

Titles of Christ.

by Edward Payson

Christ is the Wonderful Child, born to bring salvation and government to humanity, and his kingdom will have no end.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, John 1:14, Romans 14:11, Ephesians 2:14, Philippians 2:9, Colossians 1:19, Colossians 2:2, Hebrews 7:25, Revelation 19:16

Topics: "Christology", "Incarnation"

Description

Edward Payson preaches about the prophecy in Isaiah 9:6-7, foretelling the birth of Jesus Christ and the glorious consequences of His incarnation. He emphasizes the need for strong faith to comprehend the mysteries of Christ's person, character, and work, urging listeners to have childlike faith like the wise men, shepherds, and Simeon. Payson delves into the wonderful names and titles given to Jesus, such as Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace, highlighting the miraculous aspects of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. He concludes by inviting all to accept Jesus as their Redeemer and experience the endless increase of His government and peace.

Transcript

"Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end"

Isaiah 9:6, 7

the preceding context the prophet, "rapt into future times" by the spirit of prophecy, and influenced by that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, not only foretells the incarnation of Christ, but speaks of that glorious event and of its happy consequences, as having already taken place: The people that walked in darkness, says he, have seen a great light. They that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. They joy before thee according to the joy of harvest; they rejoice as when they divide the spoil.

But whence did all this light and joy proceed? I answer; the Sun of righteousness had arisen upon them with healing in his beams; for, says the prophet, unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall

be no end. That the wonderful child, whose birth is announced and celebrated in these triumphant strains, was no other than Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, it is needless to remark.

And as this is the day which has been considered by many, as the anniversary of his birth, it may not be improper to employ the time allotted to this discourse, in meditating on an event, which is no less interesting to us, than it was to the ancient church, for unto us, as well as to them, this child is born; unto its, as well as to them, this son is given. It may however be necessary, to remind you, that, if you wish to derive the smallest advantage from meditating on this passage, you must be in the exercise of a strong, and lively faith.

You must sit at the feet of God, with the temper of a little child, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls; remembering that your minds are blinded and prejudiced against the truth, by the influence of sin; and, that what appears impossible to you, is possible with God; that what is, in your view, an absurd and unintelligible mystery, may be, in his sight, perfectly plain and intelligible. In a word, you must have the temper which the wise men of the east, the shepherds of Bethlehem, and the aged Simeon possessed.

They were told, that Christ the Lord, the king of the Jews, the Saviour of men, was born; and when they hastened to see him, they found nothing but a helpless infant, born of obscure and indigent parents, and lying in a manger. Yet instead of making cavils and objections, as their own prejudiced understandings would have led them to do, they believed and worshipped. Such is the wonderful power of faith. Thus does it triumph over every obstacle, and implicitly receive the word of God, however strange and incomprehensible it may appear.

My friends, we warn you before hand, that if you do not exercise this faith, the present discourse will do you no good. You will say, it is impossible that a child born of a woman, can be properly called the mighty God, the everlasting Father. Thus the Saviour who is precious to them that believe, will be to you a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, as he was to the unbelieving Jews; and his gospel, which is to them that are saved, the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation, will appear in your view nothing but foolishness.

O then, my hearers, if you wish to be saved, if you would not have the preaching of the cross prove a savor of death unto death, if you wish to profit by the glorious truths revealed in our text, pray fervently that God will increase your faith; and if you find unbelief prevailing, cry to God like the Jewish ruler, Lord, we would believe, help thou our unbelief. This being premised, let us now proceed to consider the names and titles of this wonderful child, whose birth is foretold in our text; whose birth Christians in different parts of the world, this day celebrate.

I. Our text informs us that this child shall be called Wonderful. 1. In the book of Judges, we read that, when Manoah inquired the name of an angel of the Lord who appeared to him, the angel replied, why dost thou ask after my name, seeing it is secret? The word there rendered secret, is the same which is here rendered wonderful. It was doubtless the Eternal Word; who is frequently called the Angel of the Covenant, that appeared on that occasion. The name which is here given him, signifies secret, mysterious, wonderful; and in each of these senses, it may properly be ascribed to Christ.

He may be called secret, hidden, unknown; for we are told that no one knoweth the Son, save the Father. He may be called mysterious; for without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh. Even the angels are represented as desiring to look into it. He may also justly be called

wonderful; for his person, his character, his office, his birth, his life, his death and resurrection, are all full of wonders. His person is wonderful; for he is Immanuel, God with us, and in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily.

His character is wonderful; for it comprises every thing that is excellent in the divine and human natures. His love is wonderful; for it passes knowledge. The riches of his grace are wonderful; for they are represented as being unsearchable. His birth is wonderful; for what can be more astonishing than that the eternal Word, who was with God, and who was God, and by whom all things were made, should be born of a woman, a weak and helpless infant. His life is wonderful; for it shows us God dwelling in flesh as a man; it shows us the great Lawgiver obeying his own laws; it shows us one who was in outward appearance, nothing but a poor, despised mechanic, controlling the laws of nature, commanding the elements as his servants, banishing demons with a will, a word, and forcing death and the grave to yield up their prey.

His death was wonderful; for we there see the Lord of life and glory, dying by the hands of his creatures; we see the Giver of the law, bearing the curse of the law; we see the most innocent and perfect of beings, the delight of heaven and the ruler of earth, treated both by heaven and earth, as the vilest of malefactors. His resurrection was wonderful; for what can be more so, than to see a dead person, having power to take his life again, bursting the fetters of death and the bars of the grave, ascending from the depths of the tomb, to the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high.

These are but a part of the wonders which accompanied this wonderful child, but they are surely sufficient to show the propriety of the name given him in our text. 2. In the next place, we are told that the name of this child shall be called Counsellor. This name is also with strict propriety given to Christ. He is a counsellor, with respect both to God and to men. In the first place, he is a counsellor with respect to God. He is called the word and the wisdom of God; and with him the Father takes sweet counsel in reference to all his works.

He consulted him with respect to the work of creation. Let us make man says he, in our image, after our likeness. He consulteth him respecting his works of providence. Let us drive out the man from the garden of Eden; let us go down and confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. He consulted him respecting the great work of grace, the plan of redemption. Speaking of the man whose name is the Branch, the prophet says, The counsel of peace shall be between them both; that is, between this man and Jehovah.

Thus clearly does it appear, Christ our Immanuel is Jehovah's Counsellor. Hence we find him saying, counsel is mine, and sound wisdom, I am understanding, I have strength. Hence also the apostle informs us, that in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In the second place, Christ is a counsellor with respect to men. He is the great teacher, guide and counsellor of his people; the light of the world, the Sun of righteousness. He that believeth in me, says he, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life; for I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light, and crooked things straight, before them; these things will I do, and not forsake them.

He is also the great Advocate of his people, who pleads their cause for them in the court of heaven, and intercedes continually for the pardon of their sins, and the supply of their temporal and spiritual necessities; for, says the apostle, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous.

3. The prophet informs us that the child whose birth he predicts, shall be called the Mighty God. On this awful name, my hearers, it is needless to insist. You are already acquainted with its import.

It represents Christ, not only as God, but the mighty God. We shall only add a few of the passages which show that the prediction was fulfilled, that this name was given to Christ. St. John informs us, that the word was with God, and was God; that Christ is the true God and eternal life. Thomas, one of the disciples, calls him, my Lord, and my God. St. Paul, speaking of the Jews, says, of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. He also informs us that he is mighty, or able to save, even to the uttermost.

Whether therefore you believe or not, that Christ is the mighty God, you must allow that he is called so, by divinely inspired prophets and apostles, who were commissioned to communicate to us every thing necessary to make us wise unto salvation, and who neither would, nor could deceive us. Whatever others may choose to think of Christ, to Christians he is the mighty God, and hereafter, when every eye beholds him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, they will joyfully cry, while others weep and despair, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly. 4. This wonderful child shall be called the Everlasting Father, or the Father of eternity. Here again human reason will be ready to cry, we have already had enough, and more than enough of absurdity and contradictions. How can a child just born, be a Father, or everlasting Father, the Father of eternity? My friends, if you cannot answer this question, I suspect you would have been equally embarrassed with the question which our Saviour proposed to the Pharisees: How call David's son, be David's Lord?

This question they could not answer; nor call any answer it, at the present day, in a satisfactory manner, who do not believe that Jesus Christ was God and man united. But those who believe this, can answer it with ease. They can reply, as God, Christ was David's Lord. As man, he was David's son. In another place Christ says, I am the root and the offspring, or branch of David; the root whence David sprung, and the branch which sprung from David. So in our text. As man, he was a child born; as God, he was the Father of eternity.

But there is still another, and very important sense, in which he may be called the everlasting Father, with reference to his divinity and humanity united. He, we are told, is the second Adam; that is, he is the covenant Lord and the spiritual Father of all his people, as Adam was the covenant Lord and natural Father of the human race. All the true people of Christ, the real subjects of the kingdom of heaven, have been born again; born into another family, and are heirs of a heavenly inheritance.

Of this new birth Christ is the author, and therefore he is in a spiritual sense the Father, the ever living Father of the whole church in heaven and on earth. Hence the apostle represents him as the author or Father of eternal salvation. In the counsel, or purpose of God, he was from eternity the Father of his people; for he is represented as saying to them, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. And as his love and his relation to his people were from everlasting, so they will continue to everlasting.

With the utmost propriety, therefore, may he who was born of a woman, be called the everlasting Father. 5. The last title here given to this mysterious child, is the Prince of Peace. That our Saviour is a prince or king, the Scriptures every where inform us. Why he is called the Prince of Peace, it is easy to conceive. He

is the author of reconciliation, and consequently of peace, between an offended God, and offending man. His kingdom, as established in the heart, consists in righteousness, and peace, and holy joy.

His atoning blood speaks peace to the guilty, terrified conscience. He dispenses peace to his people in a sovereign way; his commands enjoin perfect peace and love between man and man, and his religion restores peace and rest to the tumultuous, agitated, distracted soul, by uniting its jarring powers and faculties to fear his name. Well, therefore, may he be called the Prince of Peace. Having thus briefly considered the names and titles of this wondrous child, we proceed to consider, II.

For whom he was born. My friends, it was for mankind, for us. Unto us this child is born, unto us this Son is given. It has been observed, that when angels announced his birth to men, they said, Unto you is born a Saviour. But when prophets, when men speak of this event, they say unto us a child is born; for Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Unto us also a Son is given. A Son of whom? His birth shows him to be the Son of man.

His titles, which we have already considered, and his works declare him to be the Son of God. He was both; and he was given to us both by his Father and by himself. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. In the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman. Christ loved us and gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Nor was he given to us only that he might suffer and die for our redemption; for the apostle farther observes, that God gave him to be head over all things unto his church.

This leads us to consider a 3. Prerogative, which is predicted in our text respecting this child, viz., that the government shall be upon his shoulder. In the Revelation the church is figuratively represented under the similitude of a woman, and this woman is represented as bringing forth a man child, who should rule all nations with a rod of iron. The same may be said of the child whose birth is foretold in our text. All power is committed to him in heaven and on earth; and God's language respecting him is, I have set my King on my holy hill of Zion.

I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. The establishment and unbounded extent of this kingdom, are clearly predicted, and described in the prophecy of Daniel. In the days of these kings, says he, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; but it shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Of this kingdom, our Saviour, who was born as a child and given us as a Son, is appointed Sovereign, and hence he is styled the King of Kings, and the Lord of lords. This kingdom, which is usually styled Christ's mediatorial kingdom, includes all beings in heaven and hell, who will all, either willingly or by constraint, finally submit to Christ; for God has sworn by himself, that to Christ every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess him Lord.

Agreeably, we see that even the devils were subject to him while on earth, and even to his disciples, through his name; and that they were constrained, once and again, to prostrate themselves before him, and to confess that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. In a similar manner will all wicked men and wicked spirits be compelled reluctantly to prostrate themselves before him, and confess him Lord at the judgment day; for we are told, that he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.

Agreeably, our text informs us, that of the increase of his government there will be no end. He will go on conquering and to conquer, overturning heathen temples with their idol gods, until the trumpet of the seventh angel sounds. Then the mystery of God will be finished, and great voices will be heard in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. But in addition to this mediatorial kingdom of Christ, which is set up in the world, he has another kingdom, the kingdom of his grace, which is set up in the hearts of his people.

Here Christ reigns supreme, enthroned in the soul, casting down proud imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of himself. This kingdom consists in righteousness and peace and holy joy, and of the increase of this kingdom also, and of the peace which accompanies it, there shall be no end. This kingdom is compared to leaven hid in meal till the whole be leavened. Thus effectually and imperceptibly, shall the gracious power of Christ work in the hearts of his people, till the whole soul feels its influence, and is transformed into the image of Christ; for he will! perfect that which concerneth us; he will not leave unfinished the work of his own hands.

Their peace shall be as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea. Even in heaven there shall be no end to the increase of their happiness; but their perpetually expanding souls shall be made capable through eternity of receiving larger and larger measures of glory and felicity, and shall be continually filled by Him in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. Thus of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end. APPLICATION.

Is it true, that unto our sinful race a child is born, to whom belong the wonderful names mentioned in our text, and to whom the salvation and the government of the world is committed? Surely then, my friends, it becomes us to rejoice, and to commemorate this all-important event with the most lively emotions of thankfulness and praise. In this offering all mankind are called upon to join, since the gift is to the whole race of men; for all people, and nations, and tongues, and languages, may cry, Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God; the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. And the song commenced in one part of the earth at the dawn of this day, ought to be echoed round the world as the same day dawns successively on its different climes. Even the blessed spirits of the just made perfect in heaven, may be considered as rejoicing in the birth of the great Deliverer, who redeemed them from worse than Egyptian bondage, brought them into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God, and finally raised them to the blissful mansions which they now inhabit, and where the increase of their happiness will never end.

Nay more, the blessed angels themselves, who sang glory to God in the highest, when they announced the Saviour's birth, may be considered as repeating the same song. Let it give intensity to our joy, that we may now celebrate his birth and his resurrection at once. And are there any in whose breasts these great events excite no joy; any who feel no interest in those things which excite, justly excite so deep an interest in all holy beings in heaven and on earth? Are there any who, instead of receiving with adoring wonder the great mysteries of Godliness, which we have been considering, regard them with indifference, or reject them as foolish?

How plain is it they are entirely destitute of the temper of saints and angels; that they have never embraced Christ as their Saviour, and that they have neither part nor lot in his salvation. They cannot say,

Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; for they reject him.

My friends, is this the case, with any of you Consider a moment your awful situation. That Saviour who is precious to others, has in your eyes no beauty that you should desire him. He who is to others the author of eternal salvation, is to you only a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; a savor of death unto death, and not of life unto life. Will you still remain in this awful Situation? If not, be persuaded to accept the Saviour without delay. Remember that in order to make a gift your own, two things are necessary.

It must first be offered. It must next be accepted. Unless it is accepted, it is not yours. Unless you accept Christ therefore, you have no Saviour, no Advocate in heaven. Come then, accept him as he is offered. Admire him as Wonderful; consult him as Counsellor; adore him as God; be born of him as your everlasting Father; and submit to him as the Prince of Peace. Possessed of all these titles, he offers himself to you, and in return he asks only for your heart. Come then, sinner, be persuaded to accept him.

As on the birthday of your friends, you present them gifts as tokens of your affection, so come now, on this birthday of the Saviour, and present yourself to him, who is ready and anxious to become your almighty, everlasting friend, in return for your submission, love and gratitude. This is the gift he most desires, this is the only return he asks for his boundless and innumerable mercies. Come then at this propitious moment, present yourself unto him, accept him as your Redeemer, and then you shall be of the number of those who can say, Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

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