

Mighty God

Isaiah 9:6

By Pastor Jason Van Bommel

You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;

they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Review: Wonderful Counselor

Last week, we worked through verses 3-5 and saw that the coming of Jesus as the dawning of light in the deep darkness brings joy, freedom, and peace to God's people. The joy is compared to the joy of a great harvest or of dividing the spoils of war after a great victory in battle. The freedom is compared to being set free from the oppressive yoke of a cruel captor or a tyrannical oppressor. The peace is likened to taking all of the muddy and bloody garments of brutal warfare and burning them in fire, for they will never be needed again.

Then, verse 6 announces more clearly the coming of the One whose arrival will bring the long-awaited joy, freedom, and peace to God's people. He is announced as a child who will be born – which speaks of His human parentage and ancestry. Every faithful Jewish person would know the child would have to be born to someone in the line of David, as a descendant of the man after God's own heart to whom God had made the wonderful covenant promise that one of His descendants would sit on his throne forever. Yet this child who would be born would also be a son who would be given, and the four throne names we're focusing on show us the divine nature of this Promised One, for He is the Son of God, given by God for us.

“*The government will be upon His shoulders*” – This is an interesting contrast to the freedom promised in verse 4. The burden and the staff of the oppressor, which had rested on the shoulders of God’s people, would be broken in a powerful and unexpectedly miraculous way as on the Day of Midian – the Day of Midian refers to the deliverance God brought His people from the overwhelming horde of Midianite forces, choosing to use Gideon and 300 men, armed with clay pots, torches, and trumpets. These 300 miraculously routed an army of over 120,000 men through the power of God. The only thing more miraculous and unexpected than that is an itinerant rabbi son of a carpenter from Galilee (of all places!) defeating the whole host of hell, all the demonic forces oppressing and opposing God’s people, by triumphing over them through a bloody Roman cross.

But what happens to the burden once the oppressor’s rod and staff are broken? The Promised One – the child born, the Son given – takes the burden of government, of rule and authority, on His shoulders. And what does He say to us now?

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” – Matthew 11:28-30, ESV

So, He breaks the oppressor’s rod and staff from off of our shoulders, shoulders the responsibility of government Himself, and then invites us to find rest for our souls by coming under His yoke and learning from Him, for He is gentle and lowly in heart.

And then come the four throne names of Jesus:

1. **Wonderful Counselor**, which emphasizes His supernatural wisdom, His wonder-working powerful wisdom. He gives counsel for victory with powerful, supernatural wisdom.
2. **Mighty God**, which emphasizes His strength and power for battle, Mighty to Save.
3. **Everlasting Father**, which we’ll look at next week, emphasizes His heart of commitment to protect and provide for His own people.
4. **Prince of Peace**, which will be our focus on Christmas Eve, emphasizes the goal, the outcome, of His reign, as He alone is the One whose rule brings true peace.

Another way to look at these four:

1. Wonderful Counselor: The Mind of Christ
2. Mighty God: The Arm of Christ
3. Everlasting Father: The Heart of Christ
4. Prince of Peace: The Goal/Mission of Christ

A. **We Need Mighty God**

So, let’s turn our attention to Mighty God. In Hebrew, this is El Gibbor. El is the most common word used for God in the Old Testament. The adjective *Gibbor*, which means mighty, powerful, strong, valiant, champion, chief.

Of itself. *Gibbor*, or mighty, is used most commonly in the Old Testament of men – from Nimrod, who was a mighty hunter in the face of the Lord, to Goliath, who was the *Gibbor* of the Philistines, and from Boaz who married Ruth, who was said to be a mighty man, and King Saul, to David’s mighty men.

But God is El Gibbor, He is the highest and ultimate perfection of the might, strength, heroism, valiancy reflected in these men. For God's people living in Isaiah's day and awaiting the Promised king of the line of David, they would look back at Solomon as the best example of a wonderful counselor as king, the wisest man who had ever lived, and at Solomon's father, King David, as the best example of Gibbor, the Mighty Warrior-King. For as Saul had slain his thousands of Philistines, David slew his tens of thousands. David was the warrior-king who was Israel's champion, defeating Goliath and bringing peace to Israel, and Solomon was the wise ruler, building the Temple and Jerusalem, extending Israel's regional dominance and global influence, ruling with wisdom unmatched in human history.

But Isaiah's prophecy here is that the Coming King, the Promised One, the child who would be born and the Son who would be given, would far outshine the wisdom of Solomon or the strength and warrior prowess of David. For He would not just be *Gibbor*, but *El Gibbor*, not just Mighty, but Mighty God.

In the very next chapter of Isaiah, in Isaiah 10:21, we read, "*A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.*"

The first place in the Bible where Gibbor is used to describe God, where we read of "the Mighty God," is in Deuteronomy 10:17: "*For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.*" Every mighty human ruler has weaknesses, and those weakness are shown in the fact that he gives partial treatment toward some. King David needed Joab's help and support and he dared not oppose him, even though Joab did some very unrighteous things in David's service. Other mighty rulers show their weakness when they can be bribed. Samson was one of the mightiest warriors the world has ever seen, but in weakness he succumbed to the allurements of Delilah. King Ahab was a mighty warrior king over Israel, and yet he was terrified or both Elijah and his wicked wife, Jezebel. God alone is "the great, the mighty, and the awesome God – God of gods and Lord of lords."

How do we see the might of the Mighty God displayed?

Creator – He alone has the power to call forth the whole universe and create heaven and earth with the power of His word.

Sustainer – God didn't just create the universe; He also upholds it. He has strength and power to sustain His creation. At the end of the Book of Job, we read of God coming in the whirlwind to Job, and He challenges Job with His strength and might, particularly as the One who created all things and who sustains all things.

Regarding His creation of the world, God asks Job:

*"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone,
when the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"* – Job 38:4-7, ESV

But then, regarding His sustaining of the world, God asks:

*“Have you commanded the morning since your days began,
and caused the dawn to know its place,
that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,
and the wicked be shaken out of it?*

*“Have you entered into the springs of the sea,
or walked in the recesses of the deep?*

*“Where is the way to the dwelling of light,
and where is the place of darkness,
that you may take it to its territory
and that you may discern the paths to its home?*

*“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow,
or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,
which I have reserved for the time of trouble,
for the day of battle and war?*

*What is the way to the place where the light is distributed,
or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth? – Job 38:12-24 (selected), ESV*

So, the mighty God can be seen in His works of Creation and Providence, in the making of the world and in His constant sustaining of it.

Defender – God’s might is further seen for His people in being their defender. One of the most common images in the Psalms is of God as fortress, rock, defender, shield, strong tower, and refuge for His people.

*I love you, O LORD, my strength.
The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
and I am saved from my enemies. – Psalm 18:1-3, ESV*

He is the one mighty to defend us from the attacks of our enemies. Sometimes this image of the Mighty God as the saving defense of His people is warm with affection and loving power, as in Zephaniah 3:17:

*The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing. (ESV)*

Here, *El* is *Gibbor* (Mighty) to save, and it is joyful, loving and rejoicing salvation.

Warrior – But God doesn’t just defend His people from the attacks of their enemies; He also goes on the offensive and defeats the enemies of God. In the parting of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh’s army, God showed Himself to be a strong warrior to rescue His people, and the Song of Moses celebrated:

“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;

*the horse and his rider^[a] he has thrown into the sea.
The LORD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
The LORD is a man of war;
the LORD is his name.” – Ex. 15:1-3, ESV*

B. Christ is Mighty God

We see Jesus as the Mighty God in human flesh in that He is mighty in these same ways, as Creator and Sustainer, as Defender/Redeemer and as Warrior/Captain of our Salvation.

One great passage that shows us so much of this is Colossians 1:15-20 –

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. 19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (ESV)

Creator – “by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible or invisible . . . all things were created through Him and for Him”

He is the Word of God by which the worlds were brought into being: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*” – John 1:1-3, ESV

Sustainer: “*and in him all things hold together.*” Jesus is the glue that holds the universe together. He is holding you together right now, and if He stopped holding you together, you would come unraveled in an instant and would no longer exist.

“*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*” – Hebrews 1:3, ESV

Redeemer: We also see Jesus as our defender and redeemer, in verses 19-20 of Colossians 1 – “*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*”

By reconciling us to God and making peace by the blood of His cross, Jesus defends us from the attacks and accusations of the enemy of our souls, the accuser of the brethren. Satan no longer has any weapons to throw at us, because all our sins are forgiven and we are at peace with God.

Captain of our Salvation – If we look ahead one chapter to Colossians 2, we’ll see the work of Jesus as the Warrior, defeating our enemies, not just protecting us from their vicious attacks – “*you, who were dead in your trespasses*

and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” (Col. 2:13-15, ESV)

These verses unpack in more detail what Jesus did for us and for our salvation on the cross. By cancelling all wrongs against us He disarmed our enemies.

C. Is Christ Your Wonderful Counselor & Mighty God?

So, Christ comes to us as the child who is born, the Son who is give, with the wisdom of the wonderful counselor and the strength and warrior’s might of the Mighty God. That’s who He is, but is He YOUR Wonderful Counselor and is He YOUR Mighty God?

What does it take for Jesus to be your Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God, and not just the Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God? It requires faith and repentance, a turning and a trusting.

Faith: Trusting Him

So, the first question is: Do you trust Him? Why would you not trust Him? People are untrustworthy if they are not truly good or not really wise or not very strong. If someone is lacking any of these three qualities – goodness, wisdom, or strength – you would have good cause to hold back a bit in your confidence in them.

But Jesus is not lacking in any of these attributes! Jesus is perfectly good. As we’ll see next week in more detail, He is our everlasting Father. He is gentle and lowly in heart. He loved us so much He was willing to pour out His life unto death on the cross for us in our place. Even before that, He loved us so much, He left the splendor and glory of heaven where He dwelt with the Father and the Spirit in unapproachable light and received the unbroken adoration of the angels, living beyond pain, sorrow, or trouble of any kind. He was willing to stoop so low as to be incarnate in the womb of a teenage girl and then born of her and wrapped in strips of cloth and laid in a manger – no room in the inn, only the worship of lowly, outcast shepherds. Then, a life of being misunderstood, abandoned, falsely accused, despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Then, the cross – oh, the agony of the cross! – all for us and for our salvation! All for us and for our redemption! All in love. Such love.

Jesus is not only perfectly good, but He is infinitely wise. His wisdom is bottomless and boundless. He is the LOGOS, the wisdom of God that created and upholds the universe. He knows all and He always knows what is best.

And Jesus is perfectly strong, mighty to save – the mighty creator, sustainer, defender, redeemer, and champion of our salvation. There is no one else like Him. He calmed stormy seas with a word, cast out a legion of demons, brought the dead back to life with a word – even when they had been dead for four days. He made the lame to walk and the blind to see. He fed the 5,000 and then the 4,000. He healed the woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years and had spent all of her money on doctors who could not help her, and He healed lepers who had been cast off from their community as dirty and hopeless. Finally, He bore the full weight of the wrath on God on His strong shoulders and He overthrew the gates of death and hell, snatching the keys to both in His victory over them. He alone is truly Mighty to Save in every way!

So, are you trusting Him, truly? Or are you living in fear? Do you trust Him for your future? For your marriage? For your children? For your finances? Are you truly trusting Him for your eternal salvation? If He can defeat your greatest

enemies and bring you eternal life, surely His arm is not too short to save you from lesser things, if you cast all your anxieties on Him. Do you trust Him?

Repentance: Trusting Him ALONE

And then, do you trust ONLY Him? Or are you hedging your bets by having a backup plan or two?

This reminds me of a joke a Christian comedian told one time of seeing a soldier getting ready to head into battle. The Christian noticed the guy had a necklace with a cross, a Star of David, a crescent moon and star, a yin-yang symbol, and some other things. So, he asked the soldier about the necklace, and the soldier said, “Well, I believe. I definitely believe.”

“I can see that. But what exactly do you believe? I can’t tell.”

“Well, when you’re a man in my position, you can’t really afford to have anybody angry, so I just believe it all.”

Is that us sometimes? We trust in Jesus but we’ve got a couple of contingency plans? Or we have one hand on Jesus and the other wildly grasping for anything the world might offer – financial security, political power, social prominence, family, friends. These things are all gifts of God, of course. But have we mistaken the gift for the giver? Are we trusting in Jesus ALONE?

This isn’t a call to be irresponsible or reckless, but it’s a call to graciously, lovingly, gratefully submit to His Lordship of our lives in humble obedience and loving discipleship, for all He has done for us!

Jesus is good, He is wise. He is Mighty God. We can trust Him, We must trust Him, and Him alone.