

Introduction:

- A. We sing, *“It came upon a midnight clear, that glorious song of old.”* But from a spiritual perspective the angels’ glorious song came upon a midnight black as coal.
- B. Illus.: 67 years ago, on Dec. 6, 1952, the people of London were burning cheap coal so they could use their quality coal to pay off war debts. But something went wrong. A fog fell on the city and it was so heavy that it pressed all that coal smoke down upon the city. One guy who lived through it said it was *“like somebody had set a load of car tires on fire... It’s like you were blind.”* The effect of this darkness was that it got colder so Londoners put more coal on the fire which just made things even worse. The next day 500 people suffocated to death. After four days, a sudden wind drove the fog away. It is estimated that eventually over 12,000 died from what they call now “the killer fog.”
- C. Isaiah forecast a killer fog settling over Israel 700 years before Christ. People tried to consult with the dead rather than the LORD. So Isaiah said, *“they have no light of dawn.”* He said, *“Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.”* That killer fog persisted through much of Israel’s history for the next 700 years.
- D. But Isaiah also issued another forecast. Turn to **Is. 9:1-2:**
Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—
 (Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown, was in Zebulun and his ministry began in Capernaum in Naphtali, and the area and the Sea are called Galilee. Matthew says that was *“to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah.”* [Mt 4:13-17])

*The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.*

This wasn't like any other light. This was a supernatural light from God, so grace-filled that it would penetrate the killer darkness of Israel. When Jesus appeared, just as Isaiah promised, his message was, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.*" And people *repent* because the Light had dawned. And they rejoice!

- E. "You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy;"
Israel was a decimated people, a shadow of their former selves. National nobodies. But listen to God's promise to them in **Is 49:19-23... All because of the light!**
- F. In that day, what will their joy be like?

*...they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.
For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.
Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.*

These images not only describe a turning point in Israel's future fortunes but whisper the promise of an everlasting Kingdom. Here is the promised joy of never being hungry again, the joy of being forever free from the crushing oppression of enemies too strong to defeat, and the joy of destroying every bloody vestige of war.

G. But this is all too wonderful to imagine. How can such deadly darkness be dispersed? How can such sinful, godless people come into such joy? **V.6:** here's how:

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.*

There's your answer. Things won't just get better or work out or turn a corner. A child—a son—will be *given* to us. *Given*—God's greatest grace—a Son, *his* Son, who will carry the weight of the world on his shoulders. How can anyone bear such a weight? How can he bring the joy of a new nation, of harvest and of freedom to hopeless people?

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

I. THE SON GIVEN TO US IS THE WONDERFUL COUNSELOR

- A. Our word *wonderful* just isn't adequate for Isaiah's meaning. We've devalued the word 'wonderful' down to 'cool.' And he is definitely more than 'cool'! The scholar **E. J. Young** says that this word describes, "*One who in His very person and being is a Wonder; He is that which surpasses human thought and power; He is God himself.*"
- B. The English word *Counselor* is inadequate too. To us, a counselor is someone who tells us the wise way to go but this word isn't so much an advisor as a strategic planner, the divine architect of our destiny, who draws the blueprint of the ages, God's own strategic plan, his infallible way to untangle the knotted threads of life and history and weave them into the purposeful tapestry of God.
- C. Jesus Christ qualifies for these titles. The New Testament tells us that he is Creator of all things. Jesus Christ calculated the orbits of planets and stars. He balances the infinitely delicate ecosystems of the universe.

Beyond that he manages history, unthwarted by devices and designs of despots. Whether they acknowledge him or not Jesus directs the affairs of kings and presidents as surely as he lays the courses of rivers.

But nothing so displays his genius, the wonder of his counsels, as his plan for the saving of sinners. We faced a death-dark chaos of sin and rebellion by men and demons yet the Wonderful Counselor found a way to satisfy the holiness of God, to thwart the efforts of the cosmic rebellion of Satan, and to overcome the deadly depravity of man by shedding his own blood on the cross of Calvary. What can you say of the counsels of One who conquers by dying, who becomes weak in order to do the mightiest deed of all, whose royal life is humble service?

- D. We can put our lives into the hands of this Wonderful Counselor, of this Infinitely Perfect Planner, for “*we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*”

II. THE SON GIVEN TO US IS THE MIGHTY GOD

- A. Isaiah has told us that “*a child is born*” and “*a son is given*” but now he tells us the incredible—that this child is God. In the very next chapter, **Is. 10:21**, Isaiah will refer to the God of Israel with this same title, “*the mighty God.*” The cults, like the Latter Day Saints and the Jehovah’s Witnesses, will affirm that Jesus is divine. But he is more than divine. He does not merely have something of God in him. He is the Mighty God. Thomas knew it when he saw the wounds in the hands and feet of the risen Christ and exclaimed, “*My Lord and my God!*”
- B. The Hebrew word for ‘mighty’ means *hero*, so the God-given Son is the *heroic* God. Might summoned up under

danger. It is a word often applied to the heroes of Israel—men who fought overwhelming odds, who faced death rather than give in, who saved the kingdom by their bravery.

- C. But how can God ever be brave? How can the strongest, the mightiest of beings ever demonstrate courage? Illus.: I'll tell you one more time a favorite story I've told you before drawn from Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. It tells the adventures of a very ordinary man from 19th century New England transported back to the medieval world of King Arthur. At one point this Yankee convinces King Arthur to dress like a peasant and take a journey through his kingdom to see what it is really like.

They happen upon a rundown hut, deadly quiet. When they enter they see a woman near death in the corner and when they get close to give her a drink of water they realize that she has smallpox—and that they are in desperate danger. But the king won't leave. And when the mother asks him to go into the loft, he goes, finding the dead father on the way. This is what happens next:

“There was a slight noise from the direction of the dim corner where the ladder was. It was the king descending. I could see that he was bearing something in one arm, and assisting himself with the other. He came forward into the light; upon his breast lay a slender girl of fifteen. She was but half conscious; she was dying of smallpox.

“Here was heroism at its last and loftiest possibility, its utmost summit; this was challenging death in the open field unarmed, with all the odds against the challenger, no reward set upon the contest, and no admiring world in silks and cloth-of-gold to gaze and applaud; and yet the king's

bearing was as serenely brave as it had always been in those cheaper contests where knight meets knight in equal fight and clothed in protecting steel. He was great now; sublimely great. The rude statues of his ancestors in his palace should have an addition—I would see to that; and it would not be a mailed king killing a giant or a dragon, like the rest. It would be a king in commoner's garb bearing death in his arms." [#2703]

That is what Jesus did for us on the cross! Our King, our Heroic God, had the courage to bear death in his arms. Remember how our King sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane. That was the bravery to obey even though it would mean passing beyond the fellowship of God and into his dark wrath. The heroism it took to enter this sin-plagued world, where no one ever survives, submitting to our worst insults and indignities, so that he might save people who did not even know who he was. That is how our great King demonstrated courage. That is what makes him the *Heroic* God! He is the one who said, *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* [Jn 16:33]

III. THE SON GIVEN US IS THE EVERLASTING FATHER

- A. God bears many wonderful titles, but none is sweeter to me than Father. What a gift we were given when Jesus taught us to pray, *"Our Father in heaven..."* What comfort in the promise of **Ps. 103:13**, *"As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him."* What verse in all of Scripture brings the compassion of God home to the wayward like **Lk 15:20**: *"But while he was still a long way off, his **father** saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."*

- B. But there is a curious thing in this verse: “To us a son is given... and he will be Everlasting Father.” Even those Jews with the loftiest view of the promised Messiah must have been stumped at this. The God-given son is Everlasting Father? Jesus taught us that he embodied the Father. “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,*” he said. Jn 14:11. The Triune God is not three separate beings but three in one.
- C. There is another aspect, too. You may remember that **Is. 53** describes Jesus “*pierced for our transgressions, ... crushed for our iniquities.*” Listen to **Is. 53:10**, “*Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days...*” The Messiah who dies as a sacrifice “*will see his offspring*”! How is that possible. What’s more, how could a man who never married nor ever had children *see his offspring*?! Jesus has children, those born again through faith in him. He is our father like Adam was our father. Jesus is the Second Adam, the Father of a new race of people, the Sinless Immortals born from above by the Spirit of God.

IV. THE SON GIVEN US IS THE PRINCE OF PEACE

- A. The title Prince signals royalty and sovereignty, a word with a scepter, crown, and throne, with bowing subjects and pledges of loyalty. The Messiah is a Prince with the royal blood of both heaven and earth in his veins, born to reign forever, the son of King David, and the Son of God.
- B. Peace is the expansive Heb. word, *shalom*. Peace, prosperity, health, safety, completeness. *The Message* puts this, the *Prince of Wholeness*. What a stunning idea in a war-weary world—a Prince of Peace. **Mic. 5:4,5a** says:
*He will stand and shepherd his flock
 in the strength of the LORD,
 in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
 And they will live securely, for then his greatness*

will reach to the ends of the earth.

And he will be their peace.

This God-given Son doesn't just *bring* shalom; he embodies shalom. Peace is in him. To know him, to *have* him, is to have peace.

C. Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace:

- What better name for one who commanded the sea to be silent and in whom all of nature will finally rest in peace.
- What better name for one who cast demons from the tormented and who will cast down Satan forever.
- What better name for one who reconciles sinners to the holy God, making sons and daughters of rebels and orphans. *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
- What better name for the one in whose kingdom the lamb and lion lie down together, and where there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain, and where the nations joyfully bring their treasures to the Lord.
- What better name for the one who promised us, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

D. Then in **v.7** this capstone:

*Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.*

*He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,*

*establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.*

*The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.*

Never ending! Justice and righteousness forever! Our King—*the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Conclusion

The darkness in our world and in our hearts is suffocating. *Illus.:* I've been watching *The Crown*, a series about the reign of Queen Elizabeth II. There was an episode about the “killer fog.” Prime Minister Winston Churchill came off looking heartless and foolish. He took no steps to help, showed no compassion for the suffering, suffocating Londoners. “*It’s a fog!*” he protested. “*It’s weather! There’s nothing we can do about it!*” That was Israel’s condition. That is humanity’s condition. That was—or maybe is—your condition. The deadly darkness cannot be dispelled. There’s nothing you can do?

But then, *it came upon a midnight drear, this glorious song of old:* “*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior. He is the Messiah—Christ—the Lord.*”

What we couldn’t do, God did. “*A light has dawned,*” bringing the joy of never hungering again, of never being oppressed again, of never warring again.

*For a child is born to us, to us a son is given to us,
and the government will rest on his shoulders.*

These will be his royal titles:

*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*