

## To Us A Son Is Given

Isaiah 9:1-7

Key Verse: 9:6

Merry Christmas! At Christmas we want to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with wholehearted worship and by giving meaningful gifts. There are many beautiful stories about Christmas giving. The American writer O. Henry penned a short story called, "The Gift of the Magi." This is how it goes: There was a young couple named Jim and Della. They were deeply in love, but were very poor. As Christmas drew near, they became troubled. They wanted to prepare the best gifts for each other, but had no money. Still, each had something precious. To Jim, it was a gold watch handed down from his father and grandfather. To Della, it was her lovely hair, reaching her knees. The day before Christmas, Jim went and sold his watch to buy a beautiful hair pin for Della. Meanwhile, Della cut and sold her hair to purchase a chain for Jim's watch. As they returned home, they were eager to give their gifts. However, the beautiful hair was no longer there; neither was the watch. Their gifts seemed useless. Still, each one felt deeply loved; they hugged and cried many happy tears. What a beautiful story. Today we want to think about the event that started this beautiful giving. It began when God gave us a most precious gift at that first Christmas. God's gift is not a material thing. It is far more precious. Let's learn what that gift is and receive it today.

Look at verse 6a. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...." "To us a son is given." Wow! God gave his Son, his one and only Son Jesus, to us. To God, his Son is most precious. God gave his most precious One to us. It is not easy to give our most precious thing to others. Why did God do so? It is because God loves us. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." We must deeply realize that God loves us. God has given us the most treasured possession, the very source of life. God gave his Son, not to thankful and noble people, but to terrible sinners. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). The Son is God's one-sided grace toward sinners. The Son is God's best gift to mankind.

Verse 6 says, "To us a child is born." God sent his one and only Son as a child, in fact, as baby Jesus in a manger. Luke 2:7 says, "...and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." A baby in a manger is helpless and weak. Why did Jesus come to us as a baby in a manger? Why not as a full grown man with great power and a huge entourage? Jesus was born in a manger to identify with all kinds of people: the poor, the fatalistic, the sorrowful. It is amazing that the Almighty God became a little baby in a manger. He is worthy of all honor and glory, but he humbled himself to the lowest place. It was to embrace us in our weakness and to be the friend of sinners. Whenever I think of this it makes me want to sing, "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where He lay; The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay." Thank you, Jesus.

Verse 6 says, "...and the government will be on his shoulders." Though Jesus was born a little baby, he was not an ordinary child; he is a ruler. God gives him authority and responsibility to govern the nations. A ruler is very important for the well-being of his people. A strong and godly ruler is a great blessing, like President Abraham Lincoln. On the other hand, corrupt and godless leaders are a disaster, like those in North Korea and Zimbabwe. What kind of ruler is Jesus? Verse 6b says, "And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Wow! These names are very good. Jesus is not a tyrant. Jesus is the best, most wonderful Ruler we could ever imagine. Let's consider his names.

First, Jesus is Wonderful Counselor. Sometimes we have problems that no one can understand. Even if they could, they could not help us. But Jesus came down to earth to fully understand us. Jesus counsels us with the wisdom of God that solves our life problem, no matter how difficult. Isaiah 11:2 says, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord...." Once, a rich Jewish leader named Nicodemus, whom everyone envied, came to Jesus at night. Jesus knew his agony and said, "You must be born again" (Jn 3:3). These words led Nicodemus to recognize his real problem and to seek God's grace. A Samaritan woman met Jesus when she came to draw water at Jacob's well. She had had five husbands. She was wounded and sensitive and thirsty. Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:13,14). Jesus knows each person's need. Jesus gives each one the words of life that lead us into God's deep grace. Jesus is Wonderful Counselor.

Second, Jesus is Mighty God. Jesus is the Almighty Creator. John 1:3 says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." Jesus creates matter out of nothing, and a living personality out of mere matter. Jesus also rose from the dead and triumphed over the power of death. Before Jesus' coming, the power of death had defeated everyone, including all the great generals and kings. However, Jesus said in John 11:25,26, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Last summer, Missionary Barnabas Kojo attended the African Conference though he was very sick. He was determined to share his Ghana mission report and to have fellowship with God's people. On the morning of the second day of the conference, he died in his bed. At first, his wife Chiaka was shocked. Then through prayer, she turned her heart toward Jesus. As she did so, the power of death subsided and the Jesus' resurrection worked in her heart. She realized that her husband was living with Christ in glory. That very night, she stood in her husband's place and shared his mission report. She thanked God for using him as a warrior of faith. She prayed to continue his ministry in Ghana. Jesus' resurrection power defeated the power of death. Jesus is Mighty God.

Third, Jesus is our Everlasting Father. Jesus relates to human beings as a father relates to his children. Jesus is not an impersonal force, but a personal and loving Father to his people. A father is very important to his children. A father protects, provides for and disciplines his children. Under a good father, children grow strong and live fruitful lives. Without a father, children can become weak or crooked. One cute young woman became very tough when she lost her father. A talented young man became too weak to survive without his dad. A sensitive and artistic young man became rebellious when his father neglected him with many good excuses. Because human fathers are sinners, they fail in many ways. They can be foolish, lazy, selfish, or even violent. Children suffer too much because of this. To them, the word "father" evokes disappointment and pain. Tragically, they think the same way about their heavenly Father. But our heavenly Father is different. God is love. This love is described in the Bible as follows: "Love is patient, love is kind. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (1Cor 13:4,7,8). God has already demonstrated his great love for us by sending his Son to us. God loved us before the world began; God loved us when we were born into the world; God loved us at the very lowest point of our lives; God loves us now; God will love us forevermore. We can trust the love of God more than the ground we walk on. God is holy. He has no flaw of character, but is perfect in wisdom and power. God is faithful. When God makes a promise, he keeps his promise at any cost. God is infinite. So God is not limited by time and space, but is always accessible to all of his children. God is Almighty. His children have nothing to fear and can challenge any obstacle. We can see the heart of God in the father of the prodigal son (Lk 15). When his children go astray, he waits for them, looking every day for their return. When his children come back, all dirty and smelly after committing many sins, he runs to them with open arms and embraces them. He forgives our sins, clothes us with true righteousness, and bestows on us holy dignity. We all need our heavenly Father, and we all long for our heavenly Father.

We also need an everlasting father. We have been praying for children suffering from AIDS in Uganda. Many of these children had good fathers who loved them and cared for them. But they died early because of AIDS or other diseases. Then, these little children, who needed care and nurture, were left as orphans without love, and the basic necessities of life. It is good to send them our offering as an expression of love. But they need more than that. They need a father. They need a father who will never leave them. Who can be such a father? Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Jesus is Everlasting Father for them, and for all people.

Fourth, Jesus is Prince of Peace. Everyone wants peace. So some use drugs, alcohol or yoga to pursue a kind of peace. These things may bring temporary relief, but not lasting peace, and they may have bad side effects. Jesus gives lasting peace. In John 14:27 Jesus said, "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." Jesus' peace makes us strong, and enables us to serve God in holiness and righteousness. The power of Jesus' peace spreads from individuals to families, to nations, and to the world. So at Jesus' birth, the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to men, on whom his favor rests" (Lk 2:14). Where Jesus reigns there is peace. All manner of strife and animosity disappear. There is no need for weapons of war, like assault rifles. Such things will all be burned up in a fire and true peace comes to the whole world. Jesus is Prince of Peace.

The last verse tells us about Jesus' reign. Verse 7 says, "Of the increase 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." Jesus' kingdom is forever. All other governments have been temporary. In the end, they imploded due to injustice and corruption. But

Jesus' kingdom is established on justice and righteousness. These solid pillars are the foundation for peace and prosperity that never ends. How is it possible? "The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this" (7b).

What a precious gift God has given us in his Son Jesus Christ: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. We need many names to describe Jesus. It is because Jesus is God. Jesus is comfort to the mourner, joy to the sorrowful, peace to the distressed, light in the darkness, strength to the weak, wisdom to the foolish, a friend to the lonely, and life to the dead. Jesus is everything to everyone. Jesus is God's best gift of love to us. Let's accept this gift so that we may have true joy, peace and victory. Also, let's share this gift with others, especially Ugandan children, at this Christmas. May God richly bless you.