

**For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 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. (NIV84)**

Theme: The Gospel Promise Isaiah Proclaimed

1. A Child is born for us Sinners
2. His names describe his work
3. He will have an eternal kingdom

It was April 13, 1742, when George Frederic Handel first presented his masterpiece, *Messiah*, in Dublin. For over 271 years many people—believers and unbelievers alike have treasured this work. It's a work that made the words of our text for today famous. While the "Halleluiah Chorus" certainly stands out in Handel's *Messiah*, "For unto us a Child is Born," doesn't stand too far behind it. I'm sure many of you can hear the music in your heads as we read it. But to be sure, these words were already well-known before Handel. They were written by the prophet Isaiah, some 700 years for Christ's birth. For those 700 years many loved and treasured these words. Most rightly saw them as referring to the Messiah. They studied them again and again as they waited for his coming.

We do the same today as we look at the Gospel Promise Isaiah Prophesied. We see that a child was born for sinners, that his names indicate what he would do, and that he will reign forever.

The people of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, didn't want to be ruled by the Lord any longer. They rebelled against him and went after other gods. In the opening lines of Isaiah's book God says, **I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.** He says in chapter two about them, **They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and clasp hands with pagans... Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made.** They were wicked people—no different than the pagans surrounding them. So Isaiah and some of the other prophets warned them again and again. But they refused to listen. The law that Isaiah and the others preached had little effect. They would not change or alter their sinful lives. Most of the kings of Judah only contributed to their immorality. So the prophets said that God's judgment would come down heavy upon them. They would face war. The city of Jerusalem would be destroyed. They would be ripped from their homes and forced to live in exile in Babylon. They would end up the same way as the Northern Kingdom if they didn't turn from their evil ways.

At times, we may act in the same manner. We may not bow down and worship false gods. But we often act as if we don't know God. We behave like the world around us. Sure we may worship the Lord on occasion. But that is only for one hour a week. Outside of that, people may not even be able to tell that we are Christians. We hear God's Word. We know what he says. But it may not correspond with the way we want to live our lives. So like the Israelites, we end up joining in the sinful practices of those around us.

We are rebels. So we should be punished. But we deserve a much worse end than the Jews—we deserve an eternal punishment with the devil.

The book of Isaiah isn't all doom and gloom. In fact it is filled with gospel promises. The book of Isaiah contains more information on the coming Christ than any other book of the Old Testament. And as chapter nine begins, Isaiah promises restoration. They will be delivered and given peace. How? Why? **For to us a child is born, to**

us a son is given. Christ was born for us. For us sinners who rebel against him every day, Christ was born. He wasn't just born for us. He was given to us. He was given so that he could give up his life for us. To suffer through the punishment that we deserve. To die for us. To rise for us. He was born to save us.

But that's not the only thing Isaiah tells us about the Christ. His names also tell us who is he and what he will accomplish.

Wonderful Counselor. A counselor is one who assesses a problem. He comes up with a plan to fix it. Then he makes sure the strategy is carried through. That is what Jesus is. But he is also a wonderful counselor. He's wonderful because of his plan and what he would do. The problem, of course, is sin and what sin deserves. The plan is the plan of salvation. It includes him giving up the wonders of heaven, making himself low, and putting himself under the law. It includes a perfect life, an innocent death, and a glorious resurrection. His plan is given as a free gift of his grace. His plan is received through faith—not earned by works. And so he is truly a Wonderful Counselor.

Mighty God. This is not an honorary title. This is a clearly a reference to the divinity of Jesus. He is God. Sure he was to be born of a virgin. Isaiah tells us that much in chapter seven. But he isn't just a mere man. He is God himself. True God and true man. He had to be in order to redeem us. No mere man could live a perfect life or pay for our sins. And no mere God could make himself under the law or serve as our substitute. Throughout his ministry Christ gave us indications of his divinity. And when he rose from the dead he left little doubt as to who he is. Because he is God we know that we are saved.

Everlasting Father. This is not saying that the son is also the Father. This is not saying that there is no such thing as the Trinity. Rather that he is like our Father. He is our loving and kind Guardian. He never wants anything to harm us. He wants only what is best for us in our spiritual lives.

And this Father is everlasting. He never grows old or tired. He never get's sick of us. He never stops doing what he was born to do. He is our Everlasting Father because he never stops loving us and saving us.

Prince of Peace. We don't have to look around very hard to realize that this world is not full of peace. It's full of hatred and strife. School shootings are becoming more and more common. Terrorists attack innocent civilians. The local news is filled with stories of violence every night. Yet Christ is the Prince of Peace. The angels announced peace on earth to the shepherds that first Christmas night. He is the prince of peace because he gives us true peace. That is peace between sinners and their God. Peace of mind knowing that he will not treat us as our sins deserve. For he has punished his Son in our place. Christ accomplished this by his suffering and death. Isaiah mentions this peace in chapter 53, **the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, by his wounds we are healed.** He is the Prince of Peace because he gives us the peace of forgiveness. That is peace that only he can bring.

Verse seven may not be as well known as verse six, because Handel didn't include it in his, *Messiah*. But it contains the same gospel promises and gives us the same comfort.

In verse seven we see that Christ will reign forever. **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.** David's throne was cut down by Babylon when Jerusalem was destroyed. There was no longer a king on David's throne ruling over God's children. But Christ reigns on David's throne. That is because he is a Son of David. And his kingdom is one that keeps on increasing. The more the gospel is spread the larger his kingdom increases.

The only way Jesus can have an eternal kingdom is if Jesus is eternal. As God he was before the beginning. And as God, death couldn't hold him down. He rose from the dead. He has power over death. And now he sits on his throne in heaven where he rules over all things. And he will do this forever.

But reigning over a kingdom forever is pointless if you have no one to rule over. But Jesus does. He has subjects to rule over. And he will rule over them forever. Not because more and more subjects will be born. But because he will make his subjects live forever. Because

Christ rose from the dead, we can rest assured that we too will rise from the dead. On the Last Day Christ will return and raise all people from the dead. He will take all believers to live with him in heaven. And there we will live under his kingdom for eternity. We will live forever because a son was born for us. If he wasn't, we'd suffer through an eternal death. We'd be living with the devil forever. So Jesus was born for us. He was born to save us. He snatched us from the kingdom of the devil so that he might rule us forever in his heavenly kingdom.

There is a good reason why so many people treasure Handel's *Messiah*. It contains some of the more comforting words in all of Scripture. For unto us sinners Christ was born to save us and rule over us. Handel didn't make the gospel promise Isaiah prophesied famous—Christ did. For he is our Lord and Savior. And he was born for us. Amen.