

KNOWING GOD ... better

Through the Christmas Names

HEAVEN'S BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Text: Isaiah 9:6

INTRODUCTION: I just love Christmas! My earliest memory in life is a Christmas celebration with my family. I was three years old. I know I was just three, because when I turned four, we lived in a different house. I have four memories of things that happened while we lived in that house, but the earliest one was Christmas, shortly after I attained the ripe old age of three years old.

For Christmas to be important to children is nothing unusual, but the love of the Christmas Season became increasingly special to me after I got saved, and it grew more and more as I grew in Christ. The very first extended passage of Scripture I memorized was as a fourth grader, and it was Luke 2:1-20 from the King James Version of the Bible.

Luke 2:1–20 (KJV 1900)

¹ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. ² (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*) ³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Beth-lehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) ⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, Good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Beth-lehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18 And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

As a teenager and a young adult, I often marveled at the miracle of God sending His only Son into the world as a baby, to be laid in a manger, and for that little baby to be the Son of God who would shed His blood for me upon a cross.

Sometime during my teen years, I became enthralled with the prophecies of Christ's coming. And among my favorites was the well-loved declaration of Isaiah that has been called Heaven's Birth Announcement:

Isaiah 9:6 NKJV

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

What a glorious announcement this is, and the names given here to describe the Savior help us a lot in getting to know God better. But they will help us even more if we will see a few things about this birth announcement God sent through His prophet.

SEE THE PEOPLE LIVING IN DARKNESS TO WHOM THE MESSAGE WAS SENT.

- **Israel had lived in and out of darkness since the day they entered into the Sinai Covenant with God to be His special chosen people.**
 - Right after they pledged their obedience to God, they forced Aaron to make them a golden calf so they could worship it at the base of the Mountain of God.
 - But in day in which Isaiah lived in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and the day in which God sent Heaven's Birth Announcement we just read, the darkness of sin had left almost everyone living morally and spiritually as blind men and women.

- Their wicked king Ahaz had closed the doors of the temple.
- He had put an altar of a pagan god in place of the brazen altar upon which sacrifices to YHWH were to be offered.
- He had encouraged the building of altars of worship to idols on every corner of the streets of Jerusalem.
- He ordered an altar to the god Moloch to be built in the Valley of Hinnom where the babies and children of the people of Judah were offered as sacrifices.

With that historical background, look at the text preceding Heaven's Birth Announcement to see the people to whom this grand announcement of a coming Savior was sent. In the chapter before, Isaiah said ...

Isaiah 8:19 NKJV And **when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,"** should not a people seek their God? **Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?**

He is talking about the common practice of mediums, witchcraft, wizardry, and necromancy, which is attempting to communicate with the dead, within the nation of Israel.

Then he says,

Isaiah 8:20 NKJV To the law and to the testimony! **If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.**

Isaiah says, turn to God's Word, people! The law and the testimony! Because if you do not speak in accord with the Word of God, there is no light in you. You are in darkness.

Then Isaiah declares the results of walking in the darkness of sin contrary to the Word and way of God.

Isaiah 8:21-22 NKJV 21 They will pass through it **hard-pressed and hungry**; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that **they will be enraged and curse their king and their God**, and look upward. 22 Then **they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness.**

He says, you will be

- hard-pressed and hungry, never satisfied
- enraged at your king and at God
- all around you, all around the earth, you will only see trouble and darkness, gloom and anguish,

- and these things will drive you even deeper into darkness.

Friend, that was what the lives of the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem were like when through Isaiah God sent Heaven's Birth Announcement.

- **The darkness of sin in those days is matched by the darkness of sin evident in the world in which we live today.**
 - Let me ask you, what is the most popular series of children's books to ever sweep across the United States, be turned into 8 movies, be readily available this very day on TV and internet, and has been translated so as to be available in 200 nations, and as of March of this year, has grossed over \$10 billion dollars in sales and royalties? None other than the Harry Potter series.
 - And even many Christians say, "So what?" and offer the Potter wares to their children and grandchildren, giving them the stories of an orphan who went to a school of witchcraft and wizardry to learn how to use white magic so called to combat the dark arts.
 - But what does God's Word say? It says this concerning all magic:

Deuteronomy 18:10–12 NKJV 10 There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one* who practices witchcraft, *or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,* 11 *or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.* 12 For all who do these things *are an abomination to the LORD, ...*

- **We live in a culture gone mad with denying the basic truths of the Word of God and doing all that it can to prevent anyone from declaring those truths** such as
 - **It was God who miraculously created the heavens and the earth.**
 - **It was God who made mankind male and female.**
 - **It was God who established marriage as between a man and a woman.**
 - **It was God who said the practice of homosexuality is an abomination.**
- But the LGBTQ coalition is working most successfully in our own nation to make it an abomination to even speak these truths of God's Word.

I do not believe the darkness of Judah in the days of Isaiah was any greater than the darkness of sin in our own day and in our own country.

Yet that is the very place and time that God sent the birth announcement of the Savior!

Listen, dear brother in the Lord. Hear me, dear sister in Christ,

Do not think the message that God has sent His Son to save us from our sin is a message that is old news. All the people around us need this message desperately. We must say it often, everywhere and to everybody, because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

I hope you see with me that it was to the places of darkness that God sent Heaven's Birth Announcement, but

SEE ALSO THAT THE LIGHT WAS SENT TO THE VERY DARKEST OF THOSE DARK PLACES.

Isaiah 9:1–2 NKJV 1 Nevertheless the gloom *will not be* upon her who *is* distressed, As when at first He lightly esteemed **The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,** And afterward more heavily oppressed *her*, **By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles.** 2 The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

The land of Zebulun and Naphtali were in later times called the region of Galilee.

Prior to Isaiah's life, the people of the northern kingdom who lived in this region were known for their love of the darkness of sin.

Twice God sent His judgment upon them, first less severe, and second with a heavy hand of justice God punished their apostasy.

So when the time was right for the Son of God to come, where did He go?

- Yes, He was born in Bethlehem because He was of the lineage of King David.
- But as a young child, Jesus' earthly parents took Him back to be raised in their home town of Nazareth in Galilee.
- Jesus did most of His ministry in Galilee, the place that was known, even in Jesus' day as the darkest of the dark.

And God said through Isaiah, that was where He would send the Messiah Savior.

Isaiah 9:1–2 NKJV ... *By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,*

In Galilee of the Gentiles.

The people who walked in darkness

**Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined.**

Have you ever had the privilege of seeing God shine His light into the darkest of the dark? I have.

I remember the day I first saw Jim. He was sitting about mid-way back, right on the center aisle. His face matched his clothes. It wasn't so much the years as the miles. All through the sermon, he listened like he had never heard a word of it before. Honestly, I don't remember the sermon I was preaching, but I know it had the simple gospel in it.

As I explained how Jesus left heaven and went to the cross to pay the price for our sins, how He rose from the dead to offer new life to all, and how He would give the gift of eternal life to all who would trust in Him as Savior and Lord, he grabbed every word. Others that day might have thought it was old hat, but not Jim.

When I gave the invitation to invite the Lord Jesus into your life to be your Savior and Master, Jim walked down the aisle and took my hand. His breath nearly knocked me down. I don't think I had ever smelled anything so wretched in all my life. Later, he told me, "All the wickedness in my life caused my breath to stink." I restrained myself from saying "Amen," but it was true.

But that Sunday morning, Jim Ball gave his life to Jesus.

I would stretch the bounds of propriety to describe to you the sinful life Jim had lived, which later Jim confessed to me. Rather, let me tell you how Jesus began to change him. The next Sunday he was all scrubbed up and was wearing a suit. A few weeks later, he had a lady with him. He introduced her as his ex-wife. In a few weeks, she came to Christ as well. It wasn't long before they were talking to me about getting remarried and setting their home straight.

Jim joined the choir, and we all discovered he had a beautiful tenor voice that was clear as a bell. The first solo I ever heard Jim sing was called THE OLD MAN IS DEAD; it was the testimony of his life.

After a few years of growing in the Lord in our church, God called Jim into the ministry. He said, "Lord I'm already 68 years old, but I'll do what you want me to do." At first the Lord called him to travel and sing and share his testimony of how God had dramatically changed his life, but then the Lord called him to become the Minister of Music in a little country church in Mississippi.

Along the way, Jim got cancer. At points he suffered terribly, but he never quit serving the Lord. Jim departed from this earth from Veteran's Hospital in Jackson, TN. I was honored that his wife asked me to preach his funeral. I told the crowd that I did

not personally know of another man whose life had been so dramatically transformed as had the life of Jim Ball.

A man who dwelt in darkness saw the great light of the Lord Jesus Christ and put his trust in Him. Even for those whose lives mirrored the darkness of Galilee, Jesus came. For those who dwell in darkness here and now in this world in 2019, Jesus has come.

For each and every one of us, this is the One of whom Isaiah proclaimed

Isaiah 9:6 NKJV

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

SEE THAT JESUS HAS COME AS THE WONDER OF A COUNSELOR.

Isaiah 9:6 NKJV

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called **Wonderful, Counselor**, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Those words in the text go together, and both are nouns.

- Jesus is not just good, He is a wonder!
- Jesus not only knows all truth, He is the embodiment of truth.
- And He knows each one of us inside and out.
- Who is better to have as your counselor than Jesus who has promised He will never leave or forsake you?

Isaiah 9:6 NKJV

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, **Mighty God**,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

SEE THAT JESUS IS MIGHTY GOD.

- The One who has all power to do anything,
- The One who can empower us to do all things.

Isaiah 9:6 NKJV

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

SEE JESUS AS THE EVERLASTING FATHER, LITERALLY, THE FATHER OF ETERNITY.

- He is not only the Son who is given but the Father as well.
- Jesus said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father also. ... I and the Father are One."
- He existed from eternity past, and
- He is the one who opens the door of eternity for anyone who will trust in Him.

John 3:16 NKJV For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Isaiah 9:6 NKJV

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And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.

SEE JESUS AS THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

To those who trust Him Jesus grants

- **Peace with God**
- **Peace with self**
- **A place in the kingdom of peace that Jesus will inaugurate at His second coming.**

CONCLUSION: All of this was sent to us who abide in the darkness sin brings, and it was sent in the form of a child.

- **Jesus was sent – from heaven**
- **Jesus was given – not earned, not merited**
- **And now, He must be received**

John 1:12 NKJV But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: