
The Office of Christ

Isaiah 9:6: -

For 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.

His name “shall be”

Such was the triumphant exultation of the Old Testament church! Their noblest hopes were founded upon the promise of Messiah; their sublimest songs were derived from the prospect of his advent. By faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, they considered the gracious declarations of the faithful unchangeable. God as already accomplished, though the actual performance respected a period, as yet, future and distant. Especially, as believers, under that dispensation, already felt the influence of the redemption, which Messiah was to consummate in the fullness of time. Jesus himself declared

John 8:56: -

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

It was the knowledge of his engagement on the behalf of sinners, that gave life and significancy to all the institutions of the ceremonial law, which otherwise, though of divine appointment, would have been a heavy and burdensome yoke Acts 15:10. Isaiah therefore prepares this joyful song for the true servants of God, who lived in his time; and though it was a day of trial and rebuke, they were provided with a sufficient compensation for all their sufferings, in being warranted to say, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, &c.

The ancient song is still new. It has been, and will be taken up from age to age, by the New Testament church, with superior advantage. I trust many of you understand it well, and rejoice in it daily. Men naturally look for something wherein to rejoice and glory. Little reason have the wise Jeremiah 9:23 to glory in their supposed wisdom, or the strong in their fading strength, or the rich in their transitory wealth; but this is a just and unfailing ground of glory to true Christians, that Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, &c.

When a sinner is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to understand the character and offices of Messiah, his ability and willingness to save those who are ready to perish, and the happiness of all who are brought into subjection to his gracious government; and when he begins to feel the cheering effects of faith in his name then this song, becomes his own, and exactly suits the emotions and gratitude of his heart. But many persons will despise and pity him as a weak enthusiast. And yet, perhaps, they do not think so unfavourably of the rapture of Archimedes, of whom it is related, that having suddenly discovered the solution of a difficult

problem while he was bathing, he was so transported with joy, that he forgot his situation, sprung instantly from the bath, and ran through the city crying, "I have found it, I have found it!" He is not usually charged with madness on this account, though the expression of his joy was certainly over-proportioned to the cause. The truth is, the world will allow of a vehemence approaching to ecstasy, on almost any occasion, but on that alone, which above all others will justify it.

His incarnation. Unto us a child is born. In our nature, born of a woman: Unto us a son is given, not merely a man-child, but, emphatically, a son, the Son of God. This was the most precious gift, the highest gift, the highest proof and testimony of divine love. The distinction and union of these widely distant natures, which constitute the person of Christ, the God-man, the Mediator, is, in the judgment and language of the apostle, the great mystery of godliness, 1Timothy 3:16 the pillar and ground of truth.

The Lord God of heaven collected all the riches of the universe, and laid them down in order to purchase the pearl of lost humanity. The Father gave all His divine resources into the hands of Christ in order that the richest blessings of heaven might be poured out upon a fallen race. God could not express greater love than He has expressed in giving the Son of His bosom to this world. This gift was given to man to convince him that God had left nothing undone that He could do, that there is nothing held in reserve, but that all heaven has been poured out in one vast gift. The present and eternal happiness of man consists in receiving God's love, and in keeping God's commandments. {OHC 13.3}

In giving Jesus to the world, God gave all heaven in one gift. Then why is it, when God has left nothing undone that could be done, that there are not more brought from darkness to light?--It is because the human will does not cooperate with the divine intelligences. If the Lord's will and way were carried out, humanity would be reached through humanity, and every lost prodigal would be brought home, and saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who tasted death for every man. Sin would no longer exist. But it is humanity that bars the way. It is for lack of the co-partnership of man, because of rebellion, that the way is blocked up. The revelation of God's truth comes to us through human agents. Christ came to the world as the Son of man. This was the only way in which He could reach humanity. "Ye are labourers together with God." Man must cooperate with Jesus Christ. Those who are building up a Christlike character will not, cannot, withhold their interest from the work of aiding Christ in seeking and saving that which is lost. {BEcho, April 30, 1894 par. 4}

II. His exaltation. The government shall be upon his shoulder. In our nature he suffered, and the same nature he reigns. When he had overcome the sharpness, the sting of death, he took possession of the kingdom of glory as his own, and opened it to all who believe in him. Now we can say, He who governs in heaven

and on earth, and whom all things obey, is the child who was born, the son who was given for us.

The names and characters here ascribed to him, are not only expressive of what he is in himself, but of what he is engaged to be to them.

- 1. His name shall be called Wonderful. In another place the word is rendered Secret. Judges 13:18 He is Wonderful in his person, obedience, and sufferings; in his grace, government and glory. So far as we understand his name, the revelation by which, as by a name, he is made known, we may, we must, believe, admire, and adore. But how limited and defective is our knowledge! His name is Secret! Who can by searching find him out? Job 11:7 His greatness is incomprehensible, his wisdom untraceable, his fullness inexhaustible, his power infinite. No one knoweth the Son, but the Father. But they have a true, though not an adequate knowledge of him, who trust, love, and serve him. And in their view he is Wonderful! The apostle expresses the sentiments of their hearts, when says, Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.*
- 2. Another of his names is Counsellor. The great councils of redemption, in which, every concern respecting the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners, was adjusted, were established with him, and in him, before the foundation of the world. And he is our Counsellor or Advocate with the Father, who pleads our cause, and manages all our affairs in perfect righteousness, and with infallible success. So that no suit can possibly miscarry which he is pleased to undertake. To him likewise we must apply (and we shall not apply in vain) for wisdom and direction, in all that belongs to our duty, and the honour of our profession in the present life; in all our difficulties, dangers and cares, we must look to him for guidance and support. This is to be wise unto salvation. His secret is with them that consult him, so that though the world may deem them weak and ignorant babe (and he teaches them to think thus of themselves) they have a cheering and practical knowledge of many important subjects, which are entirely hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own eyes.*
- 3. He is the Mighty God. Though in the office of Mediator, he acts in the character of a servant, his perfections and attributes are truly divine. Only the mighty God, could make a provision capable of answering the demands of the holy law, which we had transgressed. Only the mighty God could be a suitable Shepherd to lead millions of weak helpless creatures to glory, through the many difficulties, dangers, and enemies they are exposed to in their passage. Add to this, the honour, dependence, and obedience, which this great Shepherd claims from his sheep, and absolute and supreme; and they would be guilty of idolatry, if they did not know that he is the mighty God. Though real Christians, who are enlightened and taught by the Holy Spirit may, and do, differ in their views and explanations of some revealed truths, I conceive they must be all agreed in this point, It is not only necessary*

to be known as the only solid foundation of a sinner's hope, but it immediately respects the object of divine worship. For if the Redeemer is not possessed of the incommunicable perfections of Deity, the New Testament in its most obvious and literal signification, would be chargeable, not only with countenancing, but with expressly teaching and enjoining idolatry.

4. Farther he shall be called the Everlasting Father. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, Hebrews 2:11-13 having condescended to assume their human nature. But they are also his children. They are born into his family by the efficacy of his own word and Spirit. From him they derive their spiritual life, being united to him by faith and receiving from first to last out of his fullness. And he is an everlasting Father. Our fathers, according to the flesh; are subject to death; But his relation to them subsists unchangeably, and therefore they cannot be destitute; and he is thus, equally to them all. They live upon the earth, and are removed from it, in a long succession of ages; but He is the father of the everlasting age, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. All generations shall call him blessed.
5. Lastly, He shall be called the Prince of Peace. Whose sovereign prerogative it is to speak peace to his people. Psalms 85:8 And there is no peace, deserving the name, but that which he bestows. The scripture expressly declares, There is no peace to the wicked. Isaiah 17:14 By whatever name we call that thoughtless security and insensibility, in which mankind generally live, while ignorant of God and of themselves, we cannot allow it to be peace. It is the effect of blindness and hardness of heart; it will neither bear reflection nor examination. Can they be said to possess peace, however fatally regardless they may be of futurity, who are at present under the dominion of restless, insatiable and inconsistent passions and appetites? But the kingdom of MESSIAH is a kingdom of peace, and in him, his happy subjects enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding, Philippians 4:7 such as the world can neither give nor take away John 14:27. He has made peace by the blood of his cross, Colossians 1:20 for all that come unto God by him. Until they are in trouble and distress; until they feel the bitterness, and fear the consequences of their sins, and see the impossibility of helping themselves, they will not apply to him; but whenever they do seek him, thus weary and heavy laden, he hears their prayer. Their minds, for a season are like the sea in a storm, they are distressed with guilt, fears, and temptations; but when He reveals his mighty name, and boundless grace to their hearts, and says, Peace, be still, Mark 4:39 there is a great calm. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He gives them peace likewise in a changing troublesome world, by inviting, and enabling them to cast all their cares upon him, and to trust all their concerns in his hands, upon the assurance his word gives them, that he careth for them, and will manage and over-rule every thing for their good. In proportion as their faith realizes his promises, they feel a composure and satisfaction. Knowing that the hairs of their head are numbered, that their afflictions, no less than their comforts, are tokens of his love, that he will give them strength according to

their day, that he will be their guide and their guard even unto death; they are not greatly moved by any events, or disturbed by apprehensions, because their hearts are fixed, Psalms 112:7 trusting in the Lord. Farther, he teaches them (what can only be learnt of him) how to seek and maintain peace among men. His love subdues the power of self, and forms them to a spirit of philanthropy and benevolence; which has often such an effect, that they who dislike them for their attachment to him and to his precepts, and will willingly speak evil of them, are ashamed, and put to silence, by their perseverance in well-doing. Thus their peace increases as a river, which runs with a deeper and a broader stream as it approaches the ocean. For their peace is then strongest and most unshaken, when they draw near to death, and are upon the point of resigning their souls into his hands. This is the time, when, if not before, the false peace of the worldling, will give way to terror and dismay. But mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. Psalms 37:37 It must be allowed, that many of his people, through the power of temptation and remaining unbelief, have, at some seasons, uncomfortable fears concerning a dying hour; but when the time of their dismissal actually arrives, we seldom see them afraid of the summons. There is a strength necessary to support the soul at the approach of death, which is usually withheld until the time of need. But then it is vouchsafed. They who have frequently access to the beds of dying believers, can bear testimony, as eye-witnesses, to the faithfulness of their Lord. How often have we seen them triumphing in the prospect of immortality! As happy, in defiance of pain and sickness, as we can well conceive it possible to be, while in the body, and as sure of heaven as if they were already there before the throne.

Such is the character of Messiah! This is the God whom we adore; our unchangeable friend! His greatness and goodness, his glory and his grace, when once known, fix the heart no more to rove; and fill it with admiration, gratitude, and desire. From hence spring a cheerful, unreserved obedience to his commands, and a deliberate voluntary submission to his holy will. For his people do not serve him, or yield to him by constraint; at least, it is only the pleasing constraint of love, which makes their duty their delight; and their burden and grief is, that they can serve him no better.

Blessings