

He will be called Wonderful Counsellor

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Date: 30 November 2025

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[0 : 00] Let's share our prayer together. Heavenly Father, we humbly bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your great glory our supreme concern.

! Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Names are important. Names are more personal than numbers.

When we meet someone we don't ask them, what's your number? We ask them, what's your name? And we share our name with others.

Often when parents choose a name for their child, someone will ask them, who did you name them after? Why did you choose that name?

And increasingly nowadays, what on earth is that for a name that you've chosen? In the Bible, names often have a meaning or a sense which indicates something of the life and the character of the person bearing that name.

[1 : 17] A prophet living in exile in Babylon was called Ezekiel. God strengthens. A leader who settled the people in the land is called Joshua.

Yahweh is salvation. Which in Greek comes out as Yeshua or Jesus. God's name.

God's name. During Advent this year we're going to think about names. About names given for Jesus 800 years before he was born. God has spoken through his prophet the words in Isaiah 9 to a people in a land of gloom and darkness.

They were surrounded by enemies. They were troubled by many things. A time of darkness when the people were longing for light.

Judea 800 BC. Edinburgh 2025 AD. A time of darkness when people are longing for light.

[2 : 30] God's light is the birth of a child. God's light shines in four names. Four gifts which the child will bring to a people to enlighten every darkness.

The light that shines for them and for us in this child. In the gracious, glorious, hope-filled names which he bears. His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor.

The name Wonderful Counselor is one name. I'm prepared to apologise to Handel. He was misled by the King James Version of the Bible.

For example, there's not a comma between the two words. It's not Wonderful Counselor. It's Wonderful Counselor. One name.

The idea behind the noun Wonderful is that what is described as something hard to understand. It doesn't mean hard to understand like quantum physics.

[3 : 45] It means something has happened which we can't quite explain how it has happened. It is beyond or it is more than our human understanding.

Two examples from the Psalms name. Psalm 77. You are the God who works wonders. You make known among the people your might.

In this Psalm, Psalm 77, the Psalmist is singing about the Exodus from Egypt. And he describes it as a wonder which God has worked.

God overcame the power and the control of Egypt. God overcame the stubbornness of Pharaoh. When God said, let my people go, God was able to do it and bring his people out.

The events of the Exodus are more than humans can understand. We can't explain how a small oppressed group of people were able to release themselves or escape from their bondage in Egypt.

[5 : 04] The most powerful nation of the time. We know that God did it. But we can't fully explain how God did it. It's a wonder.

Or Psalm 89. The heavens declare your wonders, Lord. Even your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones. Here in this Psalm, the Psalmist is singing of the Lord choosing David and making him king in Israel.

David was the least of his brothers. He was so much the least that when Samuel the prophet came for tea, his dad didn't even think to include David in those who would meet Samuel.

And yet it was David, the smallest and the least, who was chosen by the Lord. At the time there already was a king in Israel.

And yet David was anointed by the Lord to serve him as king. There is no possibility that anyone in Israel, anyone in his family would have chosen David.

[6 : 18] But he is wonderfully chosen by the Lord to be God's person and serve God in God's purposes.

A release from a house of slavery in Egypt. The provision of a shepherd king. God works wonders for his people.

In the darkness of Egyptian oppression. In the lostness of suffering under a godless ruler. Light has shone.

God does wonderful things which even the heavens declare before us. The child who is born, our light in our darkness, our hope for a future is a wonder.

The word counsellor is a participle. Maybe one of these days Gordon will give us a grammar quiz instead of people that we don't recognise.

[7 : 22] A participle is a verb which serves grammatically as a noun in the sentence. But the root of the word is verbal.

It is a doing word. The idea behind counsellor is a planner. Someone who is able to create a plan.

But more than that, someone who having created the plan is able to work to achieve the plan. A wise leader surrounds themselves with counsellors.

Able to give them guidance and advice. A counsellor will say, here's a plan. And a really good counsellor will be able to take the word, let's do it and go and make it happen.

Let's stick with Isaiah for some examples. Back in chapter one. I will restore your judges as at the first and your counsellors as at the beginning.

[8 : 27] At the beginning of the book of Isaiah the Lord promises a rebellious people who have suffered in their rebellion by having corrupt judges and foolish counsellors that this will be reversed.

The great reversal. Where you have ended up with bad counsellors, God will send you a good counsellor. Or chapter 14.

The Lord of hosts has sworn. As I have planned, so shall it be. As I have counselled, so shall it stand. The Lord confirms his word by an oath.

He has sworn. He has sworn. The wise counsel, the wise advice which the Lord gives, will certainly happen. It will stand and will not be overturned.

And in Isaiah's great chapter of hope and comfort, chapter 40. With whom did the Lord exchange counsel? Who made him understand?

[9 : 34] Who taught him the path of justice? Who taught him knowledge? Who showed him the way of understanding? No one did. The Lord knows.

The Lord understands. He alone gives unfailing counsel. To a people who have rejected him.

The Lord promises wonderful counsel. To those without direction, in impenetrable darkness. The Lord shines the light of his wonderful counsel.

If you lack wisdom, ask the Lord. If you need direction, ask the Lord. When you need comfort and hope, depend upon your wonderful counsellor.

Who is the Lord. No doubt by now you're all beginning to wonder, what does this have to do with Advent? And what does this have to do with Jesus?

[10 : 38] The verse in Isaiah, with the names of the child, is fulfilled by the Lord in many ways. Through many servants. Over all the years in between Isaiah and Jesus.

But we believe that coming as a human among us. Being born for us and our salvation in Bethlehem stable. Taking on and sharing our lives.

In Jesus, the Lord supremely. Once for all. Has himself become. Our wonderful counsellor.

John the apostle and prophet. The visionary and pastor. John the beloved disciple. Is for us. A beloved writer.

Of God's word. Let's hear these verses again. That which was from the beginning. Which we have heard. Which we have seen with our eyes. Which we've looked upon and have touched with our hands.

[11 : 39] Concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest. We have seen it. We bear witness to it. We proclaim to you. The eternal life.

Which was with the Father. And has been made clear to us. That which we have seen and heard. We tell you about. So that you also may have fellowship with us.

And indeed. Not only with us. Because our fellowship is with the Father and his son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things. We are writing these things.

So that our joy may be complete. The good news which John reveals to us. That which he himself heard.

Which he himself saw with his own eyes. Which he reached out and touched with his hand. The wonderful counselor is Jesus.

[12 : 41] The wonder working plan. Which the wonderful counselor brings. Is Jesus. John does not declare that someone wise has come to tell us a great plan.

John discloses. That the wonderful plan and the wonderful planner. Are the same. It is Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus is the counselor and the counsel. Jesus is the planner and the plan. It really is all about Jesus.

To a people in darkness. Jesus is the word of life. Jesus declares the word of life.

A word which is about living in God's presence. Of a presence. Of a presence. Of a presence. Of a presence. Of a presence.

[13 : 40] Of a presence. Of a presence. Of a presence. Of a presence. Of a presence. that God does not wait for us to find our way back to him.

God comes running towards us at the speed of light as Jesus, our light and our life.

The great plan is the word of life. A word of victory over sin and death and hell which Jesus himself is for us.

In Jesus, God defeats all our enemies. Every opposition which would keep us back from God has already been overcome in the victory of Christ.

It is finished. That's why it's good news. A message which calls us to work hard to save ourselves isn't really good news.

[14 : 57] It's only one more thing we need to add to our already over big list of things to do. The plan is God and God has done the plan.

The plan is Christ died on the cross and removed all your rejection of God all your rebellion of God from you. it is all taken away.

It has been nailed to the cross and put to death with Jesus. The wonderful counsel is hear the good news. Hear the word of life which is God's plan and receive God's plan.

Let God save you and you will be saved. Don't go looking for a counsellor anywhere else. Don't trust any other counsellor.

The only counsellor you need is Jesus. Your wonderful counsellor. Depend upon him. To a people far from God and strangers outside the garden the plan the wonderful counsel is fellowship.

[16 : 14] Reconciliation with the Father and the Son. A fellowship with all those who like us depend upon Christ alone. In the darkness we are easily persuaded that we are on our own.

We too quickly turn in upon ourselves. Self-help self-dependence self-salvation. Haven't you realised yet none of it works?

Salvation is being reconciled brought home to the Father as beloved children. Salvation is God with us.

Not just an idea for Christmas but lived out an everyday experience of grace. We are not created to be alone but to live together with our God and also to live together with all his people.

As soon as you singular come to Jesus you singular are immediately united with all of you's all of you's other ones.

[17 : 25] The good news you are not alone. You will never be alone when you follow Jesus. This is the plan.

God wants to reform your life as part of his great fellowship. This is God's wonderful counsel for you. Come to him and be at home with him.

Be reconciled to him. Come to him together with all your brothers and sisters. Made one in Christ Jesus. Give up trying to do it all on your own.

You can't do it and you're not alone. To a people cast down in the darkness a people weary with trying to save themselves the wonderful counsellor achieves a plan of joy.

Joy is only in Jesus. Joy can be our experience during this life only in Jesus. The wonderful counsellor is the wonderful council nowhere more clearly than this.

[18 : 39] At the darkest point in the year around the longest night we start singing songs of joy. We start singing about light for the world.

To a people dwelling in a land of deep darkness Jesus comes to fulfil all joy. The Father's joy is your coming home to him.

the Son's joy is your salvation which he has dearly bought in his own body and blood. Our joy is made whole and real for us in the good news of Jesus.

Christ Jesus is the heavenly wisdom in which we find hope and peace. Christ Jesus is the powerful victor triumphing over every foe.

Christ Jesus is the dying saviour who alone has finished the plan of God for us and our salvation. Christ Jesus is the one now seated at the right hand of the Father who pleads for you that you might receive grace and mercy through him.

[19 : 52] Christ Jesus is the wonderful counsel of God the word of life spoken over you and for you. Christ Jesus is the wonderful counselor more than we could ever imagine more than we could ever deserve more than we could ever ask.

Christ Jesus is all and in all and through all for you and for me and for all people come to the wonderful counselor let's pray together.

loving Father open our ears that we might hear the good news merciful Father soften our hearts that we might submit to the good news that we might depend upon Jesus our wonderful counselor transforming God renew our lives in your grace as we follow Jesus we ask it in his name Amen