

PELE'

Isaiah 9:6

Two large posters hung on the closet doors in my bedroom throughout my entire teenage years. On one door hung a huge poster of Johnny Bench, arguably the best catcher ever to play the game of baseball. He was a superstar on the Cincinnati Reds during the 1970s, and he was my idol.

On the other closet door hung an equally large poster of perhaps the greatest soccer player that has ever played the game. His name was Pele'. Pele' played for Brazil, and for 20 years, beginning in 1958, he established a winning record and a standard of excellence that may never be equalled. Toward the end of his career, he agreed to play in a professional soccer league here in the United States, and I made sure that I saw him play in a game live, when he was a member of the New York Cosmos.

Pele' was spectacular, his skills with a soccer ball are legendary. He scored more goals than anyone in history, and he scored them in many different ways. He could score on a headball, flying through the air to knock the ball past the goaltender with a powerful twist of his head. But his famous bicycle kick was the most spectacular. With his back to the goal, he would jump up into the air and do a complete somersault, spinning his feet first. At the peak of the somersault, he would be lying flat on his back, upside down in the air, and he would kick the ball over his head and into the goal, past a goaltender who never knew what had happened. It was awesome. Pele' was absolutely magnificent.

Pele', as he had been called ever since his childhood, never knew what that famous nickname meant. He writes in his

autobiography that to the best of his knowledge, it didn't come from any other language. It was just a childhood nickname that stuck with him throughout his entire professional career.

But the word pele' does exist in at least one language, the Hebrew language, and we read it today from Isaiah 9:6. The word "wonderful" is the Hebrew word pele'.

Though I doubt Pele' had any awareness that his name meant "wonderful", it certainly was an accurate name for him. Still, "wonderful" isn't even a strong enough translation of this word. How about spectacular, marvelous, awesome, magnificent, extraordinary. That gives you a taste of this great Hebrew word pele'.

But the word really means something even more, it means supernatural. It means miraculous. It means something, or someone, that is superhuman, who is beyond being merely mortal. The word actually is a description of deity, it describes a God.

Something that is "wonderful" is something that has supernatural power. A "wonder" is a miracle performed by that supernatural power. And God alone is the only one who can perform signs, wonders, and miracles.

So to whom is Isaiah referring? Who is the wonderful counselor? Who is the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace? As you read the whole Bible, it becomes very obvious who Isaiah speaks of. He is speaking of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is given many names in the Bible, but nowhere else is he given four names all at once, names filled with as much meaning and significance as these. As we think about the Child

who is born, the son who is given, as we think about the obvious fulfillment of that in the birth of Jesus, we will be studying today two of those four names given to Jesus through the prophet Isaiah, beginning with the name "wonderful counselor."

Some translations, including the King James and the New King James, split this first name into two names, "wonderful" and "counselor". Yet I believe that these names are better combined into one, because it gives all the names a definite symmetry, each of them two words in the original Hebrew. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. So this morning, the theme is that Jesus is our "Wonderful Counselor." Let's see what that means. First,

I. JESUS HAS THE SUPERNATURAL POWER OF GOD.

He is wonderful, he is himself a wonder. He is supernatural, he is God himself. And because he is God, he has supernatural power, miraculous power.

Listen to how this word is used in the book of Judges.

Judges 13:17 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, "What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?" 18 And the Angel of the Lord said to him, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?"

Translated "secret" in the original King James, "beyond understanding" in the NIV. The word is correctly translated wonderful. This was the angel of the Lord, and this was the Lord himself, because his name was "wonderful."

And this angel did wonders, proving he was God.

Judg. 13:19 "So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the Lord. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on— 20 it

happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar—the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. 21 When the Angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the Lord. 22 And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!"

Manoah and his wife saw God's supernatural power, and his name is wonderful. That is nothing less than Jesus himself, who is wonderful, that is, he has the supernatural power of God. And,

A. Jesus' power was demonstrated by performing miracles.

You could immediately think of lots of his miracles. He healed the sick and raised men from the dead. He fed thousands of people with just a few pieces of food, and he transformed water into wine.

But I want to think even deeper this morning, and mention the miracle of creation, perhaps God's greatest miracle and his greatest wonder. Proves his power exceeds everything else. And it was Jesus Christ who performed this great miracle, with his father.

John 1:3 "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

Hebr. 1:2 "[God] has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."

But God not only created the world from nothing, he performed a greater wonder. He redeemed his people who had rebelled against him. And at Christmas, we celebrate another

one of God's great wonders, the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Born to a woman named Mary, announced by the angel.

Luke 1:30-33 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Luke 1:34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" GOOD QUESTION!

Luke 1:35-37 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

The birth of Jesus Christ was a wonder, a miracle. It was supernatural, no other explanation. He was born to a woman who was a virgin, who had never been with a man. Nothing is impossible with God.

How should we respond to that great wonder? How should we respond to this wonderful display of God's supernatural power?

B. Jesus' power demands our loyal devotion.

God demonstrates his power for one primary reason. For us to respond with loyal devotion.

Not always how the OT people of Israel responded.

Ps. 78:12-16 "He did miracles in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan. He divided the sea and led them through; he made the water stand firm like a wall. He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night. He split the rocks in the desert and gave them water as abundant as the seas; he brought streams out of a rocky crag and made water flow down like rivers."

Ps. 78:17-20 "But they continued to sin against him, rebelling in the desert against the Most High. They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved. They spoke against God, saying, "Can God spread a table in the desert? When he struck the rock, water gushed out, and streams flowed abundantly. But can he also give us food? Can he supply meat for his people?"

Ps. 78:32 "In spite of all this, they kept on sinning; in spite of his wonders, they did not believe."

Let's not be like those Israelites. Rather, when we see God's wonders, performed by Jesus Christ, let us show him our devotion. Along with Moses. Listen to his praise:

Exod. 15:11-13 "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them. "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling."

Listen to the praise of Asaph:

Ps. 77:11-15 "I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? You are the

God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph."

As you think about Jesus' birth, stop and consider all God's wonders. Most especially, his work of redemption. All those wonders call for your complete love and devotion.

Jesus is wonderful, he has the supernatural power of God. And,

II. JESUS HAS THE SUPERNATURAL WISDOM OF GOD.

He is the wonderful counselor. The essence of Jesus' miracles was his wisdom. He has the wisdom of God. He is the wisdom of God.

Illus: We live in an age that desperately needs wisdom. We live in an age when teenagers take assault rifles into schools and kill their classmates. We live in an age where prisons are full and we are setting prisoners free for no other than there is no place to keep them. We live in an age in which our country wages a war on terrorism, and seems too often seems hopelessly frustrated. We live in an age where over half of all marriages end in divorce, where children carry weapons to school, where drug use and drunkenness are common place, and sexual immorality is rampant. And ours may well be the best country on earth. Think about that just a little.

I can't to begin to describe life in Saudi Arabia. Or North Korea. Pakistan, or Iran. We live in a world that desperately needs wisdom. Yet the world in which we live rejects the very wisdom that can give life. The world in which we live rejects the wisdom of Jesus Christ, the supernatural wisdom of Jesus Christ, the wonderful counsel of Jesus Christ.

Why? Because people in our day, people in every day, do not want to submit to the authority of that wisdom.

A. Jesus' wisdom gives him unique authority.

Imagine yourself listening to this new, young son of a local carpenter who has the boldness to enter your synagogue one Saturday, back around 27 AD. Imagine yourself listening as this untrained teacher dares to read from the prophecy of Isaiah.

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke records the drama of that day.

Luke 4:20 " Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Imagine if I did that to you here today. You would probably fall out of your pew. Get pretty scared if you thought I was serious. Jesus is claiming to have the authority of God. And that is an astounding claim. Indeed, his wonderful, supernatural wisdom gives him that authority.

Listen to what else the prophet Isaiah says about Jesus and his authority to bring justice:

Isa. 11:1 "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. 2 The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. 3 His delight is in the fear of the Lord, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor

decide by the hearing of His ears; 4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

Jesus has the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and that wisdom gives him unique authority. And,

B. Jesus' wisdom demands our loyal obedience.

That's the problem with authority! That's why we don't like it. We have to submit to it. We have to obey it. Yet in our pride, we think that we know better than God, how to run our lives. But listen to the wise prophet Isaiah:

Isa. 40:12-14 "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance? Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding?"

You don't know better than God how your life should turn out! You don't know better than him how you ought to live.

If you believe that Jesus is the wonderful counselor, and believe therefore that he has supernatural wisdom, then you have to obey! If you believe this is the word of God, you have to submit to it and obey it. You can't pick and choose.

That's my fear among Christians today. Even among Christians who correctly believe that this is the infallible word of

God, without error. If we believe that, we must show it. If you believe this book, then you must obey this book. And where you discover that your life doesn't measure up to this book, you must repent with sincere humility. There is such a danger, even among those of us who believe this book, to believe that these standards describe some sort of idealized life that is impossible for us. Therefore, we ignore certain things.

Listen to how Job responded after the Lord had spoken to him, and when he realized that his life fell short of God's standards.

Job 42:1 "Then Job answered the Lord and said: 2 "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. 3 You asked, Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' 5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. 6 Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes."

My friends, that is the proper response. Jesus' wisdom demands our loyal obedience. And that we repent in dust and ashes when we fail. For if Jesus is the wonderful counselor, and this book is his wonderful counsel.

Isa. 28:29 "This also comes from the Lord of hosts, Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance."

But there is one other important consequence of Jesus being the wonderful counselor. He is not only our counselor, giving us instructions about how to live today, he is the wonderful counselor who has determined the eternal purpose of God.

III. JESUS HAS DETERMINED THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD.

What do I mean? Why do I bring that up? I want to fully understand this name given to Jesus, Wonderful Counselor. I want to fully understand what God tells us about his counsel. And I want you to understand that I am not just talking about some rules for things we should or shouldn't do.

If you really believe the Bible, and really understand Christianity, then you know that God has an eternal purpose. If you really understand the Bible, then you know that before the creation of the world, God decided and determined the course of all events that would follow. That course of events is called his eternal purpose.

And that eternal purpose is part of this wonderful counsel that we have been studying today. And,

A. The wonderful counsel of Jesus will be perfectly accomplished.

You can't escape this idea in the Bible: what God has determined in the past will actually happen. Everything which God has predestined will actually come to pass.

Isa. 14:24,27 "The LORD Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand... For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?"

Isa. 46:10-11 "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do."

Do you know the main point of God's eternal purpose? The salvation of his people, accomplished by Jesus Christ. The center point of God's eternal purpose was to send his son Jesus Christ into this world, that he might live as a human being, yet without sin, and die in our place to satisfy the demands of God's perfect law. It was God's predestined purpose for Jesus Christ to die.

Acts 4:27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done."

And so our salvation is a result of this wonderful counsel, this eternal purpose.

Eph. 1:4 "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."

That's his wonderful counsel. It is "the purpose of Him who

works all things according to the counsel of His will.”

So how should you respond? Lots of people respond with questions. How can that be? That’s not fair. But those questions aren’t the right response. Instead, we should marvel at God’s eternal purpose, and respond with praise.

B. The wonderful counsel of Jesus demands our loyal praise.

Eph. 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him.”

Or, Rom. 11:33-36 "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."

Illus: Who of you has ever given counsel to the wonderful counselor? Who of us has ever taught God anything? No one will ever teach God anything new. None of us will ever be his counselor. All that we can do is praise him.

Paul understood that his salvation came as a result of God's eternal purpose, because the wonderful counsel determined by Jesus before the creation of the world was perfectly fulfilled. And he was filled with praise. I understand that my salvation came as a result of God's eternal purpose, and I am filled with praise.

So as you think about Jesus’ birth, however much you might

celebrate the holiday of Christmas, recognize that Jesus is the wonderful counselor. He is not a little baby born in a manger. He is not the warm fuzzies we get from all our comfortable Christmas traditions. He is the son of God, with all the supernatural power and wisdom of God. And therefore, what you owe him is your devotion, your obedience, and your praise. The son who was given, the child whom Isaiah prophesied would be born, is the Wonderful Counselor.