

# Wonderful

by Billy Sunday

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*Billy Sunday's sermon 'Wonderful' explores the profound significance of Jesus' name, character, teachings, and impact on the world.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 11:28, Mark 10:27, Luke 19:10, John 3:16, John 14:6, John 15:23, Romans 10:13, 1 Timothy 1:15, Hebrews 7:25

**Topics:** "Salvation", "The Wonder of Jesus"

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## Description

Billy Sunday emphasizes the significance of the name 'Wonderful' ascribed to Jesus in Isaiah 9:6, exploring how this name encapsulates His extraordinary birth, character, life, teachings, and the impact of His resurrection. He illustrates that Jesus' humble beginnings, miraculous deeds, and profound teachings set Him apart as truly wonderful, highlighting that His life was marked by selflessness and a commitment to serving others. Sunday argues that the transformative power of Jesus continues to be evident today, as He saves and changes lives, affirming that He is a wonderful Savior who can save anyone, regardless of their past. The preacher calls for individuals to recognize and accept this wonderful Savior into their hearts.

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## Transcript

"His name shall be called Wonderful" -- Isaiah 9:6

IN olden times all names meant something, and this is still the case among Indians and all other people who are living in a primitive way. Whenever you know an Indian's name and the meaning of it, you know something about the Indian. Such names as Kill Deer, Eagle Eye, Buffalo Face and Sitting Bull tell us something about the men who possessed them.

This tendency to use names that are expressive still crops out in camp life, and whenever men are thrown together in an unconventional way. In mining, military and lumber camps nearly every man has a nickname that indicates some peculiarity or trait of character. Usually a man's nickname is nearer the real man than his right name.

All of our family names today had their origin in something that meant something. All Bible names have a meaning, and when you read the Scriptures it will always help you to a better understanding of their meaning to look up the definition of all proper names.

There are two hundred and fifty-six names given in the Bible for the Lord Jesus Christ, and I suppose this was because He was infinitely beyond all that any one name could express.

Of the many names given to Christ it is my purpose at this time to briefly consider this one: "His name shall be called Wonderful." Let us look into it somewhat and see whether He was true to the name given Him in a prophecy eight hundred years before He was born. Does the name fit Him? Is it such a name as He ought to have?

Wonderful means something that is transcendently beyond the common; something that is away beyond the ordinary. It means something that is altogether unlike anything else. We say that Yellowstone Park, Niagara Falls and the Grand Canon of the Colorado are wonderful because there is nothing else like them.

When David killed Goliath with his sling he did a wonderful thing, because nobody else ever did anything like it. It was wonderful that the Red Sea should open to make a highway for Israel, and wonderful that the sun should stand still for Joshua. Let us see whether Jesus was true to His name.

His birth was wonderful, for no other ever occurred that was like it. It was wonderful in that He had but one human parent, and so inherited the nature of man and the nature of God. He came to be the Prince of princes, and the King of kings, and yet His birth was not looked forward to in glad expectation, as the birth of a prince usually is in the royal palace, and celebrated with marked expressions of joy all over the country, as has repeatedly happened within the recollection of many who are here.

There was no room for Him at the inn, and He had to be born in a stable, and cradled in a manger, and yet angels proclaimed His birth with joy from the sky, to a few humble shepherds in sheepskin coats, who were watching their flocks by night.

Mark how He might have come with all the pomp and glory of the upper world. It would have been a great condescension for Him to have been born in a palace, rocked in a golden cradle and fed with golden spoons, and to have had the angels come down and be His nurses. But He gave up all the glory of that world, and was born of a poor woman, and His cradle was a manger.

Think what He had come for. He had come to bless, and not to curse; to lift up, and not to cast down. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. To give sight to the blind; to open prison doors and set captives free; to reveal the Father's love; to give rest to the weary; to be a blessing to the whole world, and yet there was no room for Him. He came to do that, and yet many of you have no room for Him in your hearts.

His birth was also wonderful in this, that the wise men of the East were guided from far across the desert to His birthplace by a star. Nothing like this ever announced the coming of any one else into this world. As soon as His birth was known the king of the country sought His life, and ordered the slaughter of the Innocents at Bethlehem. The babies were the first Christian martyrs.

His character was wonderful, for no other has ever approached it in perfection. It is wonderful that the greatest character ever known should have come out of such obscurity, to become the most famous in all history. That such a time and such a country and such a people should have produced Jesus Christ can be accounted for on no other ground than His divinity. On his return from a trip to the Holy Land a minister was asked what had made the greatest impression upon him while there. "Nazareth," he answered, and for this reason: "The same kind of people are living there today as in the time of Jesus, and they are about

the worst specimens of humanity I have seen anywhere. Lazy, lustful, ignorant and unspeakably wicked, and to think of His coming out from such a people is to me a sure proof of His divinity. Had I not been a believer in His divinity before going there, I should have to believe in it now."

His life was wonderful. Wonderful for its unselfishness, its sinlessness and its usefulness. Even His enemies could not bring against Him any graver charge than that He claimed God for His Father, and that He would do good on the Sabbath day. Not the slightest evidence of selfishness or self-interest can be found in the story of His life. He was always helping others, but not once did He do anything to help Himself. He had the power to turn stones into bread, but went hungry forty days without doing it. While escaping from enemies who were determined to put Him to death He saw a man who had been blind from birth, and stopped to give him sight, doing so at the risk of His life. He never sought His own in any way, but lived for others every day of His life. His first miracle was performed, not before a multitude to spread His own fame, but in a far-away hamlet, to save a peasant's wife from humiliation. He had compassion on the hungry multitude and wept over Jerusalem, but He never had any mercy on Himself.

His teaching was wonderful. It was wonderful for the way in which He taught; for its simplicity and clearness, and adaptation to the individual. Nowhere do you find Him seeking the multitude, but He never avoided the individual. And His teaching was always adapted to the comprehension of those whom He taught. It is said that the common people heard Him gladly, and this shows that they understood what He said. He put the cookies on the lower shelf. No man had to take a dictionary with him when he went to hear the Sermon on the Mount. He illustrated His thought and made plain His meaning by the most wonderful word-pictures. The preacher who would reach the people must have something to say, and know how to say it so that those who hear will know just what he means.

Jesus made His meaning clear by using plenty of illustrations. He didn't care a rap what the scribes and Pharisees thought about it, or said about it. He wanted the people to know what He meant, and that is why He was always so interesting. The preacher who can't make his preaching interesting has no business in the pulpit. If he can't talk over ten minutes without making people begin to snap their watches and go to yawning all over the house, he has misunderstood the Lord about his call to preach. Jesus was interesting because He could put the truth before people in an interesting way. We are told that without a parable He spake not to any man. He made people see things, and see them clearly. It is wonderful that this humble Galilean peasant, who may never have gone to school a day in His life, should have made Himself a Teacher of teachers for all time. The pedagogy of today is modeling after the manner of Christ closer and closer every day.

He was wonderful in His originality. The originality of Jesus is a proof of His divinity. The human mind cannot create anything in an absolute sense. It can build out of almost any kind of material, but it cannot create. There is no such thing as out-and-out originality belonging to man. You cannot imagine anything that does not resemble something you have previously seen or heard of.

I grant that you can take a cow and a horse and a dog and a sheep and from them make animals enough to fill Noah's ark, but you must have the cow and the horse and the dog and the sheep for a beginning. Everything you make will simply be a modification of the various forms and properties of them.

There is said to be nothing new under the sun, and there is a sense in which it is true. Everything is the outgrowth of something else. The first railway cars looked like the old stagecoaches, and the first automobiles looked like carriages. It is that way about everything. No man ever made a book, or even a

story, that was altogether unlike all others.

The stories we hear today on the Irish and Dutch are older than the Irish and Dutch. You can find stories like them in the earliest literature, but you can't find any stories anywhere in any literature that even in the remotest way resemble the parables of Jesus. Such parables as the prodigal son and the Good Samaritan are absolutely new creations, and so proclaim Jesus as divine, because He could create.

His teaching was wonderful, not only in the way He taught, but in what He taught. He taught that He was greater than Moses. Think of the audacity of it! Making such claims as that to the Jews, who regarded Moses as being almost divine. Think of the audacity of some man of obscure and humble parentage standing before us Americans and trying to make us think he was greater than George Washington.

Jesus also declared that He fulfilled the prophecies and the law of Moses, and the only effort He ever made to prove His claim was to point to the works that He did. The first thing an impostor always does is to over-prove his case. Jesus never turned His hand over to try to convince His enemies that He was the Christ. You have to explain a coal-oil lamp, but you don't need to waste any breath in giving information about the power of the sun. The springtime will do that by making all nature burst into bud, flower and leaf, and the power of Christ is shown just as convincingly in the changed lives of men and women who believe in Him.

Jesus taught that all would be lost who did not believe on Him. I have seen multitudes of saved people, but I have yet to see one who did not get his salvation by believing on Christ. Find the place in this world that comes the nearest to being like hell itself, and you will find it filled with those who are haters of Jesus Christ. You can't argue it. Go into saloons, gambling hells, and such places, and the people you find there are all haters of Jesus Christ, and the more of them you find the more the place in which you find them will be like hell itself.

Jesus taught that He was equal to God. He said, "He that hateth Me hateth My Father also" (John 15:23). Did you ever know of anybody else making such claims? He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Offering to bear the burden of the whole world. Think of it! He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." And He said, "I am the resurrection and the life; and he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Surely He was wonderful in what He taught.

It is not surprising that He so stirred them in the Capernaum synagogue, where He taught them not as the scribes, but as one having authority. Is it any wonder that they were right after Him for heresy? Let any one today begin to teach in our churches something as entirely new as the teachings of Jesus were, and see what will happen.

He was wonderful in what He prophesied of Himself. He foretold how He would die, and when He would die. It was wonderful that He should have been betrayed into the hands of those who sought His life, by one of His own trusted disciples, and wonderful that He should have been sold for so low a price.

Wonderful, too, that He should have been condemned to death in the way in which He was, by both the religious and civil authorities, and on the testimony of false witnesses, in the name of God, when all the laws of God were defied in the trial. It was wonderful that He was tormented and tortured so cruelly before being sent to the cross, and that He should have been put to death in the brutal manner in which He was. The time of His death was also wonderful; on the day of the Passover, thus Himself becoming the real

Passover, to which the passover lamb had so long pointed.

The great publicity of His death was also wonderful. It is doubtful if any other death was ever witnessed by so many people. Hundreds of thousands of people were in Jerusalem, who had come from everywhere to attend the Passover. The sky was darkened, and the sun hid his face from the awful scene. A great earthquake shook the city; the dead came out of their graves, and went into the city, appearing unto many, and the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. And remember that up to that time no eye had been allowed to look behind that veil, except that of the high priest, and then only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement.

His resurrection was wonderful. He had foretold it to His disciples, and had done so frequently, always saying, whenever He spoke of His death, that He would rise again on the third day, and yet every one of them appeared to forget all about it, and not one of them was expecting it. None of them thought of going to the sepulcher on the morning of the third day, except the women, and they only to prepare His body more fully for the grave. Womanhood has always been on the firing line.

This shows how fully they had abandoned all hope when they saw Him dead. Some left the city, for we are told of two who went to Emmaus. The manner of His resurrection was godlike. No human mind could ever have imagined such a scene. Had some man described it in the way in which he thought it should have occurred, he would have had earthquakes and thunders and a great commotion in the heavens. A sound like that of the last trump would have proclaimed to all the terrified inhabitants of Jerusalem that He was risen. But see how far different it was.

An angel rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulcher as quietly as the opening of the buds in May, and the women, who were early there, found no disorder in the grave, but the linen clothes with which they had tenderly robed His body were neatly folded and tidily placed.

And then how wonderful are the recorded appearances after the resurrection, again so different from what man would have had them. He appeared to every one of His friends, and to His best friends, but not a single one of His enemies got to see Him. I know that this story of the resurrection is true, because none but God would have had things happen in the order that they did, and in the way in which they occurred. Had the story been false the record would have made Jesus go to Pilate and the high priest, and to the others who had put Him to death, to prove that He was risen.

The effect of His teaching upon the world has been wonderful. Remember that He left no great colleges to promulgate His doctrines, but committed them to a few humble fishermen, whose names are now the most illustrious in all history. Looked at from the human side alone, how great was the probability that everything He had said would be forgotten within a few years. He never wrote a sermon. He published no books. Not a thing He said was engraved upon stone or scrolled upon brass, and yet His doctrines have endured for two thousand years. They have gone to the ends of the earth, and have wrought miracles wherever they have gone. They have lifted nations out of darkness and degradation and sin, and have made the wilderness to blossom as the rose.

When Jesus began His ministry Rome ruled the world, and her invincible legions were everywhere, but now through the teachings of the humble Galilean peasant, whom her minions put to death, her power and her religion are gone. The great temple of Diana of the Ephesians is in ruins, and no worshipper of her can be found.

When Jesus fed the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, and healed the poor woman who touched the hem of His garment, there wasn't a church, or a hospital, or an insane asylum, or other poor house in the world, and now they are nearly as countless as the sands upon the seashore. When the bright cloud hid Him from the gaze of those who loved Him with a devotion that took them to martyrdom, the only record of His sayings was graven upon their hearts, but now libraries are devoted to the consideration of them. No words were ever so weighty or so weighed as those of Him who was so poor that He had not where to lay His head. The scholarship of the world has sat at His feet with bared head, and has been compelled to say again and again, "Never man spake as He spake." His utterances have been translated into every known tongue, and have carried healing on their wings wherever they have gone. No other book has ever had a tithe of the circulation of that which contains His words, and not only that, but His thoughts and the story of His life are so interwoven in all literature that if a man should never read a line in the Bible, and yet be a reader at all he could not remain ignorant of the Christ.

He is true to His name because He is a wonderful Savior now. You have only to lift your eyes and look about you to see that His wonderful salvation is going on everywhere today. This vast audience throws the lie back into your teeth when you say the religion of Jesus Christ is dying out. There has never been a time when the love of Christ gripped the hearts of humanity as it does today.

When John the Baptist, in prison, sent two of his disciples to Jesus, saying: "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus sent this answer to John: "The blind receive their sight; the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them"; and that test of His power is as apparent in nearly every part of the world today as it was in Galilee. If you have eyes to see the works of God, you will always find them going on. The heavens declare the glory of God, but there are people so blind they can't see anything but a spell of weather in the rainbow.

Jerry McAuley in prison, a man who had lived by crime, and who had never heard the name of God outside of profanity; as blind and dead to anything good as a stone, one Sunday in the prison chapel heard a verse of Scripture quoted that took hold of his attention. He thought he would like to see it and read it for himself. So he took the Bible in his cell and began to search for it. He didn't know but one sure way to find it, and that was to begin at the first verse in the Bible and read straight on until he came to it. The verse he wanted was in Hebrews, away over in the back part of the New Testament.

Jerry read on, chapter after chapter, and day after day, looking for that verse, but long before he found it he found Jesus Christ—just as some of you would do if you would only be honest with God, and give Him a chance at you by reading His word. From that time on everybody who came near Jerry McAuley knew that the eyes of the man born blind had been opened in him. He started the Water Street Mission in New York, where I don't believe a service was ever held in which somebody was not converted.

Any number of men who were headed straight for the devil are preaching the gospel today because they were stopped by the light of God and the voice of His Christ as suddenly at St. Paul was. Yes, He is a wonderful Savior because He is able to save to the uttermost now.

A man would be a great surgeon who could save ninety per cent, of those upon whom he operated, but mark this: Jesus Christ never lost a case. He never found a case that was too hard for Him. His disciples were continually finding cases they thought were hopeless, and this shows how little they knew Him while He was with them. Jesus never sent anybody away who came honestly and earnestly seeking His help.

They brought to Him all kinds of desperate cases, but at a word or a touch from Him their troubles were all gone. The hardest cases were no more difficult for Him than the easiest, and the same is true today, for there is no change in Him. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He can save the scarlet sinner-the man who commits murder-as easily as He can the woman who cheats at cards.

He is a wonderful Savior, too, because He can save so quickly. Quicker than thought He can give you life. It is only, look and live. As quick as you can come He receives you, and as quickly as you could receive a present you had been wanting for years, you can have salvation. "Him that cometh to Me I will in nowise cast out." "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." No need of taking very much time about that.

In a meeting Thomas Harrison was holding, a railroad engineer came forward with his watch in his hand and said, "Mr. Harrison, can I be saved in ten minutes? I must leave here to take my train out then."

"Yes," replied Harrison, "you can be saved in ten seconds." The man dropped on his knees, was quickly saved and had seven minutes to spare. A conductor on a fast Pennsylvania train, in Ohio, was converted while crossing a bridge fifty feet long, when going at the rate of a mile a minute. Yes, indeed, He is a wonderful Savior because He can save so quickly.

Moody used to tell of a banker in San Francisco, who was awakened in the night by a burglar at his bedside. The robber held a revolver almost against his face, and said, "If you move I'll kill you!" The banker said, "God have mercy on my soul!" and knocked the burglar down before he could pull the trigger, and was soundly converted before the man struck the floor, as his life afterward proved.

And now I come to the last evidence I will give you that He is true to His name, and that is-He is a wonderful Savior because He saved me. There is nothing that can be so convincing to a man as his own experience. I do not know that I am the son of my mother any more certainly than I know that I am a child of God, and I do not know that I have been born in a natural way any more convincingly than I know that I have been born of the Spirit.

And now let me ask you this: Has this wonderful Savior saved you? Do you know Him as your Savior? Have you ever given Him your case? When the proof is so overwhelming that He does save, and has been saving for centuries, and that none have ever been saved or ever can be saved except through Him, is it not wonderful that any one can be indifferent to the claims of Jesus Christ?

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