

Title: What Child is This?  
Text: Isaiah 9.6-7  
Theme: The humility, greatness and goodness of our God and Savior  
Series: Advent #2, 2024  
Prop Stmtnt: The promised child-savior is God Himself

The Assyrian empire ruled the ANE until it was conquered by the Babylonian empire which ruled until it was conquered by the Medo-Persian empire until it was conquered by Alexander the Great and the Grecian empire, which split into 4 empires that were eventually conquered by the Roman empire. While each of these empires are foretold by the OT prophets, the Bible is written from the perspective of the plan and people of God. God's plan and people are primary. World empires are secondary and simply a means that God uses to carry out his plan.

Isaiah was a prophet whose book stands, in my opinion, as Mt. Everest in the Old Testament. Isaiah lived in the southern kingdom of Judah during the reign of 4 successive kings (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah). Great-grandfather to great-grandson. 4 kings and 4 transitions of power without chaos. Meanwhile, during that same time, the Northern Kingdom was descending into chaos. The Northern Kingdom, Israel had 7 different kings, marred by assassinations, civil wars and the eventual destruction of the northern kingdom by the Assyrian Empire. No one could stop the Assyrians. They were powerful, ruthless and terrifying. Ahaz (king of Judah) tried to buy them off and become an ally of them. He was leading his nation (the people of God) to be servants to a foreign power and to bow before foreign gods. Isaiah the prophet is warning Ahaz and others NOT to trust in your diplomacy, alliances, or in anything other than God.

This is the major choice before you. You can try to rely upon your wisdom, strength and resources for life now and forever to come, or you can discard all that and trust in God alone. In preparation for Christmas, we are studying one of the promises that Isaiah made about Christ. This promise was evidence that God put forth for why it was right, wise and necessary to trust in God. For Judah, the world around you is failing. The darkness is growing. The threats are on your doorstep. But God is not going to abandon you. Trust him. He is the only one who can relieve your oppression and stop all war. And he will by sending us a child who will deliver us. This child will be born. He will be one of us. He will be a man given to us by God who will carry the government on his shoulders. But there is more to this child. Isaiah's prophecy, 750 years before the birth of Christ goes on to answer the question of: Why is this child a reason for us to trust God? What is this child and what is he going to do?

Read text: Isaiah 9.6-7

The fact that God makes detailed promises that he fulfills in every detail is all the evidence we need to trust God. But God is doing more than predicting the future. He is showing both his sovereign control of all things and what kind of an incredible God he is. This child is none other than God himself. God is going to come to us and for us as one of us because God is amazingly humble, gentle, yet glorious, great and good. This morning we are going to look carefully at the

last half of v.6, where we are told about this child. And what we are promised is overwhelming and comforting.

What is at the heart of the terror in a scary movie? The grip of the terror is this idea that you have an enemy who is after you who knows where you are at all times, but you don't know where he is. He knows what you are thinking, what you are planning, what your fears, vulnerabilities and weaknesses are. It is as if he is inside of your mind and can hear your thoughts. He knows what you love, and whom you love and will find them and destroy them in order to get to you. And what is worse, you cannot stop him. You can never get rid of him. He will always find a way to get you. That is what nightmares are made of. Now, what would the opposite of that be?

What if there was someone who was for you in the greatest way possible. Who knows where you are at all times and is always there to help you, who knows what you are thinking and is always there to help you think better, who knows your fears and wants to calm them, your weaknesses and is there to protect you, who knows what you love and care about and loves them and cares for them more than you do. And what is even better is that he cannot be stopped. He is all powerful and he is eternal. He will always help you now and forever. This is the promise of God set forth in this verse. The message is very clear. 1) Look at what God promises. 2) Compare this promise to all other promises. 3) Make a decision: who are you going to believe? Who are you going to trust?

1. **Look at what God promises.** (6)

God promises you:

a. **The Wonderful Counselor who gives supernatural wisdom.**

Wonderful Counselor means a counsellor whose wisdom is so amazing that it works wonders. His wisdom is supernatural. His guidance is absolutely perfect. When David was king, he had an advisor named Ahithophel whose counsel was so good and true that it was like listening to the voice of God. The same thing was said about Solomon in his early years. I mentioned last week that it is easy, natural, even instinctive for us to accuse God of not knowing what he is doing or not realizing how his management of the details of life are not making any sense. God's counsel is perfect and therefore his plans are incapable of failing. God is incapable of doing you wrong because God is great and good. God knows everything, which means that he knows you. He knows everything about you. He knows your thoughts. He knows your thoughts and yet he didn't kill you in your sleep last night. When you think about some of these things like supernatural wisdom, it could terrify us. This child is wonder counselor because as God he knows my thoughts. Try to imagine being in a conversation or a social setting with someone who knows everything that you are thinking. Our God is more than someone who knows the darkness of our thoughts and the lies we are prone to believe. He does not more than expose them, he has come to change our darkness to light and change the things that we believe from lies to truth. He has come to give life, not take it.

**b. The Mighty God who will fight for you.**

The term for “mighty” is a word that means warrior. In 10.21, this is a title that describes Yahweh. The word of God, “el” is a term for deity. Taken together it means God – warrior or Mighty God who fights. Since this child is for us and is to us, we are to understand that this child is the Mighty God who comes to fight for us.

What do people need? We need to know what to do and we need the power to do it. These first two descriptions of the child reveal that his supernatural wisdom tells us what we need to know and his supernatural strength will protect his people.

The result of his supernatural wisdom and his supernatural strength is seen in the next two descriptions. This child will provide...

**c. The love and protection of a Father who is forever.**

I’ve presided over funerals of men who were a profound gift to their families. Their lives were like the walls of a sheep pen that provided security for the others to sleep. When my family would go on trips, we would often drive late at night and many times all through the night. I remember looking in the rear-view mirror to see my kids asleep and next to me to see Cathi resting as well. I felt this responsibility as a gift, a privilege to be responsible to get my family safely from one point to another. They trusted me not to drive off the road or fall asleep. The truth is, there were plenty of times when I would get sleepy, and I could have gotten distracted. But this term, everlasting Father describes what kind of an effect this child will have on those who trust him. He will provide care, protection, affection, as well as provisions for those entrusted to him. He will feed them, clothe them and along with wonderful things, he gives himself to them. We are aware of homes where the dads struggled to provide things, but they sure knew how to love well. In other cases, there are dads who provided all sorts of things, but were absent physically or emotionally. When you trace how this term “father” is used of God throughout this section, it speaks of one who is a perfect provider and is present.

What could be greater than that? As I said, I’ve presided over funerals of men who were profound gifts to their families. What could be greater is for men like this to never die. This child will be fatherly and he will be last forever. He will never leave his family in a panic over who is in charge or what is going to happen because he deserted them or was taken away from them in death. He is everlasting.

The Assad family ruled for 54 years in Syria. The terror of that reign has given way to the uncertainty and fear for some of what will replace it. It is amazing and unusual to have great leaders whom you can implicitly trust. The ones who come after them rarely live up to that same level. But here is a King who is perfect and he is everlasting. His kingdom will never be in flux or in fear. It was (and in some cases today) customary to address a monarch by saying, “O king, live forever.” It may be customary, but it is meaningless in that the king won’t and not

matter how much you say it, no king will. No king, that is but this King! Think of this. This King will forever be the perfect father who gives of himself in love for the people of his kingdom.

**d. The King who brings peace to your world and to your soul.**

The final term is prince of peace. Like the others it is a wonderfully rich promise. When we think of peace, we usually think of the absence of conflict. Let's say that a couple of your kids are in an argument and it is getting out of hand. You send them to their rooms so that you can have some peace and quiet. Do you have peace and quiet? You may have quiet, but there is not actually peace because peace means well-being. The Hebrew word for peace is "salem" that is directly connected to the word "shalom." Shalom is a Jewish greeting that is popularly used to say "hello" but is also a wish that the person you are greeting has inward wholeness and completeness. To be in a position of being at peace with God means that you are experiencing the full realization of his favor. You are completely satisfied. By the way, the name Jerusalem means city of peace, or city of wholeness, favor, completeness. This child is the Prince of peace.

The term prince carries with it a sense of royalty and authority. He has the power to stop all war (vs. 4-5) but there is more. He is able to bring wholeness, favor and completeness to us because he himself is whole, and perfect and he rules with perfection.

One of the reporters who toured the ransacked office of Assad, overthrown and former ruler of Syria, he found packages of anti-anxiety pills in the office. Was the coming revolution and with it, the exposure of his deeds pressing home terror in the heart of the man who brought terror to hundreds of thousands of others? When our thoughts and deeds are threatened with exposure we fear because we have seen how they are used to destroy a person. Beloved, that is not how God likes to deal with us. He knows our thoughts and deeds, but comes to us in order to change us. Left to ourselves we would destroy our lives, so God did not leave us to ourselves. He came to us. For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given and what an amazing Son he is.

Step back from this text for a second. I remind you that this text is a promise that God made designed to cause you to believe in him and believe him. This is also a promise that God has kept. This child has come. The Son was given. For God so loved the world that he gave is one and only Son that whoever believes on him will not die but will have eternal life. Look at this promise and look at our God who has kept this promise and compare this promise to all other promises.

**2. Compare this promise to all other promises.**

When God makes a promise, he keeps it because he does not forget, he controls all things, he is truthful and he is good. A friend of mine's mother recently died. When she was young, her dad promised her that he was going to come and pick her up and take her out for a time together. She sat on her sidewalk step from morning until evening that day. He never came. For the rest of her life, she would fight against being overwhelmed with feelings of unworthiness and abandonment. Her battle with depression hung heavy over his home.

Investment companies produce ads and brochures that picture retirement life traveling to exotic places, living by the sea, or enjoying a carefree life. The pictures are making you a promise, but when you look at the fine print, they say that they can't guarantee this.

Sin makes promises that steal your life, and take your joy. Instead of satisfaction, you are left with addictions. Instead of love and affection, you are left with loneliness and emptiness. Instead of peace, you have fear.

Last year \$120 billion was wagered in sports betting in this country. That number is expected to be over \$130 billion this year. People, particularly young men are losing a lot of money with many cases of people ruining their lives. Part of the impact is seen in job loss, bankruptcy, gambling-related crimes, health-care related issues and of course ruining credit scores that have rippling effects on credit card rates, insurance rates, ability to get car or house loans etc. But when you watch the ads they promise success, thrills, excitement, happiness and of course, huge payoffs. They are lying to you. The algorithms in the apps "are specifically designed to encourage more engagement through a strategically selected mix of small wins (at first to make you think you are good at this) then near misses (to make you think that you almost had that huge payout), and then you are hooked and your losses are then big because you are now betting large amounts to attempt to cover what you lost. They draw you in and trap you in order to suck you dry. They don't care that you are ruining your life, your marriage, or your career. Can you explain how rational appearing people find it almost impossible to resist the urge to give away so much money and do it over and over and over? Sports betting lies to you, and the evidence of those lies is plain. It's no different than the lies of pornography, weed, drugs, or illicit sex. All of these promise you "life" while they steal your life.

Compare that to God. God's promises do not ruin your life, they give you life. He does not draw you in to suck you dry and destroy you. He gives of himself to you. Compare the promises of your world to the promises of God.

### **3. Make a decision: Who are you going to believe?**

We have been looking at one of the many, many promises that God has made and kept. God has done this so that we can see his record. He gave these promises to his prophets so that they would write them down and preserve them for us. There is no fine print. You can study them. Study them. Be informed so that you can see the wisdom and security that comes from trusting in God. There is more. God made a promise to give us a child, a son to save us. He did. He gave us Jesus who came and died on the cross in order to pay the debt of our sin so we could be forgiven and adopted into his family – forever. Why would you not believe him? Why would you hold back the affection of your heart from him? What else or who else is worthy of your trust? Who else can give you life?