Only those who followed Him by faith in this life will be allowed entrance into the kingdom that He establishes. Just as God promised to David, this ruler will sit on the throne forever. There will be no end of it. His kingdom will conform to His holy character. There never has been nor will there ever be a kingdom that will be ruled like His.

Daniel 7:14, 27

Luke 1:30-33

Revelation 11:15

To us a child has been born.

To us a son has been given.

Do you know Him as your personal Savior? Have you allowed Him to rule in your heart? Is He to you Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace? He is the One whose birth we celebrate. May the joy of the Christ child and the peace He brings to our hearts be yours this Christmas.

For to us and for us a child was born, but He was no ordinary child. He would grow up and give Himself as our sacrifice for sin so that we could have peace with God.