

Matthew 22-12-18b

We resume our study this morning. We're looking at Isaiah chapter nine, verse six in particular. What on earth does it mean that he will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, Prince of Peace.

We've seen some background, the context, which is always important. This is a Messianic anticipation section of Isaiah chapters seven through 11. As we noted, his conception and birth in chapter seven, this is his arrival and naming, if you will, and the purpose for which he comes, and then the anticipation of the rule itself is in Isaiah chapter 11, verse one and following.

So there's a sequential flow here. As we continue looking at this, Pele Yoetz is the wonderful or inscrutable, mysterious, unfathomable aspect that is represented by our word wonderful, but it's not wonderful in the sense of mere wonder. There is an advanced level at which this counsel operates, and it is beyond normal human understanding.

And it's hard to boil that down to one word, but if we understand what wonderful represents, that's fine. There is a related word, niflaot, which takes the root of Pele and turns it into a nifal, nifal is the passive, passive voice. So this is a nifal feminine plural participle from the same root, is one of the Old Testament words for miracle.

So miraculous, a miracle is something that we can't figure out how God did it, except it's by divine fiat, but it's the means by which someone blind from birth can not only see, but interpret what they see and not get dizzy, not get sick to their stomach, have three-dimensional understanding, hand-eye coordination. Someone who's been lame from birth and never walked, that not only has restored limbs, but the muscles are flexible, the nerves are trained, balance center operates, and someone can leap and dance immediately, the miraculous nature. This takes some time and reflection to even begin to understand.

It's not an easy, oh look, he dropped a rock and it hit the ground, cause and effect, Pele, miraculous, unfathomable, inscrutable, well beyond what we would expect or be able to anticipate. And then the second word, yoetz, once again, a participle used as a noun, the root, yoetz, means to advise, to counsel, to plan, to strategize, to look at a situation and deal with it, cope with it, interact with it in some way. It is commonly used of personal advisors, like the ones we spoke of in the David story, so when you put these together and they need to go together, you have the messianic king as a, a wonder of a counselor, a miraculous planner, an amazing strategist, you get an anticipation of this looking at David's actual reigning son, Solomon, who had wisdom surpassing anyone else in his age.

And you get a recognition of this in the Lord Jesus in passages like Luke chapter two,

verse 47, all who heard Jesus teach were continually amazed at his understanding and his answers. Didn't see it coming, couldn't be taken for granted. In Luke 4, 22, everyone was giving testimony about him and was amazed at the gracious words which went out of his mouth.

You don't often find yourself thunderstruck at the beauty and the wisdom with which someone speaks, not just command of language, not vocabulary, not sonorous voice and tone, but the content, the substance, the answer that is given, the ability not only to answer a question that is asked, but to deal with the situation that prompted the question in the first place. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Well, who is my neighbor? And then Jesus tells the beautiful story of the good Samaritan.

Which one was neighbor to the man in the ditch? You can't make this stuff up. It's one of the ways we know that Jesus was in fact, the son of God. No one could have created Jesus out of the cloth of imagination.

He's too wise. He's too profound. He is amazing.

But you, the counselor seems to limit him to an advisory capacity. It is his strategy. It is his grasp of the entire situation that is miraculous, that is beyond comprehension.

It's his perspective and his viewpoint. Nothing gets past him. Nothing surprises him.

He's ready. He knows exactly what to say and when to say it and when not to speak at all. This is wisdom.

We're studying how to try to just touch the hem of the garment of this kind of wisdom, looking at Proverbs. Proverbs begins to reveal the kind of wisdom that comes from God that partakes of this miraculous quality. Matthew 7, 28 and 29.

It happened when Jesus had finished speaking. Remember Matthew 7? You know your geography, the book of Matthew. What is chapter 5 through 7? It's the teaching to the disciples on the hill, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount, thought to have been delivered to crowds, but it was the teaching on the hill.

Matthew 5 through 7 begins with the Beatitudes. When he had finished these words, Matthew 7, 28 and 29, the crowds were amazed at what he taught because he had been teaching them as one who possessed authority, not as their scribes did. John 7, 46.

They sent people to apprehend Jesus, and they come back and say, no one ever spoke like this man speaks. We couldn't do it. You had to hear him.

No man ever spoke like that man. So not only does Jesus as Messiah, not only is the Messianic expectation that he is going to bear the burden of rule on his shoulder, but he will have the miraculous, amazing, impressive wisdom to grasp what needs to be done

and take the steps, establish the policies, and execute that rule in a way that accomplishes God's purpose. The next phrase in Hebrew is El Gibur.

Gibur, you should recognize. The Giburim were the mighty ones. David's mighty men.

Gibur means mighty, strong, powerful, often in a warfare context. El Gibur, the mighty God. This to the unbiased eye is an unambiguous declaration of deity.

If you are going to call someone the mighty God, it's hard to not believe that in the same way that Emmanuel, God with us, not only anticipates that God is going to dwell with man in the future, but that the one bearing the name is going to be a means to that end. Emmanuel, God with us, God will be with us, God is with us, and this individual with that name has that name because he is part of the process by which that comes to pass. So, the Jehovah Witnesses have tried to find a way to separate the mighty God from the almighty God, and I'm not going to bother to address that, but it is interesting that they recognize the implications of this name, and because they don't want to believe that Jesus was exceptionally divine, they have to find a way to deal with it, just as they do with the first few verses of John.

In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and God was the Word. Take away the divinity of Christ. We come to the next phrase in Hebrews 9, 6, which is translated, Everlasting Father.

This begins with Av, A-V, which is the word for father, Abba, the spirit by which we cry out, Abba, father, Paul talks about, Av in Hebrew, Abba in Aramaic, father. So, this is Av, my father, Av is one way to, if you stopped right there, but Av, Ad, A-D, and Ad is a reference to eternity or to continuity, and there's a lot of flack here in how to understand this, and this is why the translations deviate so much when you get to this point in the verse. There are three possibilities for the last part of this, Av or A-V, depending on whether you're going to attach the Y to Av or not.

So, since this is a noun in the construct form, which is a grammatical observation, Ad can mean witness, so this could be father of witness, and the Masoretes didn't, or the father of testimony, the father who testifies, the father who reveals, the father who communicates, would be one way to take this. The Masoretes didn't understand it this way or point the word this way with their vowel points, and no ancient translations took it in that sense. Grammatically speaking, it could be so translated, nobody ever did.

The second possibility is the word Ad is used for spoils, so he could be the father of plunder, or the father of spoils, or he who being the father of spoils can distribute the spoils, distribute the bounty, the booty, and you can use the Masoretic vowel pointing and translate it that way, the points don't preclude that translation. Ad in the third sense, and this has been the historical understanding, means perpetuity or the future. We have the oft-repeated phrase in the Old Testament, Ad Olam, forever into the ages.

So perpetuity or the future, literally father of the future, or future father, eternal father, but eternal is a bit of a stretch because Ad means going on to some indefinite future point. So father of continuous future existence doesn't really say. So it's easy now to say, well, wait a minute, if he is a child and a son, how can he be the father, the everlasting father? And so people try to say, well, you can't, this is not confounding of the persons of the Trinity.

This is viewed as a reference to the Messiah's role as king over his people Israel. He is not fulfilling a father role in the Trinity. He is the father of his people.

And this is a common view of kings in the ancient Near East that they were both divine. You remember Caesar and many others were thought to be gods. Even Nebuchadnezzar has a godlike aspect.

And that as a god, they were then also the father of their people. What concerns me about that view and trying to explain the term father here, which is very clearly there, is it doesn't say he will be called father of the people or father of the nation or Avraham, father of many nations. Why isn't he called Abraham? But he's not.

This is father of something beyond time. So they say, well, if you look at the next verse of the increase of his government, same word uniquely that was used in the previous verse, of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end. He will order and establish the throne and the kingdom with judgment and justice from henceforth and forever.

And so this description of the kingdom as unending, you remember the vision in Daniel where when the stone made without hands comes and crushes the image with the head of gold, shoulders of silver, belly and thighs of brass, and the legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay, and then this giant stone made without hands crushes them, and he sets up a kingdom that has no end. So in that sense, he is the father of unending rule. His fathering of the nation has no end or some such thing.

And so that's the explanation of this third term. So he is a wonderful strategist, miraculous, unfathomable, grasper of situations and dealer with circumstances. He is mighty, givur el, divinely mighty, could be another use of this.

Father of unendingness. And I think the father of works better than everlasting father. The father idea dominates the unendingness.

He is the father of that which does not end, would be a way to view it. And then you come to Prince of Peace, and this is Sar Shalom. Shalom, we know this word well.

Sar does not mean prince. Does not mean prince. Remember when we talked about Jacob's new name, Yitzar.

Yitzar means prince. Sar means ruler, not prince. And one of the Jews' objection to the Christian translation and understanding of Isaiah 9-6 is they say, well, you're purposely fitting this to Jesus as the son of God.

If God is the king, then Jesus is the prince. And so you're translating this as prince instead of its proper meaning, which is ruler. And honestly, I think that's kind of a fair criticism.

Sar doesn't mean prince. We've got a perfectly good Hebrew word for prince. It means ruler.

So ruler of peace, ruler in peace is a much better translation. So a ruler who brings peace, his rule is characterized by peace. It's always people's hope that their government is going to bring peace.

What do you wish for? World peace. And we look to the government to try to do this. George Santayana famously wrote this quote, only the dead have seen the end of war.

And the Bible affirms that there will be wars and rumors of war until the millennial kingdom, when he has put down all rule and authority and rules in peace. And he enforces peace with strength and, in some cases, violence. There is no gentle way to smash a clay pot with an iron rod.

You don't just kind of tap it around the edge like an eggshell and carefully remove one half. This is peace enforced through strength that resorts to violence when necessary. He will smash them in pieces like pottery to enforce the peace.

Peace through strength used to be the operative understanding. So there are some parallels in the Old Testament supporting these observations. Micah, as we know from our Kings and Prophets study, was a near contemporary of Isaiah.

And if you look at Micah chapter 5, keep your finger in Isaiah, and Isaiah, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Isaiah, chapter 5. Not only do we find out that the coming Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem in verse 2, you Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me, the one to be the ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are of old. And then you go down to verse 4. He shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they shall abide. For now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.

Verse 5. And this one shall be peace. Shalom. The Assyrian comes into our land, treads in our palaces.

We will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princely men. I want to show you something in Micah. In verse 2, you Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among

the tribes of Judah, yet out of you to me shall come forth the one to be ruler in Israel.

And the word ruler there is Mosel. One who rules, it comes from, it's Mosel. It comes from Mashal, to have dominion and to reign.

This goes all the way back to Genesis chapter 1, that the greater light and the lesser light will govern the day and the night. It is used in Genesis 3, 16, that Eve's desire will be to her husband and he will rule Mashal over you. God speaking to Cain in chapter 4, verse 7 of Genesis.

Sin lies crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule it. You must dominate it.

So this idea of rule going all the way back to the government being on his shoulder is central. Now, in the modern day, with the gentle Jesus of the Gospels being pushed further and further as the only Jesus we need to know, and as the fullness of the revelation of the Father, the Jewish objection to the understanding of Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, comes to the fore. When did Jesus ever do this? If the Messiah is going to rule, how can you say this Jesus, who never governed, never passed a law, never judged, never executed a sentence, how can he be the fulfillment of all of these concepts of dominance and oversight? And ruling authority? Well, if you restrict yourself to the first advent, to Jesus emptying himself and coming in the form of a servant and the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man and humbling himself and being obedient, he is not functioning as the mighty God.

He is not functioning as the father of that which is everlasting, the author and the finisher of our faith, as it were. He did not come with angelic armies. He did not come to impose rule.

And it is ironic that those who embrace the gentle Jesus as the only Jesus and say the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 through 7 is his ethic. And his policy and his only policy. This is his kingdom.

It is a kingdom of humility. It is a kingdom of service. It is a kingdom of embracing the poor and weeping with those who weep and sensitivity and openness and dialogue and affirmation of anybody regardless.

And no conflict, no conviction of sin, no calling out of evil, except as it oppresses the poor and needs to be addressed by embracing the poor and so on. It is a very limited and therefore error-prone view. People love to see the baby Jesus in the manger at Christmas time.

They love to see the baby Jesus in the manger at Christmastime. The shepherds, the humility, the unassuming entrance, and not reflect on what the Bible says. Yes, he is going to come and have no form or comeliness that we should desire him.

He is going to come in the form of a servant and in the likeness of men. He is going to bear in his body our iniquities and our sins. He is going to have stripes and bruises inflicted on him as Isaiah goes on to say later in this book.

But that is one phase, one element in God's plan. And to think that we have understood God's plan when we read the Sermon on the Mount, to believe that we have grasped the Father revealed in Jesus when we read only the Gospels, is an egregious, egregious failure. Because there's a lot more to the Bible.

If he is going to send the goats into eternal fire, if he, as in the parable in Luke, is going to call those who refused his rule when he goes away to receive a kingdom, and he says, bring them to me and slay them before me. Well, we've got to find a way to explain that out. I saw something this past week where even in the Sermon on the Mount, and people are saying the Sermon on the Mount, they just abbreviate it, SOM.

This should be the Christian's ethical guide. We should do nothing. Don't pay attention to Paul.

It's what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Turn the other cheek. Go the extra mile.

Humility, embrace everybody. If they are poor, they must be helped and loved. There's no sensitivity to their response to God, their interest in God, their acceptance of the Lord Jesus.

If they're poor, we must embrace them. They're going to inherit the kingdom just because they're poor, with no other qualification. If they have been humbled and oppressed, if they've been persecuted, if they're the wrong race, or the wrong economic class, or the wrong gender, or whatever else it may be, we as Christians must absolutely make it our mission to help them in all cases.

Well, what happens in Matthew chapter 7 when you get to, do not give what is holy to the dogs. Do not cast your pearls before swine. Well, this has been the cause of almost comical consternation, because 5 through 7, this is the unimpeachable words of Jesus.

We'll explain away, and well, these are accretions and additions, and somebody put that in later. But the Sermon on the Mount, if nothing else in the Bible is inspired, 5 through 7 in Matthew is, and yet Jesus says, there is such a thing as a dog, and there is such a thing as a pig. So how do we deal with this? Well, by great gymnastic, histrionic, strutting and fretting sound and fury, they managed to get this to mean, don't compromise and get in bed with the Romans.

The Romans are the pig dogs. The Romans are the bad guys, and don't try to involve them, because they are the oppressor. And somehow, I guess, enemy love, they just don't put those two in the same article.

You can talk about, don't compromise with the Romans, don't tolerate their misbehavior and their oppression. But when Jesus says, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those that spitefully use you, well, how do you reconcile those? Love the dogs, pray for the hogs. They cannot reconcile it, because it is a mistaken attempt to interpret Scripture.

So in the Christmas season, as we look at those wonderful Scriptures that anticipate the Lord Jesus, you look at Isaiah, you look at the parallel in Micah, he is going to rule. He will rule authoritatively, and this is going to be a burden he and the other sons of David are going to carry for a thousand years. And it is done in wisdom, it is done in miraculous strategy that keeps this stuff suppressed and under control for 999.8 years.

But at the point that it has matured, when the iniquity of the Amorites is full, so to speak, instead of squashing it forever, what is God going to do? He is going to release Satan from the bottomless pit. He wasn't put into the lake of fire, he was put into the pit. There would be a great argument for the survivability of the lake of fire, if Satan is cast into it and then is brought back out of it.

But you can't put him in the lake of fire and bring him back, he has to be put in the bottomless pit so that he can be brought back. And he then becomes the magnetic leader and the messiah, the anti-messiah, to everyone that has been just scraping and chafing under the authority of the Lord Jesus. He is the suffering servant, but he is also the conquering king.

It is just as big a mistake for Christians in the modern day to only see the suffering servant as it was for the Jews of Jesus' day to only be interested in the conquering king. Jesus is both, and you see it in Isaiah 9, 6, and 7. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, the son is a subservient role, but the government is going to be placed upon him as a burden, and he will then be miraculous in his wisdom, omnipotent in his rule, able to sustain it indefinitely, and able to impose peace through strength. He is both, and we should appreciate him and love him for both, and recognize that both are necessary.

Hebrews says it was necessary that he learn obedience through the things that he suffered, to be our great high priest, to be the mediator, and to ultimately be the one who will take us to glory and present us before the throne of his Father, sanctified, hopefully prepared for service and function, not only in the kingdom of the Son, but that ultimate kingdom of the Father. Well, I hope this has been a great uplifting preparation for the Christmas season. Certainly a lot to think about here in Isaiah chapter 9. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for sending your Son, the Lord Jesus, to be Israel's Messiah and our Savior. We pray that as we reflect on his humility, his obedience, and also his strength, and his wisdom, and his power, that we will have a fresh appreciation for who it is that has bridged the gap between earth and heaven, who it is that has become our mediator,

our redeemer, our atoning sacrifice, and also our Lord and Savior. And with that appreciation, we will be motivated to live the life to which we've been called, invest the time that you have granted to us, the opportunities and the resources, to more fully reflect his example and his character, and shine a light of hope in an ever-darkening world to those who are ready to ask a reason for that hope, and be drawn to you through the Lord Jesus.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.