



## He is the Wonderful Counselor

Text: Isaiah 9:6

Series: Who is Jesus? (#1)

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### Introduction

The Christmas season is under way. Most people enjoy the season. It has become *all things to all people*, with a strange and expanding bag of mixed messages. Some of you are familiar with the Dr. Seuss story for children, *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. The Grinch hated Christmas! The whole Christmas season. He hated the *noise* of children laughing, the *feasting*, the *singing*. So he devised a plan to *steal Christmas*.

Late Christmas Eve he began his trek around town dressed like Santa Claus, stealing all the presents, ribbons, wrappings, tags, all the tinsel, the trimmings, the trappings from every home before the dawn of Christmas Day.

Then he waited. He waited to hear the crying. But, the sound wasn't sad, "it was merry, very!" How could it be so without the ribbons, tags, packages, boxes or bags? He puzzled 'til his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. "Maybe Christmas... perhaps... *means a little bit more*."<sup>1</sup>

This story, while entertaining, can add confusion rather than clarity to Christmas. It does not answer the Grinch's thought of what that "little bit more" than presents, feasting and singing meaning of Christmas might be.

During these four weeks of Advent, I want to help bring clarity about the person of Christmas—Jesus. He is the reason for the season!

But *who is Jesus*, really? We could spend all the Advent seasons for the rest of our lives answering this question and not fully answer it. Even so, we are going to sharpen our focus a bit this year, we are going to remove confusion and bring clarity.

We are going to do that as we focus on one verse that describes Him, Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6. As we read earlier, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the

government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Isaiah is a book of prophecy—God’s word to His people about 700 years before the coming of Jesus about their future judgment and also salvation. The people in Judah, or the Southern Kingdom, were beginning to follow the pattern of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by turning away from God. They were walking in spiritual darkness and confusion. The book opens with prophecies of judgment against Judah, and then other nations as well. But we also find statements and prophecies of God’s greatness, grace, peace *and* the long-awaited Messiah, or Savior.

This morning we look at the first name or description this verse gives to the Messiah, to Jesus Christ—He is the *Wonderful Counselor*.

Our church Bibles, the New King James Version, as well as the King James version, place a comma between Wonderful and Counselor, giving us two distinct names or descriptions here— *Wonderful* and *Counselor*. He is *Wonderful*. He is *Counselor*. Most newer versions combine the two words into the one description *Wonderful Counselor*, which is a better reading. The word wonderful describes the kind of counselor Jesus is. He is the *Wonderful Counselor*.

## **Our need for a Wonderful Counselor.**

Our need for a Wonderful Counselor is seen clearly as we take a look at our world and times. There are many good things in our world, homes, the church, the arts, sciences, technology. All these areas and more have many bright spots. Of course, most of those are quickly displaced in the news and conversations by the not-good things in our world.

When was the last time you listened to or read the news when there was *not* a listing of unrest, conflicts, crime, riots, wars, health hazards and diseases, poverty? Or perhaps better, have you ever watched or listened to the news without seeing and hearing those things?

For generations many have thought the world could not get much worse, so the end must be at hand. There has have been a long string of inaccurate date-setters, claiming the end of the world in the year ... fill in the blank.

One not long ago was the blood moons idea based on a misunderstanding or lack of understanding of Joel chapter 2 verse 31. Based on that it was suggested that Christ might return between April 2014 and October 2015. If you haven't picked up a copy of John Hagee's *Four Blood Moons*, don't bother. While he didn't give a date for Christ's return, he stated that based on that idea something significant was going to happen in that 2014-15 time period, that Jesus is coming again and we should be ready.<sup>2</sup>

Let's move from the broad or global view, to the *up front and personal view*. Even though you may be very positive about your own life and world, you still know all too well the stresses and strains, disappointments and failures; the betrayals and disasters, the broken hearts and relationships; being overwhelmed by demands, choices, options. In this fallen, imperfect and sinful world, one would have to be blind or totally deluded to not see our need for a *wonderful counselor* to help make sense of things and to cope.

Then, when we look at our own nature and abilities, we again see our own, personal need for a wonderful counselor. Most of us know and accept the Bible's facts about ourselves. We know the Bible tells us "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."<sup>3</sup> A practical result of this is that no matter how brilliant or skilled, polite or kind we are, there is a sinful heart at the core of our nature. Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 9 puts it so directly, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

If at any point we think we have living the Christian life down, or don't have to be concerned with distractions or temptations, we are in the position of Cain, as we are told in Genesis chapter 4, with "sin crouching at the door" (verse 7, NASB). Sin's desire, crouching around us, is to destroy us. All of us can review the last week and see some times where sin was crouching at our door, and perhaps some times when it ruled over us, rather than we ruled over it through God's strength. And so the truth found in Proverbs chapter 16 verse 25 becomes clear and compelling, that "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

As a result, the confession and testimony of Jeremiah should be ours, "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps" (ESV). And we, as he, should ask God, "Correct me, or LORD" (ESV).<sup>4</sup>

Couple this with the reality of Satan and his forces. Paul tells us that Satan "has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."<sup>5</sup> Every believer needs to remember the warning of the apostle Peter, "Stay alert!

Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (NLT).<sup>6</sup> So, in addition to our natural sinful, deceitful nature, we are faced with a life-long spiritual warfare with the forces of Satan whose goal is to deceive and destroy us.

These realities scream at us about our need of a *Wonderful Counselor*.

## **God’s provision of a Wonderful Counselor.**

God tells us through Isaiah that He has provided us with the one and only Wonderful Counselor that we need. That brings us to the question, “What is a *Wonderful Counselor*?”

Let’s begin with the main term, *Counselor*. The basic meaning of this Old Testament word comes from the idea of separating or distinguishing between things, and includes to advise, counsel, to devise and propose a plan of action. Today the basic meaning is the same. It was used in the Old Testament of leaders both seeking and giving counsel and direction for themselves and their people.<sup>7</sup> God used it to tell us in Psalm 32 “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will *counsel* you with My eye upon you” (verse 8, NASB).

God’s counsel shares His nature — it is pure, true, faithful. God’s counsel does not change with the seasons for any circumstances — it stands forever.<sup>8</sup> Isaiah wrote, “O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, for You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.”<sup>9</sup>

Let’s turn then to the word *wonderful*. Today this word is almost bland and unexciting as everything is hyped as the newest, greatest, most wonderful, most sensational. We are inundated and surrounded by Christmas commercials. Huge sums of money are spent on creating and then airing and printing them. Some are now considered an art form and are reviewed, rated. The best, the *most wonderful* of those often are not even for a specific product, but is simply noted as a message from the company.

One such ad a few years ago dealt with the basic idea that it can be difficult to get the whole family together for Christmas. We all know something about that, don’t we? This took it a bit farther. A father wanted to celebrate Christmas dinner with his children and

grandchildren. But it seemed they did not have time for him at Christmas. So, year after year he had Christmas dinner alone.

Then at Christmas one year his family received a card and electronic messages — a notice of his death. They all dropped what they were doing and met at the family home, hugging each other and crying together outside. Then they went in and were puzzled to find the big dining room table nicely set, candles lit and the Christmas tree lights burning. Then *he* walked in from the kitchen, their father and grandfather. They gasped, shocked and bewildered. He said, rather simply, “How else could I have brought you all together?”

The family enjoyed a great Christmas evening together. The commercial ended with the simple statement, “Time to come home.”<sup>10</sup> A sentimental, tug-at-the-heart-strings, *wonderful* commercial.

The background of the word *wonderful* in Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 includes much more than something sentimental or touching. It has the idea of being something uncommon, out of the ordinary, so much so that it can be difficult to understand. It is used in the Old Testament of the miracles God performed for Israel, such as freeing them from slavery.<sup>11</sup> So when the word is used of God, it often has the idea of more than extraordinary, miraculous, going beyond our ability to do and to understand.

When we put these words together, *Wonderful Counselor*—miraculous, beyond our ability to do or understand planner and agent for our deliverance—we begin to see something of the amazing blessing of God the Son being our *Wonderful Counselor*.

That is saying a lot. But what are Jesus’ qualifications? It may sound like a strange question, but it is fair to ask. Consider just a few of the many qualifications Jesus has. First, He is God the Son.

The gospel of John’s opening words tell us “In the beginning was the Word [Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”<sup>12</sup> Later in the same gospel Jesus told some Jewish leaders who were trying to discredit and destroy him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that Abraham was born more than 2,100 years before Jesus spoke these words. Jesus shocked them by saying, “Before Abraham was born over 2,100 years ago ‘I AM,’ I was and am living.”

Then God tells us through the apostle Paul, “For in [Jesus] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (NASB).<sup>14</sup> This is a mind-boggling, beyond our ability to comprehend truth.

Jesus Christ is the God-Man. You and I have *eternal God the Son* available to us as our *Wonderful Counselor*. No one can match this qualification.

Secondly, Jesus possess all wisdom. If you need advice and guidance you want to find someone who has some wisdom, who sees things as they really are, who can help you put the pieces of the puzzle together.

In Christ, the Bible tells us, “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”<sup>15</sup> No wonder that Isaiah wrote that God “is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance.”<sup>16</sup> And so, God tells us in Proverbs chapter 8 verse 14 that “Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength.” The best qualified human counselors would not even think of claiming this. They know their limitations.

Next, Jesus is qualified to be your Wonderful Counselor because He became one of us and understands us. John chapter 1 verse 14 tells us, “And the Word [Christ] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” God tells us in the book of Hebrews that Jesus “had to be made like” us in order to satisfy God’s holy justice for our sins. And that “since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (2:18, NASB).

A bit later in the same book God says that Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses because he was tempted, “yet without sin,” and as a result of that we can “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (4:14-16, NASB). That’s wonderful! That’s amazing! That’s Jesus!

Finally, Jesus is qualified to be your Wonderful Counselor because He loves you and patiently works within you. Over 2,500 years ago God told Israel, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”<sup>17</sup> God, who does not change, loves you and me with His everlasting love, draws us to Himself with His lovingkindness. And, the Bible promises that Jesus will “confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>18</sup> What a beautiful, wonderful truth! What a Wonderful Jesus!

Don’t miss the great balance and beauty here. Jesus is qualified to be your Wonderful Counselor because He is Almighty God who possess all wisdom. But He is not detached nor

patronizing — He became one of us. He understands us. His love, His commitment to You is absolutely unshakeable! It is everlasting!

### **Our receiving and rejoicing in Wonderful Counsel.**

You might be thinking, “Yes, that sounds great! But at least at times I seem to be missing out!” At one point when our son was young he wanted a horse. He *really* wanted a horse. He went so far as to say, “Everyone else has a horse!” A bit of exaggeration. He felt he was missing out. He never did get a horse, at least not yet.

You don’t have to miss out on having Jesus as your Wonderful counselor and all the joy in His counsel. How? How can I receive and rejoice in Jesus being my Wonderful Counselor? First, the Bible tells us, accept God’s promises and seek His counsel.

Go back to Psalm 32 again, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you” (8, NASB). *This is God’s promise to every believer, to you!* The New Testament book of James tells us that if any of us lack wisdom we are to “ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” (1:5).

Let me share an example of that from the Bible. Judges chapter 13 tells us about God announcing the birth of Samson. He appeared to Samson’s mother, who had not been able to have children, and told her she would have a boy. He was to be raised under a special vow as a Nazarite, and would deliver Israel from the Philistines who were oppressing them.

She told her husband, Manoah. What do you think was the first thing he did after hearing this great news? *Jump and dance for joy? Throw a party? Run around and shout out the good news to all the neighbors?*

No. None of that. Verse 8 tells us, “Then Manoah prayed to the Lord and said, ‘O Lord, please let the man of God whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born’ ” (ESV). That was the first thing he did. He was open to, he was quick to eagerly seek and accept God’s counsel and instruction.

Then too, we avoid missing out, we receive and will rejoice in Christ’s wonderful counsel as we read God’s Word and respond to His direction. Many people say, “I’m willing, but I

don't hear the actual voice of God. At times I don't even sense His direction." One of the key ways God speaks to us is through His Word, the Bible. It is the first and final test of all we may think is God's direction or will for us.

We read in Psalm 119, "Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors" (24). Later in the same Psalm the writer tells God, "Oh, how I love Your law!" (97). Why? How did he get to that point? Because, as he testifies, God's word "is my meditation all the day" (97). He was not saying that he only thought about God's word every waking moment, but that regularly throughout the day in the things that came his way, he thought about God's word. The more we think about God's wonderful truth the more the Holy Spirit will help us understand it, apply it and find joy in it.

The results of that are amazing. That Psalm writer goes on to testify,

"Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are my constant guide. Yes, I have more insight than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your laws. I am even wiser than my elders, for I have kept your commandments" (verses 98-100, NLT).

No, you won't find a verse that tells you what career to pursue, whether to marry or not nor to whom, what vehicle or house to buy and when, but it puts you in touch with God, your *Wonderful Counselor*. It builds up the statements and principles of His truth to guide you. Proverbs chapter 2 verse 7 tells us that God "stores up sound wisdom for the upright." That wisdom is found in His Word; and the wisdom of the Word will help you sort out all of the ideas, suggestions and options. It is one of the key ways in which Jesus *counsels* us.

You and I can receive and rejoice in the Wonderful Counsel of Jesus.

## **Conclusion**

Those of us who know God through Jesus Christ know there is more than a "little bit more" than presents, feasting and singing to the meaning of Christmas. The value and meaning of Christmas is Jesus. Jesus *is* the reason for the season. Jesus, whose name is, who is the *Wonderful Counselor*.

Question: Is Jesus your Wonderful Counselor? That starts with knowing Him, not just knowing about Him. Do you know Him today? Do the people you meet in this season know



Him? Knowing Him begins with accepting the truth about Him and ourselves. He is all we have seen today and so much more. You and I have sinned and fall short of God's perfection, His glory.<sup>19</sup> The results, the wages of our sin is death, being separated from God, "but," the Bible tells us, "the free gift of God is eternal life *in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"<sup>20</sup> People need to move from knowing to action, to confess their sin to Jesus who is "faithful and just to forgive [their] sins and to cleanse [them] from all unrighteousness."<sup>21</sup>

Jesus came as God's gift to the world, to us, to every person, to you. On this first day of Advent, of the Christmas season, we need to remember that all who have not need to accept God's gift of Jesus who will be their Savior and Wonderful Counselor.

For each one who believes and knows God through Jesus, thank God for Jesus, *your* Wonderful Counselor. The same question is before us, is He our wonderful Counselor? It's before us in a different way: are we actually seeking and relying on Jesus to be our Wonderful Counselor today, each day, in everything?

Confess where you have neglected this ministry of Jesus. Determine to seek and respond to His counsel. He is available 24 hours a day, every day, and in every circumstance of your life.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Seuss. *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. New York: Dr. Seuss Enterprises/Random House, 1957.

<sup>2</sup> John Hagee. *Four Blood Moons: Something is About to Change*. Brentwood, TN.: Worthy Publishing, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 3:23.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 10:23-24.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 5:8, NLT.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Exodus 18:19; 1 Kings 12:6, 9-15.

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 33:11.

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 25:1.

<sup>10</sup> *EDEKA Weihnachtsclip — #heimkommen*.

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6-0kYhqoRo>>. 28 November 2015. Accessed 27 November 2017. (Song in English; English subtitles for the dialogue).

<sup>11</sup> e.g., Psalm 78:11-16.

<sup>12</sup> John 1:1.

<sup>13</sup> John 8:58 (context, verses 31-59).

- <sup>14</sup> Colossians 2:9.  
<sup>15</sup> Colossians 2:3.  
<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 28:29.  
<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 31:3.  
<sup>18</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:8  
<sup>19</sup> Romans 3:23.  
<sup>20</sup> Romans 6:23.  
<sup>21</sup> 1 John 1:9.

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