

What Child Is This?

December 24, 2017

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Immanuel”

Immanuel – “God with us”

In the prophecy of the virgin birth, [Isaiah 7:14](#), the prophet Isaiah declared, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel." This prophecy refers to the birth of Jesus in [Matthew 1:22-23](#), "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' which means, 'God with us.'" This does not mean, however, that the Messiah's name would actually be Immanuel.

There are many names given to Jesus using the phrase “He shall be called,” both in the Old and New Testaments. This was a common way of saying that people would refer to Him in these various ways. Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah, “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” ([Isaiah 9:6](#)). None of these titles were Jesus' actual name, but these were descriptions people would use to refer to Him forever. Luke tells us Jesus “shall be called the Son of the Highest” ([Luke 1:32](#)) and “son of God” (1:35), but neither of these was His name. In the same way, to say that Jesus would be called "Immanuel" means Jesus is God and that He dwelt among us in His incarnation and that He is always with us. Jesus was God in the flesh. Jesus was God making His dwelling among us ([John 1:1,14](#)). No, Jesus' name was not Immanuel, but Jesus was the meaning of Immanuel, "God with us." Immanuel is one of the many titles for Jesus, a description of who He is.

One of the many important decisions confronting new parents is, “What shall we call our baby?” Most new parents spend hours debating this question. We all realize that names matter. Shall the new baby be named after his father, his uncle, her mother, her grandmother, a favorite friend? Should he or she be given a name that happens to be popular at the moment? Or one that simply sounds good?

Jean and I have been through this process two times. Naming our first son was not difficult. We named him Forrest after his Great-Grandfather, and Steven from me. We didn't decide on Joe's name until it was time to leave the hospital. He was not named for anyone in particular except for his middle name of Clifton which was after Jean's grandfather.

Names are important because once you pick out a name the child will be stuck with it for a long, long time! Babies have no voice in the selection of their names. They have to live with them — to live them down or live them up.

Names are important because you tend to become what your name represents. Every so often you'll run across a person with multiple names, such as Charles Phillip Arthur George Windsor. That's sounds odd until you discover it's Prince Charles. If you say that is a heavy load to lay on a baby, remember he's royalty and he needs a long name.

So it is with Jesus. Even before his birth, he was a child with many names. The prophet Isaiah, writing 700 years before He was born, prophesied that Messiah would have four names: **“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders. And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).**

This verse reveals four names for Jesus. Each one unlocks an aspect of his character. They teach us who he is and how he can help us today. One of our beloved carols is cast in a form of a question: **“What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet”**

If this morning you have that question of “what child is this?” in your mind, listen to Isaiah's divinely-inspired answer. These four names speak to us about wisdom, power, security, and assurance.

Name # 1: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

Literally this title means “a wonder of a counselor.” It speaks of the wisdom of his plan. The word “wonderful” means “astonishing” or “extraordinary.” Or “supernatural” The writers of the Old Testament used it for acts of God which man cannot understand. The word “counselor” means “advisor” or “ideal ruler.”

First, this means he is a reliable counselor. Those who come to him will never be led astray. People like Dear Abby, Ann Landers, and Dr. Phil all make their living giving advice to others.

But they cannot claim perfection. Psychiatrists routinely make \$150 (and sometimes \$350) an hour for their counsel. Much of it is good, some not so good. But the Lord goes to no one for advice. And when anyone comes to him, he gives them the counsel they need.

He is therefore the perfect teacher and the ultimate counselor. This gives us insight into his working. His plans are not our plans, his ways not our ways. He will accomplish things beyond human comprehension and he will do it in ways we cannot fathom. He will do the greatest work ever accomplished and he will do it successfully. A violent death would not be man's way to victory but it was God's plan and our Lord carried it out perfectly.

Let me apply the truth this way. As the Wonderful Counselor, he gives wholesome direction to His people. Those who follow him will not walk in darkness but in the blazing light of day.

In this tiny baby we see all the wisdom of God wrapped in swaddling clothes.

What Child is This? He is the Wonderful Counselor.

Name # 2: MIGHTY GOD

This speaks of the "Power of Accomplishment." It is first of all a statement of deity. The baby born in the manger is not just the Son of God, he is also God the Son. All the fullness of God dwells in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the ancient creeds declare, he is "very God of very God." That can never be said of any mere human baby.

There is something else important in this title. The word translated "mighty" is the word gibor, which means "strong one" or "the powerful, valiant warrior." Thus the term "mighty God is actually a military title. He is the God who fights for his people!

At the Incarnation, God took the form of human flesh. That's why one of his names is Immanuel— "God with us" just as Isaiah prophesized in chapter 7
Now take the first two titles together and what do you have?

As the Wonderful Counselor — He makes the Plans.

As the Mighty God —He makes the plans Work.

All of his wonderful plans will be carried out with all of God's infinite might. There is in this little baby all the strength of Deity. The power of God is in those tiny fists. He has strength which is divine. The omnipotence of God is at his commands. Whatever he desires, he is able to achieve.

I apply it this way. When we meet Jesus, we meet God. If He is not the "mighty God," then we are deceived and it is blasphemy to worship him. There is no middle ground here. As the Apostle Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy "I know in whom I have believed" 2 Tim 1:12

If he is not God, we are fools to worship Him.

If he is God, we are fools not to.

In 1996 the renowned astronomer Carl Sagan died. He is best remembered for his famous PBS series called "Cosmos" in which he evangelized for his evolutionary views, especially the notion that the universe is billions and billions of years old. He repeatedly said that he didn't believe in the afterlife. However, he also said he wasn't an atheist because he didn't know enough to rule out the possibility of God!

Carl Sagan is an evolutionist no longer. And at this moment he is neither an atheist nor an agnostic, for he has met the Mighty God whom he refused to worship in this life.

Despite his great learning and his notable achievements, Carl Sagan died a fool's death because he would not bow before the Babe of Bethlehem.

If Jesus is but a man, then all we do at Christmas is in vain. At this point it is important that we not give in to the sentimentality that makes Christmas just a kind of feel-good holiday. You know "Happy Holidays." Christmas is the great dividing line of the human race. No wonder some people want all mention of Christmas expunged from our public schools and from our public life. They do understand that Christmas is based on the belief that at Bethlehem the God Incarnate was born. If that is not true, then we are not only wasting our time this morning, we are actually deluded and deceived. We are of all men most to be pitied.

But if He is the Mighty God (which He is), then when we rely on Him we are relying on God Himself! He is the Mighty God because we need divine aid to help us in our battles. Satan and sin would every day defeat us.....but He is the Mighty God and He has defeated them.

In this tiny baby we see the power of God sleeping on Mary's lap.

What Child is this? He is the Mighty God.

Name # 3: THE EVERLASTING FATHER

In the Hebrew the phrase is literally "the Father of Eternity." This speaks of the purpose of his coming.

He is before, above, and beyond Time. He is the possessor of eternity.. He is eternally like a father to his people. This is not a statement about the Trinity, but about the character of our Lord. All that a good father is, Jesus is to his people.

Because he is like a father, he cares for his people. Because he owns eternity, he can give us eternal life. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" John 3:16

That's so important for those of us who live on this sin-cursed planet. No one lives forever. Sooner or later these bodies will also find our own place in the graveyard. We are not immortal, but transitory. We're here today, gone tomorrow.

Here's a key phrase: He is a father forever! That's important to me because I had a father, but not a father forever. I had a father, but he is gone now. He was a very good man, but he was not a father forever. . I am father to Paul, Forrest and Joe, but not a father forever. I will someday pass away. All human fathers must go. But Jesus is the Everlasting Father forever! He's just what we need.

When my sons needed anything, I ran to help them. If they cried, I went. If they want me, I will come to them. I never kick them out. They belong to me. They are my sons. They bear my name. What I am in a poor way to them, Jesus is in a perfect way to all who believe in Him.

In this tiny baby we see the love of God sleeping in a stable.

What child is this? He is the Everlasting Father.

Name # 4: PRINCE OF PEACE

The phrase literally means “the prince whose coming brings peace” This speaks of the effect of his coming. This final title is the climax of all that has gone before. The word “prince” means something like “General of the Army.” It speaks of his high position. The word “peace” speak of his basic nature.

All over globe there are ethnic conflicts and tribal wars. Closer to home not a day goes by without word that someone else has been murdered in Chicago. We see so much killing that it no longer surprises us—or sometimes even bothers us. We’ve been immune to violence because we live in a violent world.

Isaiah 9:6 tells us that **God’s plan for world peace is focused on one person—a baby asleep in a manger in Bethlehem.** He is the ultimate man of peace.

***In the past, His coming made peace with God**

***In the present, those who come to Him find peace in their heart when Christ comes in.**

***In the future, his second coming will usher in a kingdom of peace.**

Peace is a wonderful thing, but hard to find in this world. It's worth working for and waiting for. God's ultimate plan for peace rests not in treaties or lessons or progress, or material prosperity. God's plan for Peace is the Maker of Peace, Jesus Christ.

To know Him is to know blessing and happiness. To live without Him is to be restless and miserable.

He is no warrior, no greedy conqueror, no empire builder. He came to bring peace. He did. He does and He will.

In this tiny baby we see the peace of God welcomed by angels and shepherds.

What child is this? He is the Prince of Peace.

In this one verse in Isaiah you have four names of Jesus. This is what they mean to us today:

If you are confused...He is the Wonderful Counselor.

If you are weak....He is the Mighty God.

If you are scared or anxious.....He is the Everlasting Father.

If you are disturbed...He is the Prince of Peace.

You never know what may happen in the world because a baby was born.

No doubt the Innkeeper didn't know who he was turning away. Even Mary couldn't fully imagine what it all meant that night. But that baby born in Bethlehem has become the centerpiece of human history. We even divide time itself by his coming—B.C. and A.D.

What child is this? He is ... the Wonderful Counselor ... the Mighty God ... the Everlasting Father ... the Prince of Peace.

“For Unto us”

The most important part of our verse is the first three words....."For Unto us" The gift of Christ is a personal gift from God to us. A gift that requires a response. If I put a gift under your tree, you may acknowledge it, may admire it, may even thank me for it, but it isn't yours until you open it and take it for your own.

God has a Christmas gift for you.....not wrapped in bright paper and fancy ribbon, but in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.....It is the free gift of His Son. It is for you. The gift is still there. But it must be personally received. **John 1:10 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name”**

You can never truly enjoy Christmas until you can look in the Father's Face and tell Him you have received His Christmas gift.

In his carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” Phillips Brooks has a stanza that is a delight at this point:

**“How silently, How silently
the wondrous gift was given
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven
No ear may hear his coming
but in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him still
The Dear Christ enters in”.**

And so He will. If you sense His calling and drawing you to Him and if you've never received Him into your heart invite Him in today! Accept the free gift of Jesus.
May this be your experience this Christmas season.

“What Child is this, who laid to rest, On Mary’s lap is sleeping?

Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,

While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,

Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:

Haste, haste to bring Him laud – The Babe, the Son of Mary”