

And His Name Will Be Called: The Development of the Lord in Our Lives

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*Unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).*

This prophecy associates a variety of images with the coming Messiah. Among other things, He will be a Child. He will be a Son. He will be a Father. He will be a King with the government on His shoulder. He will be God.

But how can one be a Child and Mighty God? How can one be a Son and an Everlasting Father? One answer is by development. The Lord was born a child and grew. He was the Son of God and in time He reunited Himself with His Divine soul and became the Everlasting Father, the one Mighty God.

This prophecy presents a series of images that represents the progression that the Lord went through on earth, and one that we too go through. Let us look at these images one by one.

A Child

The prophecy begins by calling the Lord a Child and ends by calling Him “Prince of Peace.” In this we see the beginning and end of human development. The Lord’s end in view was to become the Prince of Peace—to conquer the powers of darkness that were oppressing us and to enable us to know the peace of heaven.

But a genuine peace is not given to human beings at once. In a sense it is the last thing to come. The Lord was first born in the world, and is first born in us, as a “Child.” A “child” stands for the good of innocence (*Arcana Coelestia* 430e, 5236e). This good is the good we see in little children: the lack of any dissembling or hypocrisy, the absence of that inclination to look out for themselves. This innocence is the willingness to be led and influenced without pride by those who know better; it is the selfless delight we see in little children when they participate in another’s happiness. This state of innocence is joined with peace.

The good of innocence, with its peace, is the heart of the Lord’s presence in us. The Lord gives us all a store of the good of innocence, especially in our formative years. This experience of heavenly goodness and peace is very real, and it remains with us. Nevertheless, it does not become a part of our eternal character *at this time*. In fact, it seems to gradually disappear as we grow up and “come into our own”. But this is the way it must be. In order to exercise our free choice and respond to the Lord in a meaningful way, we must grow up.

Living in innocence is meaningless unless we are aware of what we were doing and choosing to do. So before heavenly innocence and peace can become our own, truth must be given to us. Through truth we can come to see and recognize the Lord's goodness and can choose to make it a part of our adult character. This is why education is so important. Knowledge and truth bring our minds into the light, so that we can make choices and put into practice *this* or *that* kind of chosen love and purpose. This is how we establish our identity and exercise our freedom.

A Son

The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church tells us that "sons" in the Word stand for truth. The Lord in the world is called the "Son" so often for two reasons. First, because while He was here He was developing just as we are. He was in a state of receiving truth and putting it into practice. Secondly, He is called "Son" because He represented the truth which our God was sharing with the world.

So it is that, first, both in time and in end, "a Child is born" to us (the good of innocence). And then the "Son is given" (truth). Through this "Son" our lives come into light. Our mind becomes an orderly kingdom. Then, as this "government" of truth increases with us, the good of innocence can return to our life in greater and greater fullness, bringing with it, in time, a deep happiness and inexpressible peace.

In our prophecy the "Child" and "Son" (good and truth united) is given some names. Names in the Word stand for the character and quality of something. Nowhere is this more obvious than here! The names listed tell us the Lord's qualities as we are able to perceive them as His kingdom grows in us: "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Wonderful

The Lord is *Wonderful*. Wonderful is one of those words like "good" and "love." In themselves these words are general and subjective. Their meaning and depth of meaning depend entirely on our own experience and character. But one of the most telling things, which shows that we have begun to be affected by the truth that we have learned, is a sense of gratitude toward the Lord, a sense that He is wonderful, that He has done wonderful things for us. As the Psalmist sang,

*Many, O Lord My God, are Your wonderful works
Which You have done;
And Your thoughts which are toward us
Cannot be recounted to You in order;
If I would declare and speak of them,
They are more than can be numbered (Psalm 40:5).*

Of course, as we advance in our spiritual growth, we have a more and more accurate and profound sense of the Lord as wonderful, but it begins early in our life.

Counselor

One thing in which Isaiah saw that the Lord is wonderful was “counsel.” In a later passage, he referred to the Lord as “wonderful in counsel, excellent in guidance” (28:29). It is not surprising that Isaiah gives Him the name *Counselor* here.

As we try to follow the Lord’s truth, we grow in our sense that His Word can be trusted. He speaks to us in integrity. What He says comes to pass. What He says about human beings, about human evil, about human goodness, about marriage, about heaven, about providence—all these things hold true. We come to trust more and more that the Lord can guide us: there is no end to what He can tell us when we are willing to hear. The Psalmist sang, “I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel” (Psalm 16:7). This is one of the qualities about the Lord that we come to know as we grow in spirit: He is a Counselor who has our eternal welfare at heart. With this realization comes a greater commitment to living the truth.

Mighty God

Next Isaiah gives the Child and Son born to us the name *Mighty God* (*El Gibor*). This can also be read as two separate names (which is the way the Heavenly Doctrine reads it): “God” (*El*) and “Mighty One” or “Hero” (*Gibor*). Both names have a similar meaning. *El* (God) means “power” and it denotes the power of Divine truth (*Arcana Coelestia* 4402:5,9,10). “Mighty One” or “Hero” recalls the Lord’s power of fighting and conquering our spiritual enemies and so making heaven possible to us (cp. *Arcana Coelestia* 8273). The Lord becomes our God and Hero when we have experienced spiritual battles. Our choice for His good becomes ripe when we learn that the Lord alone can win our battles. This is the more advanced realization pictured in the names “God” and “Hero.”

Everlasting Father

We call the Lord “Wonderful” and “Counselor,” “God” and “Hero,” from what He *does* in regenerating us. But we call Him “Everlasting Father” and “Prince of Peace” from what He *is*—from what we come to see and know that He is.

To know the Lord as our “Everlasting Father” is to sense that He created us in love and that, like a parent, He longs for us to be happy. It is to know that all things that come from Him are leading to a good end (whether or not we choose to inherit that goodness). To see Him as our everlasting Father is to sense that He is merciful; that “He will not always strive with us” (Psalm 103:9), which means that He does not try to make life eternally difficult for us; and that “as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him” (Psalm 103:13).

Prince of Peace

The angels who announced Jesus’ birth to the shepherds rejoiced at the hope of a renewed “peace on earth.” During His ministry, Jesus frequently sent away people whom He had healed with the charge, “Go in peace” (cp. Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50). He instructed His disciples, when they entered a house, to first say, “Peace to this house” (Luke 10:5). In His final hours in the world He

encouraged the dispirited disciples, saying, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you" and "These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace." (John 14:27, 16:33). And after He had risen, the greeting on His lips was "Peace be with you" (Luke 24:6; John 20:19,21,26). From His love the Lord longs to give us peace.

The first image of the Lord given in this prophecy from Isaiah is that of the Lord as a Child; the last is of the Lord as Prince of Peace. There is a reason for this. The Lord as Child stands for Divine innocence, the heart and basis of all goodness. And peace is simply the state of mental delight that attends innocence (*Heaven and Hell* 285). The Lord extends to us the good of innocence from the beginning. But we do not really know the delights of this good until we are regenerated by him and become as the angels of heaven. In other words, we must know the Lord as Son, as Wonderful, as Counselor, as God and Hero, and finally as Everlasting Father; then we can know Him as the Prince of Peace. But this last is His aim: to grant us His peace. For this cause He came into the world, taught, chided, fought, conquered, rose in glory.

Let us pray that He may be born ever more fully into our "world," to do His work here. And through our efforts and the passage of life's seasons may we come to know Him more and more fully by His holy names: "Wonderful," "Counselor," "God," "Hero," "Everlasting Father," "Prince of Peace."

Amen.

Lessons: Isaiah 9:1-7; Luke 1:67-79; *Heaven and Hell* 285-287