

Hallelujah For The Messiah

Isaiah 9:6-7

This Saturday at 4:00 is the 90th choral presentation by the Hartland Community choir performing Handell's masterpiece – Messiah. The text was written by Charles Jennens who was a friend of Handell, giving it to his friend to Handel to write the musical score. In debt, Handell was funded by a group of charities from Dublin, Ireland to compose the work for a benefit performance to help free men from debtors' prison. He also received a commission that would help reverse his own financial misfortune.

While composing the music, Handell often went without much food or sleep. At times, servants would find meals left uneaten. At other times they would find him in tears as he composed what would become his crowning achievement. When he completed the section of "Hallelujah" he reportedly told his servant "I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself seated on His throne, with His company of Angels."

When you hear the entire masterpiece of the life of Christ, it's difficult to comprehend that he completed the 260-page oratorio in just 24 days. Outside of Scripture itself, this might be the closest composition to being inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Jennens's text is a snapshot of the life of Christ taken from Scripture. Part one focuses on Old Testament prophecies and then moves to the New Testament announcement by the angels to the shepherds. Part two brings us to the passion of Jesus ending with the Hallelujah chorus. The movement in part three takes us through Paul's teachings on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and culminates with His glorification in heaven.

Selections are sung by soloists with a choral response each part echoing what was just sung. They go back and forth emphasizing the text to show its importance in that particular event in the life of Christ. At times the four parts come together in a crescendo of harmony and unity.

Our text is among the Old Testament selections sung in prophetic anticipation of the coming Messiah. It begins with the soloist reciting the text from **Isaiah 9:2** **"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."**

The choir then responds with a section of our text taken from **verse 6**.

"For unto us a child is born" which is repeated several times as the parts sing back and forth. Then they sing the next phrase: **"unto us, a son is given."**

And then you hear the bass singing **"and the government shall be upon His shoulders,"** which is repeated by the other sections. Then they come together in harmonious unison **"and He shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."**

The choir will do much better than I, and I'll defer to Carol to let you know if I was close.

And that brings us in our Bibles to **Isaiah 9:6-7** where we turn our attention as this month we focus on the birth of Christ in anticipation of Christmas.

How do you respond to birth announcements? Are you in favor of these big gender reveal parties that happen a couple months before the birth where family and friends gather to see if it's a boy or girl?

Our text is the ultimate in birth announcements with a gender reveal that occurs 700 years before the birth of the Messiah.

For context to this prophecy, let me fill in some of the blanks. At this point in Israel's history, they were facing an imposing army from Assyria. From what Isaiah described, they were looking for a king who would deliver them. They may have thought Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, might be the one they were looking for. During his reign he purposed to purge Judah of idolatry and he rebelled against Assyria. But then he died. This prophecy speaks of a king whose kingdom would not end. Eventually, Judah fell into the hands of Babylon.

Isaiah's prophecy, though, is one of hope, yet it is sandwiched in between words of warning and judgment for their sin. God would bring judgment, but Isaiah's words offer hope that condemnation would not last forever, that there would come one who would be the deliverer. A true and eternal king would come and restore Israel back to God. These prophetic words from Isaiah offer hope not only to Israel, but to everyone because the one coming would fulfill an even earlier prophecy given by God to Adam that a redeemer would come to pay for the debt of sin. It is a reference to the long-awaited Messiah, which means anointed one, and in the New Testament it is the word Christ.

Notice first, that the Messiah's individuality is unique.

I. THE MESSIAH'S INDIVIDUALITY IS UNIQUE – v. 6a

The prophet begins with these words **“unto us”**. **‘Unto’** or **‘to’**, depending on your translation, is a preposition depicting motion or movement toward something or someone. It is given from someone and sent to someone and then what is sent abruptly stops because it has reached its goal or objective. The word expresses purpose, direction, or action.

Isaiah is saying that there was this child, and this child was purposely directed at us. His purpose and action are evident in the remainder of **verse 6 and 7**. Normally a child is born to a specific set of parents, but in this case, Isaiah is stating that this child would be born for all and be a blessing to all. **Mark 10:45** explains that this child, referred to by Mark as Son of Man, came to give His life as a ransom for many, while **Luke 19:10** says He came to seek and save the lost.

The first thing we see about the Messiah's individuality is that His relationships are unique.

A. The Messiah's Relationships Are Unique

First of all, the Messiah is described as a child, indicating that he would be born. We learn from **Isaiah 7:14** that this child would be born of a virgin. **Matthew 1:18** tells us that Mary, the mother

of Jesus, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, speaking of the miraculous nature of His birth. **Luke 1:31** also confirms the virgin birth of Jesus as the angel Gabriel visited Mary to tell her that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah and that God would do what is humanly impossible. This child could not be conceived in the natural way because if that had happened, then the sin nature of Adam would have been passed on to this child. He then could not be the perfect sacrifice required by and owed to God to pay for the debt of sin. He had to be miraculously born to Mary but not through a man. It was the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit who made it happen, as the angel told Mary **“Nothing is impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37)**

The virgin birth cannot be overlooked or underestimated. It is vital to our salvation. In His virgin birth He did not give up His deity to become man but was both 100% man and 100% God. **John 1:1, 14** attest to the fact that the Word, referring to Jesus, was both God and man. Thomas affirmed the deity of Jesus when He saw the resurrected Christ and exclaimed **“my Lord and my God.” (John 20:28)** And both Paul and the writer of Hebrews confirm the same (**Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8**). Jesus also confirmed His deity in **John 8:58**.

The second person of the Godhead, **“took on human flesh and added a human sinless nature to His eternal existent divine nature.” (GotQuestions)**

Hebrews 2:17 tells us why Jesus had to become a man: **“He had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people.”**

Galatians 4:4-5 adds that the Son of God took on human flesh to provide redemption to those under the law. The self-existent Creator would become 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, a child born for us.

The Messiah would be a child, born an infant, born

into humanity, but still very much and always God. But Isaiah continues by telling us that not only would the Messiah be a child, but that the Messiah would be a son. Notice that Isaiah makes another important distinction about His individuality. He says that this son was **“given”**. It is the action of a person giving to someone else a gift without any expectation of receiving anything in return.

John 3:16 clearly shows us this relationship of giver and recipient explaining that there is nothing the receiver must do but accept the gift given. It implies that the receiver can accept or reject the gift. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him, should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

Before He became a son to Mary, He was already a son. He was the Son of God, not in a way where at one time He didn't exist, and then was begotten in the sense that we understand. Instead, He has co-existed with the Father forever. As a son, born into humanity, his gender would be important so that He could rightfully claim the throne of David. We learn through the genealogical records of Matthew and Luke that His lineage to the throne would come through both Mary and Joseph, even though Joseph was not the biological father, fulfilling the promise made to King David that this son would reign on the throne forever. This son certainly has a unique relationship as both a child and a son. But He also has a unique responsibility.

B. The Messiah's Responsibilities Are Unique

“and the government will be on His shoulders.”

Any rule has responsibility. That the government will be on His shoulders speaks both to the blessings of a ruler but also to the burdens of a ruler. Blessings will come to Him as He receives the adoration and praise of His subjects for the care He gives them. The government referred to is a time yet to come known as the Millennial kingdom. It will be a thousand-year period of time that He will reign on earth. It will be a blessing because it will be a time of unprecedented peace never before experienced by society in any time of history. He

will show the world what a world will look like that is governed by justice and righteousness.

That this government will rest on His shoulders speaks of strength and the burdens that are born on them, the weight of leadership over those people that He cares for. It speaks of His authority and sovereign reign. Just before His ascension, He told the disciples that all authority had been given to Him (**Matthew 28:18**).

And while we see that the government will rest on His shoulders, there is another sense in which those shoulders already bore another burden. **1 Peter 2:24** tells us that He bore the weight mankind's sin by taking on the debt we owed but could not pay. **“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 believed these words referred to a future king in Israel who would lead them to political deliverance. That's what Israel was looking for when Jesus was born and who they thought Jesus was when He rode into Jerusalem, but we understand these words to be referring to no one else other than the Messiah who would save His people from their sins.

As we see in **verse 7**, His kingdom will be one of justice and righteousness. He who bore our sins will one day sovereignly rule. Throughout history many have attempted to lay claim to sovereign rule through oppression, but they all ended. The Messiah's rule will be different because His individuality is unique, but then so is His identity.

II. THE MESSIAH'S IDENTITY IS UNIQUE – v. 6b

Here are 4 descriptive and unique names that reveal His character and the kind of ruler He will be.

A. The Messiah Is Unique in His Counsel – “Wonderful Counselor”

In the dictionary the word wonderful means inspiring, delight, pleasure, or admiration; extremely good; marvelous.

We had a delightful visit with my dad.
That dinner was marvelous.
The drive home was pleasant.
My boss is an extremely good man.

But that is not what Isaiah wants to convey with this word. The word used here means something that is exceptional, something that is uncommon or out of the ordinary, something outside of human explanation. It literally means something that is incomprehensible that causes us to be full of wonder, like when the disciples asked what kind of man Jesus was after calming the storm. His wonder was demonstrated when He healed or when listeners were amazed at His teaching or in how He lived a perfect life and rose from the dead.

It's the same word used in **Judges 13:18**. The angel of the Lord visited Manoah and his wife explaining that they would have a son who was to be dedicated to God. Manoah asked the visitor his name. He told Manoah **"Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?"** In other words, "why do you want to know my name, seeing it's beyond your ability to understand." This child is wonderful.

Isaiah additionally describes Him as **"Counselor."** In ancient Israel, a wise king was a counselor who would give sound counsel to his subjects. Solomon was such a king. **Isaiah 28:29** describes the Lord in that way. This **"Wonderful Counselor"** will be a King that people will gladly listen to. He will speak with authority. He will speak with truth. He will be the kind of counselor that will listen and then give advice that will guide people on the right path of life. He will speak in a way that all who hear Him will be able to trust Him (**Proverbs 3:5-6**). As a **"Wonderful Counselor"**, He has our best interest at heart because of His deep and abiding love for His people. This counselor is always available. This **"Wonderful Counselor"** gives us guidance through His Word, through His Spirit, through prayer, and through the wise counsel of others. The Messiah is unique in His counsel.

B. The Messiah Is Unique in His Command – "Mighty God"

The word **"mighty"** refers first to His strength. We call it omnipotence or being all-powerful. Throughout scripture we see reference to His power. **Job 42:2: "I know that you can do all things and that no plan of yours can be thwarted."**

Numbers 11:23 "The LORD answered Moses, 'Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you.'"

Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26 "God said, 'Let there be...and it was so.'"

Psalms 33:6 "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth." (Hebrews 11:3)

There are many verses that we could point to that tell us about the power of the Lord. We see it demonstrated time after time by Jesus who healed the sick, made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, the mute to speak. He calmed storms, cast out demons, and raised the dead.

Not only does **"Mighty God"** refer to His power in what He can do that is beyond our comprehension, it also speaks to His kingly authority. In the original Hebrew, the word means having or showing great power in authority and leadership. He will rule with absolute power over the nations, His armies, and His enemies.

Deuteronomy 10:17 "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes."

When He came the first time over 2000 years ago, He displayed power different from what people expected. They were looking for a conquering king like David who would subdue their enemies through political power and military might by establishing an earthly throne. Jesus displayed a different kind of power by coming as a servant-leader, telling them that His kingdom was not of this world. **Philippians 2:7** tells us that when He came to earth the first time, He voluntarily gave up those privileges. Yet there is coming a day when Jesus will come a second time and will be all that Isaiah describes

Him to be and what Israel is waiting for. But His single greatest act as **“Mighty God”** is when He rose from the dead proving that He has power over death and the grave freeing people from bondage to sin. It is that same power that will raise us again in the last days. No one else has that kind of power.

The Messiah’s command is unique.

The third name we notice about the Messiah’s identity is that of His changelessness.

C. The Messiah Is Unique in His Changelessness – **“Everlasting Father”**

The term **“Everlasting Father”** can literally be translated **“Father of Eternity”**. **“Father”** is the primary noun and **“Everlasting”** is the adjective that describes His fatherhood as having no beginning and no end. **What does the term “father” mean then?**

Throughout history, many leaders have been referred to as the father of a country. We refer to George Washington in that sense. We also think of a father as someone who serves both as the provider and protector of his family.

That’s the idea that Isaiah wants to portray here about the Messiah. He will be both the provider and protector of His people, speaking specifically of this role in regard to the nation of Israel during the Millennial kingdom. It is a role Isaiah says will not end. Remember that when Isaiah wrote this, Israel was going through a difficult time as a nation, and they needed someone who could be their provider and protector. He reminded them that they would have a caring, compassionate Father in the Messiah who not only would know their needs but would be capable of meeting those needs. All they needed to do was follow Him. Because of His changeless nature, His compassionate care would never end. In that regard, His changelessness is unique.

Isaiah reveals one more aspect of the Messiah’s identity that is unique. He is unique in His care.

D. The Messiah Is Unique in His Care – **“Prince of Peace”**

We are living in a day and age where people and nations are desperate for peace. Some want peace through strength or force. Others want peace through tolerance or compromise. Others want it through assimilation. Israel longed for peace. Throughout its history, there were only a few times when they experienced peace, but it was short lived. Isaiah said that this child, this son, would bring peace because He would be the **“Prince of Peace.”**

Peace is often associated with calmness or tranquility or the absence of war or difficulties. The general idea of the word in the Greek means unity and harmony. But there is a deeper and more essential meaning to the word. True peace as it’s described in the Bible is **“the spiritual harmony brought about by an individual’s restoration with God.”** (GotQuestions)

In the context, Isaiah has in mind the Millennial reign of Christ where the Messiah will not only bring peace to the world, but He will also maintain that peace in the world by being the **“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, and Everlasting Father.”** This will be a time when Israel will be restored and rightly related to God.

But as the **“Prince of Peace”** we don’t have to wait to be made right with God, to have peace with God. He has made it possible for us to be at peace with God and to experience the peace of God.

Peace with God is possible as we read **Romans 5:1** **“Therefore, since we have been justified (made right) through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

The peace of God is seen in **Philippians 4:6-7** **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

Peace with God means we don’t have to fear His wrath because of what Christ did on the cross in dying for our sin as we put our faith in Him for salvation.

The peace of God means that in spite of whatever circumstances we are facing, His peace will set a guard around our heart and mind to keep us from becoming worried and anxious. That kind of peace Jesus said He was going to leave with us (**John 14:27**), a peace that Paul tells us is the fruit of God's Spirit (**Galatians 5:22**). We don't have to wait for the **"Prince of Peace"** to come and give it to us, He has already come to give us peace.

And whether we see this peace as something we can experience right now or the peace that Israel will experience in the Millennial kingdom yet to come, Alexander MacLaren says the **"Prince of Peace"** pierces to the heart of Christ's work." He came to give us peace inside and for eternity.

It was the prevailing message of the angels on the night Jesus was born when they proclaimed to the shepherds: **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests."** (**Luke 2:14**) Just a moment earlier the angel had stated that the Savior had been born. He was the Messiah they had been waiting for. (**Luke 2:11**)

If you have never experienced His abiding and eternal peace, you can receive it today. Only the Messiah can be the **"Prince of Peace."** He cares enough about you to give you peace of heart and mind both now and for eternity. His care is unique.

The Messiah's individuality is unique.

The Messiah's identity is unique.

Let's close by looking at **verse 7** where we see that **the Messiah's influence is unique.**

III. THE MESSIAH'S INFLUENCE IS UNIQUE

– v. 7

His influence is unique in two ways.

A. The Messiah's Influence Is Unique in Its Harmony

He will show the world what it's like to rule in righteousness. Everything about who the Messiah is will establish a kingdom rule that will bring unity. Isaiah describes it as a government with a peace that will not end. No power on earth, under the earth, or

above the earth will be able to circumvent His reign, even though, at the end of His millennial kingdom reign there will be one final attempt by Satan and his hordes to overthrow His power and usurp His authority, but this attempt will be met with utter defeat. This **"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace"** will prevail, and His kingdom will be established in justice that gives peace forever and His people will be the recipients of this blessed state. **And just how will we see this eternal kingdom established?** We will see it in the influence of His holiness.

B. The Messiah's Influence Is Unique in Its Holiness

This reign of peace can be established no other way than through His righteousness and will be accomplished by His zeal. Zeal here is more than just passion or intensity. It speaks of a jealousy for His people that pursues for them the very best that comes from His passionate love for them. That's why in the commandments given to Israel He demanded that they have no other gods than Him. God's jealous nature does not mean that He is envious but refers to His being jealous when we give to someone or something what rightly belongs to Him. **"Worship, praise, honor, and adoration belong to God alone, for only He is truly worthy of it. God is rightly jealous when worship, praise, honor, or adoration is given to idols."** (GotQuestions)

Alexander MacLaren describes this zeal by saying that the Messiah won't tolerate unfaithfulness in any of the objects of His love. Scripture says that he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye, which speaks to the abiding protection of Messiah.

This **"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace"** has come and is coming again. In a time when we need hope, Isaiah says we can have hope in the child who was born and the son who was given. And for that we sing HALLELUJAH!