



Christmas 2021-Part 3
God Named His Christ
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Well, Merry Christmas everyone. It is great to see you here on December 24th, and we're inside and not dodging raindrops outside, so that's a good thing contra last year when we were dodging raindrops outside. And we are again back on the 24th to celebrate the birth of a child 2,000 years ago, a little baby in Bethlehem, as we studied last weekend from Micah Chapter 5 verse 2. And speaking of babies, did I tell you that my oldest had a baby back there in July? (audience applause) Yeah. My son didn't actually have the baby, but he had a small part in it nine months earlier. But anyway, the point is his wonderful wife, Karina, gave birth to their child and not to be outdone by his brother to try and get the tax write-off in this year he had a baby. Pastor John had a baby there, and of course, he didn't have a baby, his wonderful wife had the baby, but he was there for it. And so we got two little new lives. We got a hairy grandson and a bald granddaughter. (audience laughs) So we're hoping that our beautiful granddaughter will sprout some hair at some point.

And it's funny because here are these children so dependent, of course, and so reliant on their parents and their parents really have to do everything that it takes to get those kids going. Particularly, I guess, the first thing they got to decide is what they're going to name those kids. And so every parent, if you're a parent, you know, you've got to sit down and figure out, you know, what name am I going to grant to this child? And my son, Matthew and his wife, Karina, decided to name their first-born Levi. Levi, of course, one of the 12 tribes of Israel, one of the sons of Jacob, and became the priestly tribe in the Old Testament. Also was Matthew the Apostle's Hebrew name. So kind of clever. I see what he did there. Levi, called his son Levi, and it means literally etymological it means attached or connected, which is an interesting route as you studied that word, Levi. My other son, my second-born, he and his wife named their daughter Eden after the Garden, of course, in Genesis Chapter 1 where God was and where there was the idea is happiness. That's what the word is about, happiness or satisfaction or joy or pleasure. The idea of a place that was an idyllic paradise, a garden, a paradise of God. That's the idea there of Eden.

And so, you know, they got to pick these names. And that is interesting because here these babies, if you think about it, will carry these names, unless something weird happens, they will carry these names for the remainder of their lives. And in a sense, it's a shot in the dark, because if you're trying to attach the name to the person or the character, I mean, who knows. If Levi means attached and connected, I mean, he could be the most detached kid, you know, the most independent kid in Orange County. Who knows? He might not live up to his namesake at all. Or Eden, you know, may not even like gardening. I don't know, she might not reflect, maybe she's not a super happy baby. Maybe she'll be a person who is an analytic or some kind of, you know, those people with the Doric wrinkling in their brow and thinking... I doubt that. If she gets hair she'll probably be fine, but she's just, you just never know. You give her a name like, you know, joy and happiness, you don't know what kind of person they're going to be.



And rarely do we see people changing their name midstream to match their personality or their role in life. Although God, every now and then has stepped into history to take people like Abram and say, "I'm going to use you to be the patriarch and leader of a great many people. So I'm going to change your name from Abram, which meant in Hebrew "great father," like you're a great father, to Abraham, which means the "father of a great many people." And so God did that saying, "Here's the role you're going to fulfill. And I know your parents didn't know when they named you that I'm going to step on the scene, revealed the plan to you, and I'm going to give you an associated name change with this." And I guess going from Abram to Abraham, not a huge deal. But he had a grandson named Jacob, and Jacob was one who means "heel grabber." He was coming out as twins, he and his brother, Esau, and coming out holding the heel of that child. They called him "heel grabber," "Jacob." And yet God said, "Nah, you're a scrapper, you're a fighter, and you're going to be the father of a great nation that's going to have to scrap and fight and, you know, kind of like the underdog. And so I'm going to name you, no longer are you going to be called Jacob, you're going to be called Israel," right? Israel. And so he takes on the name that ends up becoming the moniker for the nation of Israel. So big name change. He had to go the DMV and get a new license made, all of that because he just, I mean, this is a pretty big deal for him to go from Jacob to Israel.

This is not just an Old Testament phenomenon, even in the New Testament, remember that Jesus had an apostle named Simon and Simon, I mean, that's what everyone knew him by. But Jesus looks at him and goes, "I got a role for you." And that role is going to be as a kind of a foundational person, a quarterback, as I often say of this new movement. He's always listed first among the apostles. You're going to be called Cephas or you're going to be called Peter. Both those things mean the same thing. You're going to be the rock, I'm going to call you the rock. And so that name change was associated with the fact that you have a role, I've called you to that, but your parents named you, but I'm going to change your name because your name is going to match who you're going to be. And if you think about the birth of Christ 2,000 years ago, the picture of Christ being born in Hebrews Chapter 1 in particular reminds us that unlike any other preexisting being like an angel, God's never said to someone today you're going to become my son. "You are my Son. Today I have begotten you..." He goes on to quote more Old Testament passages, "I'm going to be a father to him. He's going to be a son to me." He's going to bring his child into the world, right?

This firstborn, which means you're at the top of the heap, you're the one in charge. "I'm going to bring the first-born into the world, and I'm going to say, let God's angels worship him." So here is a picture of the Father, the Father in the trinitarian understanding of the economy of who God is, and he's going to send the second person of the Godhead and he's going to say, "I'm going to make you born into the world and I'm not going to let Mary and I'm not going to let his stepdad, you know, Joseph, pick your name. I'm going to pick your name." Right? They didn't have to sit around and go through baby books or even like they would in any, you know, first-century culture, just kind of have to figure out is this a boy or girl that we need to come up with some names we like. Or maybe we can name this child after a relative or something? No. God comes on the scene and says repeatedly "his name shall be called..."



And the reason I put an ellipsis here behind "his name shall be called..." is because it's not just one name. You realize that if you look through the Bible, there are many names that God gave the Messiah, the Christ, the Messiah. He's got this person he's bringing into the world, the preexistent eternal, co-equal Son of God, but he brings him into the world like a father with a son being born. Right? Now, all of a sudden, I've got a plan for you and I know exactly, because I planned it all, and I'm going to give you names that match what you're going to do and what you're going to be. And so the manifold names of Christ, he's got a lot of names and a lot of names that God the Father has given him and they all remind us of various aspects of what he's called to do. Now some of the names that Jesus takes on are names that people called him. But a lot of these are names that the triune God had chosen to be representations, nomenclature, headings, verbiage that was going to represent who he was. And so that's important for us to consider.

Now this isn't going to be a seven-hour sermon where we go through all the names of Christ, because if you looked through your Bibles you'd find... No one choked at that or applauded. But I mean, I don't know if I could do it in seven hours, but we could make it a lot of time to go through every name that God assigns the Christ when God named his Christ. You could look at a lot of them, but I just want to look at a few tonight. I want to look at eight in four categories and really only one theme. And the theme I'd like us to think about on this little devotional thought before you celebrate Christmas this year is the theme that was provided to us by God's Spirit through a man named Simeon on the Temple Mount. He was an old man and he was waiting for the Messiah. And it says about Simeon here in Luke Chapter 2, that he lived there in Jerusalem, and he was one named after one of the tribe's leaders of Israel. "And he was a righteous man and devout man." He loved God, a righteous man. He did what was right and he was waiting for the Messiah. But instead of using the name Messiah, he chose a descriptor regarding who Christ was going to be. And if you know the passage, you know what's coming next. He calls the coming Messiah, he says, I was waiting "for the consolation of Israel." The consolation of Israel.

I want you to think about that word and just allow that to be our theme tonight to think about what Christ was, he was to be a consolation. Do you know that word? A comfort. He was to be an encouragement. He was supposed to be someone who felt like help to us, right? Because he would be help to us. He would be help to us in Israel, Simeon of course an Israelite said. And so he takes up this baby in his arms from Mary, right? And he says good things to God. He worships God, he blesses God, and he says, "Lord, now you're letting your servant depart in peace." I kept waiting for the Messiah and now I'm holding in my arms this child who is to be the Christ. "My eyes have seen your salvation," he says. "You've prepared," this child publicly here, "in the presence of all the peoples." And he says he's going to be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles." Even the Gentiles are going to learn about your plan for this world through the Messiah. And of course, it's going to be "for glory to your people of Israel." They're going to glory because this Messiah who is going to bless the whole earth is coming through the descendant of Abraham.



So this is a great concept, a great concept of the Christ being a consolation. Not a name, not a proper name, but just a description of who he would be. And I'm thinking, OK, how many names line up under that concept? Well, plenty. But let me just give you a few tonight thinking and asking the question how did the coming of Christ 2,000 years ago provide a comfort, a help, an encouragement, a support? How did it hearten people when Christ came? How did that work? Well, it's tied up in several names of Christ. I just want a look at four categories here as we think this through. Out of all the names of Christ which ones provide what Simeon by God's Spirit said he would provide comfort, help, consolation, encouragement. How does that work?

Well, let's start with the enunciation. When the angel comes to Mary and says, "Hey, you're going to have a child." The angel gives a clear description of the name, right? "You're going to conceive in your womb, you're going to bear a son, and you shall call his name," and the first name that we get that's repeatedly used and the most frequently used, "He says we're going to call him Jesus." And when you see the word Jesus, you got to remember we're reading an English translation of a Greek New Testament. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek or common Greek in the first century. When you read the word Jesus in English, it's translating Iesous, which sounds a lot like Spanish, but its Greek, Iesous, which is the word that is used in the New Testament, that if you were reading the New Testament, that's the word you would see. But if you read that word, you'd go, "I know what that word is because if I happened to be reading a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament every time you ran into the word Yeshua, you would see the word Iesous. So in their minds, clear. And Yeshua is the word translated into English in our Bibles, Joshua.

So you need to in your mind think when the angel came and showed up in the first century and said, "Hey, the Messiah is coming and guess what? You don't get to pick the name, God the Father picked the name, and here's one of the names he's going to give that'll be the most commonly used name, and that name is Joshua. It's not wrong to think that way. Matter of fact, you could think that way and tonight I want you to think that way because they thought that way. And when they heard the word Yeshua or they heard the word Jesus, what they were thinking was this guy in the Old Testament who led the armies into the Promised Land. Do you ever use the phrase divide and conquer? That comes from the military strategy of Joshua, the captain of the armies. He was the understudy of Moses, who after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, the baton goes from Moses to Joshua. Joshua divides the Promised Land by hitting the capital of it, the biggest city, in Jericho. Of course, God shows that he's in charge and the power behind it all, but Joshua is carrying the armament. He is the head, he's the general. And then he starts the southern campaign and the northern campaign. He divides and conquers the land.

He is surrounded by pagan and absolutely degenerate people who were taking their young babies and throwing them into the fire. This is part of their worship in Canaan. And he was fighting these hostile forces so that the people of God could move into the Promised Land, this land flowing with milk and honey, and could have peace on their borders. Joshua was the deliverer. Joshua was the campaigner. Joshua was the fighter. Joshua was the military strategist. Joshua, as you picture him here in this painting, is the guy you would picture with a



helmet and a spear and a sword and a shield. He's the guy who's leading the armies of God to vanquish their enemies. So when you read in the Scripture, whether it's Matthew Chapter 1 or Luke Chapter 1, and here is this reminder of Christ Messiah coming into the world, and we're going to give him a proper name that he's going to be called, whenever you're going to have a conversation with him, the average name you're going to hear is you're going to hear that he's named Joshua, which is hearkening back in your mind to a military campaigner, right?

And here's the description of what the angel said to Joseph, right? "You're going to call his name," just like I told Mary, this kid's going to be called "Jesus" because he's going to deliver, he's going to fight, he's going to fight and vanquish foes, he's going to save his people, not from the Canaanites and not even from what they might expect, the Romans and many of them did expect him to fight against the Romans. No, he's going to save, a whole different category, a whole different mindset, "he's going to save people from their sins." It's going to take a fight. It's going to take work. But you've got a foe and that foe needs to be vanquished and that foe is your sin. I don't know if you think about your sins that way. You probably don't if you're busy about your life and in the world, and the noise of the world keeps you thinking about other things. But if I were to turn all that off and sit you down and say, I just want you to sit there with your conscience and evaluate your life, even in light of just your conscience that's made in the image of God, and you're thinking about the fact that there is a standard that would be nice for me to live by, but I know I fall short of that standard. And there are a lot of times if I think about it, I disappoint myself and I think I should be living better. I should be living differently.

My sin, me falling short of God's standard, even frustrates me that I fall short of my own standards and I think to myself, I failed, and that's a feeling of guilt. That's a feeling of being ashamed. And it really should make us, as we think about it, if God ever gives us an opportunity to open up a Bible and look at what he says, is to realize that, not only do I fall short of my standard, the concept of sin itself is falling short of God's standard, and the more I think about that, the worse I feel. Matter of fact, I recognize that if your sins were displayed up on the screen, if I said, I'm going to take your sins that I secretly recorded everything you've said and everything you've done, I got video and audio. I'm going to throw up on the screen, I'm going to pass out popcorn for everyone, and we're going to look at the sins of your life for the past month. Ready? Let's watch. Right?

I would assume if we're going to start with you, you're probably going to be squirming. You're probably going to be ashamed. You're probably going to feel bad. And I'll bet if you're honest without, I mean, you'd be really mad at me, but if you could look past your anger toward me in exposing your sin to everybody, you'd feel like, "I am mad at myself. I'm mad that I'm not who I'm supposed to be. I'm mad that I don't do what I'd like to do." And if you think about it in Scripture, the Bible speaks of the idea of your sins being your enemy. Matter of fact, they are as Colossians says, "hostile toward you." These laws that you don't meet, even reflecting your conscience that you know is a reflection of God's moral law, they're kinds of things that if you given a thought to it, they start to assail you. They start to make you feel bad and they will stick in your mind. And they're described in our parlance with words like guilt and shame. As



David put it, thinking about his own sin that was overwhelming him, he wrote, "For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me."

And of course, that was a psalm that was written for Israel and a reflection of his own failures because it was something everyone could identify with. Because everyone has felt that if they've been honest and reflective enough to consider the fact that they fall short of what they should do. Well, all I have to do is talk about sin and make you think about your own sin for a little bit, for you to say, "Oh, wait, wait, wait. That's the whole point. Right? Your Bible says, 'If you confess your sins, God is faithful and just to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.' There you go. That's the whole point. That's why I believe in Christianity, because if I just confess my sins, it all goes away." And I'd say that's absolutely true. That's what the Bible says. But don't rush over the words when it says here, "If we confess our sins," which number one means you need to look at the problem and see it, "then he is faithful," he'll do it every time, "and just to forgive your sins."

How does he justly forgive your sins? How does he look at what you've done and you feel bad and you think, "Wow, if I were to measure my sins against God, I mean, I would feel horrifically bad if they were played in the presence of God and the angels and everyone could see my sins, I would feel horrible." Well, how does he justly wipe those out? You can go to a lot of churches this weekend that are going to talk to you about things you can do to try and start canceling your sins out. And they're going to talk about good works and service and being kind and saying you're sorry and making some kind of reparations for your sins. Or maybe piling on enough good things that would start to weigh out the bad things and you can feel better about yourself because look, you're doing more good than bad. And maybe when you get to the end of your life, God will look at your life and see, "Well, you got more good going for you than bad." And maybe he'll let you into heaven. Or some theologies will say, "Well, yeah, you still got bad, but you'll go to a like a divine car wash for a while. It's called purgatory. You go there and you can slowly burn all those off. And maybe after a few hundred or few thousand years, maybe you can get into heaven and you'll be OK."

See, the gospel of Jesus Christ is completely different than that. We believe that if we confess our sins he's faithful and just to forgive our sins. But how does he do that? How can he instantaneously vanquish the enemy of our sins that's hostile against us? How is it that I can say, even if I were the worst murderer and rapist in the world, in a word of saying I confess my sins, how can it be that I'm not any longer guilty and all my sin is expiated and removed from me as far as the east is from the west? Most people do not believe that. Even religious people do not believe that. But the Bible says he's able to do that because someone came and went to war against your sins. This is the Christ, the captain of the army, the Joshua who's going to fight in a whole different arena and not kill Canaanites, but kill your sin and all that is due against you in a just courtroom before your creator. He's going to vanquish your foes. How does he do that? By stepping between you and God and saying, "God, I'll take on the punishment for their sin. You can aim your just anger at me. You can count my human suffering and my human anguish as the full payment for them."



Matter of fact, that's why Jesus used the word "Tetelestai" when he died. Tetelestai in Koine Greek means "paid in full." "It is finished" is how a lot of our translations translate it, but it's really an accounting word that describes the fact that all the payments that are due have been paid. I mean, I'm getting close to paying off something I got attached to my house that I had to do and I looked at it today, it was a great Christmas gift, and I said, "I'm almost done paying this off. I can't wait to make that last payment and say it's paid in full, paid in full. I don't have to pay you anymore." And the point is, there are lots of religious systems that do not teach that. But we teach the gospel of Christ because we believe that Christ came as the Savior to save us from our sin, just like Joshua went and fought the battle so you can sit behind your walls in your house next to your vineyard and you can go out there and do your thing and eat in peace because the foes have all been vanquished by Joshua, the captain of the Lord's army.

Jesus is the one who removes guilt. He's the one who removes shame. He's the one who removes all of the transgressions that stand hostile against us. To put it in the words of the Old Testament, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they'll be white as snow." "Though your sins are red like crimson, they'll be made white like wool." That happens instantaneously, because Christ 2,000 years ago came and died and made peace between you and God because the sins have been vanquished. One of the reasons in Isaiah 9 he's called the Prince of Peace. Now, I understand we often think about lateral peace or horizontal peace, peace in society, peace between people, but the main peace he came to bring, Romans Chapter 5, is peace between you and God. And God can't have peace with you as a sinner unless somehow someone vanquishes your sin. Someone fights against your sins. Someone takes your sin and actually conquers it. That's consolation by the way because most churches don't even teach that truth. It's the old gospel of Jesus Christ. The grace of God provided through a just payment on a cross. "He is faithful and just to forgive our sins." And if you think that through, that's a huge, huge consolation and comfort to those of us who bring guilt into our auditorium tonight and feel bad for their sins. Pin it to the cross by faith, confessing it and trusting in the Joshua who fought the battle for us.

Simeon there called him a light of revelation for the Gentiles. Let me give you a second thing to think about here this Christmas. I want you to think about the concept of Christ coming and being light. That's one of the titles Christ takes upon himself. It's one of the ways the gospel writer describes him in John. John uses this word 24 times in his gospel in just one book in 21 chapters. He uses it 24 times. It's the concept of Christ coming in and illuminating, bringing light. "The true light" he's called, "which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." "When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," as John Chapter 1 says, he was light. "He was the light of men," "he gave light to people." What's that all about? Well, Jesus talked about it in John Chapter 8 verse 12. He actually said, "I am the light of the world." "That's what I am. The light of the world. I bring light where there's darkness."

And then he describes it this way if you get in line behind me, "If you follow me, then you won't walk in darkness," because in the dark, you don't know where to go. You can't see things. You can't see obstacles and walk around them. "But I'm the light. If you follow me," follow what I say, follow what I teach, follow what I affirm, follow what I'm going to instruct my



apostles to teach you. Follow that. Do what they say, do what I've said through them. Do what I'm affirming in the Old Testament as to what God has said in the law. Do that, follow me, then "you won't walk in darkness." You'll know where to go. We live in a day, by the way. I don't know if you think this through as consistently as you should in a world that has detached itself from the foundation of understanding that truth is objective and comes from God. When you don't believe that you are a relativist, you're a post-modernist and you believe, as so many do in the intellectual elite of our country, that we are a cosmic accident, to quote one of the most applauded secularists and intellectuals of our day. You've got Richard Dawkins speaking of the fact that if evolution is true, you need to understand that this is a purposeless, chaotic universe, that there is no meaning, there's no higher design. There's nothing to this other than the fact that you happen to be a DNA, an organism, that is just simply trying to survive and you have a passion and innate passion as an organism to survive and procreate. That's, I mean, if you want to talk about purpose, that's all there is and it's really meaningless anyway, because there is no purpose, there is no meaning.

Matter of fact, between now and the time you die, you just kind of figure out whatever you want to do. It doesn't matter. Even if you don't want to have kids, it doesn't matter, I guess. Be nice for the species according to the naturalists of our day. But whatever. Do whatever you want. Matter of fact, let's just see what everyone decides to do in our culture. Let's affirm what everyone does. Let's take polls and surveys. Let's just follow the elites of our nation, in our case in our nation, and just do whatever they say. Do whatever you want. It doesn't matter. Well, the Bible says in all the options that you have the great thing, and it is a comfort, that God has done as he's embodied deity in bodily form. He sent his Son to be the light and the standard and the representation of what human life should be. And he comes on the scene and he says, "Here's what you are to do." As a matter of fact, you should walk in this light. "If we say we have fellowship with him and yet we walk in darkness, we lie. We do not practice the truth." Darkness means you don't follow what he says. You take your own path. You do what most of the people in our society do and that is they just figure it out by the visceral feelings they have or whatever they think is right, whatever popular culture says is good. Whatever they affirm and applaud, I'll just do all of that.

But the Bible is very clear. Light has come into the world. Christ is the embodiment of human life. This is what it should be. This is human flourishing to live like Christ, to do what he taught. If he says, "Hey, haven't you read? God created them male and female." Well then the whole gender discussion is over, right? We don't have any confusion about it. And you follow what he says. It may not be popular and people might say, "Well, we like all these options," and we're saying, no, there are no options because Christ has come and given us the rules, and he has been the embodiment of it. He's affirmed God's truth. Whoever abides in him, you say you've had your sins forgiven, if he's your Joshua, then "you ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." You ought to adopt the standards, the values, the ethics that he was teaching. He's that light. He's that path. This is the fulfillment of humanity is to do what he says.

Hosea Chapter 14, a great line about you thinking about what you should think about when you consider God's revealed truth. "Whoever's wise let him understand these things; whoever



is discerning, let him know them." And what is that? "That the ways of the Lord are right." This is the right way to go. He's illuminated a path. He said, "Here's the right path." And if you're wise, if you're smart, if you're upright, if you say this would be the best way for humans to live, then you'd walk in the path that's not some visceral whatever you want. It's not intuition. It's not culture. It's not surveys. It's not popularity. It's you saying if God has said it and embodied it in Christ, that's what we do. We follow Christ. He comes on the scene and says, "I'm the light. Follow me. I'm like a shepherd and you're like sheep and do as I say." People don't want to be sheep. I get that. They want to be the master of their own fate, the captain of their own soul.

But the reality is you will never lead to human flourishing because he is the good guide. He is the good shepherd. He is the true light. And if you want to live life the way God designed life to be lived, which is the best way to live life, well then you ought to do that. You ought to hear his voice. You ought to tune in to what he says and you ought to follow him. And when you do that, you'll recognize every other path is darkness and those paths, the tempter is going to come and say, "Come and do this this way. Did God really say that?" That's how it started in the Garden. "Did God really say that? You should do differently. It's good for your eyes. It's good for you to have food. Here, just do what you want. Don't worry about what God wants." "Well, a thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy." And in the end, you'll write the book of Ecclesiastes and say, I had everything that I wanted, but nothing that I really needed and it never really fulfilled me.

Human flourishing, really if you to speak in those terms, is about looking at the light that has come into the world and saying my goal in life between now and the time I die is to be more like Christ. I want to reflect what he reflected. I want to teach what he taught. I want to say what he said. I want to live with the values that he had. He came to bring life, real life, fulfilled life, abundant life. Which may not mean that I'll get all the promotions. It may not mean that everyone in the culture will like me. As a matter of fact, it's likely that, like Christ, I will be rejected in many circles, but I will at the end of my life sit on the porch of my house and say that was abundant life to live in accord with Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Jesus, the true light. This is the point. It gives direction. The world doesn't have a lot of direction. They're constantly figuring out whatever they want to do and changing every other week. And Christ has brought the light into the world and said, "You want consolation and comfort? No questions about how to live life. Christ has provided the template." Some say, "I'd like to be creative." Well, you're going to be creative to your own peril. "I'd like to be a free spirit." You'll be a free spirit to your own demise. Real life, abundant life, true life, human flourishing is found in Christ's light, the light of the world.

700 years before Christ, in that passage, four titles, one of them is "wonderful counselor." He gives direction, he gives light, he gives guidance, he tells his sheep which way to go and the good news is you'll look back on it and say, "That was wonderful. That was good. That was flourishing. That was abundant life." A lot of people telling you what to do, but they're not wonderful counselors. Christ came and one of the things that the Bible says his name shall be called is wonderful counselor, the light of the world. There's some great consolation in that, great comfort in that.



Just like there was in this word when it says in a very familiar passage that the shepherds were told there's a Savior "being born in the city of David and he is Christ," here's the third thing, "the Lord." Three of four. Here's the third title that he is given, Lord. You don't often think about that because we're so used to the word. It's used 8,000 times in the Old Testament, hundreds of times in the New Testament. Here is a word that we're so used to we don't stop to think about what it means. To be Lord means you're, it's a hierarchical term, it's a term that shows a pecking order. It's like the old, you know, kind of the savage rules of the jungle. There's a king of the jungle, right? Because he's stronger and mightier and has more power and veracity than any other creature. So he's in charge. Revelation, by the way, speaks of the eschatological scroll. People were crying because they couldn't open it because no one had the authority to open it. No one had the power to open it. And John was told, listen, people need to stop crying because here's the thing, there is a "lion from the tribe of Judah." Christ is that lion. He's the top of the heap. He's the king. He came from the "Root of David." That means he was born in the lineage of David and his life, his death and his resurrection give him all the authority. "He has conquered."

I know Christianity is passed by a lot of cool people in this world because they think it's not the power position. It seems like a weak religion. It seems like really, you know, you're just kind of the fringe of society. And I get that. Matter of fact, Paul said, we actually, in many cases, are the scum of the earth to the people that look at us. But here's the deal. That group of people following the light, having their sins forgiven by the Joshua of Christ, here's the deal. In the end, they win because this Christ one day is going to come back after people have put their trust in him for forgiveness and followed his light. Guess what? He going to take his great power and begin to reign. The lion is going to roar. And one day the sleeping giant is going to stand up and establish his kingdom, and everyone who's followed him in this life will be raised to a place of authority with him. As Jesus put it, "You'll sit on my throne with me and you'll rule in the kingdom."

Jesus, when he died and rose from the dead, called his disciples together at the end of Matthew, and he said, "Listen, guys, all authority." How much? "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Only one Lord. The Triune God. And the second person of the Godhead says, "I have all authority." Therefore, anything I say, much like people disputing something when they say like, "So help me God," or "I swear to God," they're deferring to a greater authority that should punish me if I default or defer or don't do something that I say I'm going to do, right? "I'll do this, I promise, it's an oath, so help me God." "People swear by someone greater." Well, there's no one greater than God. So God swore by himself. That dispute that would be settled by saying, "I swear to God," well God has no one else to swear to. He swears to himself so that as he gives an oath and a promise, he can be more convincing to people like us who put our trust in him. We're heirs of the promise and you're saying you're counting on the fact that if you confess your sins and trust in Christ, you'll have your sins forgiven. You follow the light of Christ, you follow him, then that'll be abundant life. It'll be rewarded. It will pay off. There will be vindication.

Well, how do I know that's true? Well, Christ's resurrected life proves to us that he has all the authority, and in our minds we ought to have this confidence that there is a guarantee in this oath that he's given in the authority that he has. "God by two unchangeable things," a promise and an oath, and the third thing is "he can't even lie," because he's the truth, he helps us, I know this is a wordy passage but follow it, for us if "We fled to him," and we've said, "God, be our Joshua, be our light," if we've said that, well, then hey, we can have great encouragement, "strong encouragement to hold fast," to hang onto without wavering because I'm not doubting it because there's no one greater than God and God has made a promise, all authority has been given to him. That's assuring. We can set our hope on that promise without wavering. And you know a lot of people out there with fear and anxiety and they are worried about all kinds of things, they're trusting in this and they're hoping it pays off. If we trust in Christ, here's the thing, we have absolute assurance. "We have," as it says in this next line, "a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul."

You want encouragement it would be great for you to live with that. It would be great for you to live absolutely guilt-free. I'm done. My sin has been paid for. I have a pattern. I know what to do between now and the end of my life, and I know at the end of my life, as Paul put it, I've entrusted myself to God and I know the one I've entrusted my life to, and he's faithful because he has all authority. He is the great king. He is the great lion. He is the great authority of all creatures, right? And so I know if I'm related to him, I'm OK. Matter of fact, it's like a parent-child relationship. The Lord, as a title, is a picture of the all-authoritative Triune God, who if I am trusting him, it's like, I'm OK, my dad has all the power. "I'll be a father to you, you'll be sons and daughters to me." This is a great line. Why? "Because I'm the Lord Almighty." I have all power. You'll be OK.

There's assurance in that, there's hope in that, there's resolve, there's security in that and a lot of people today don't have any of that as a consolation. Someone who lives with complete forgiveness, someone who lives with a complete sense of direction, someone who lives with absolute assurance. Christ the Lord, he grants that security. That's a great one. Meaning, purpose, forgiveness, security. I mean, you're starting to talk real good mental health right here, because that's spiritual health. One of the things that was given to us in the name that the Messiah was going to be called 700 years before it happened in Isaiah 9 was that the Son of God was going to be called the "Everlasting Father." That's not a confusion of the trinitarian roles. He's still the Son of God the Father, but he comes to us and he's like a father to us. And he has all power and he's lived forever and he knows everything past, present and future, and we can trust him. We're sons and daughters of one who has all power and I can rest assured. I can absolutely live as a secure person. If you want consolation, that's a good way to put it.

Briefly. Now let me give you a fourth one. Matthew Chapter 1 verses 22 and 23 speaks about a fulfillment of a promise in Isaiah. And it says, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son," Isaiah 7:14, "and they shall call his name Immanuel." You want to wrap this all up with one last title that helps us understand what a consolation and comfort and encouragement it is to relate to that child 2,000 years ago who was born in Bethlehem? Well, then you have to understand this word, Emmanuel. Emmanuel is a Greek transliteration of a Hebrew word that sounds the same, Immanuel. And Immanuel literally means, as Matthew goes on to explain,



"God with us." Literally, it means "with us is Elohim." With us is El, God, is the one who has all the authority and power and he's not only making promises we can bank on, but he promises to be with us. Now, that's weird because Jesus was with us and then he went away. But he said, "When I go away, I'm not going to leave you as orphans."

Matter of fact, after he said all authority been given to me, and then he gives them light of what to do for the rest of their lives, make disciples, he then says, "And behold, I am with you always even to the end of the age." How does that work? He goes to be enthroned at the right hand of the Father. Well, here's how it works. The third person of the Godhead now is dispatched by the Son and the Father to come and live among his people in a way that he wasn't living among the people before. Matter of fact, he's not just with his people, he's now IN each individual person. He's so intimately related to them the Spirit of God is in them, and that becomes the hope of what we have to stand firm in any situation because Christ is in us. He's with us to the end of the age. That's given a kind of courage and a kind of strength to Christians throughout the generations, starting with the first generation. People who had Christ in them, in the person of the Godhead, the Spirit of God, they were able to face situations that were absolutely unthinkably hard challenges, like being thrown to the lions by the Romans and be able to die with a kind of dignity and assurance and fearlessness that's just almost unthinkable.

We've got to think about the reality of this. It says in First Timothy Chapter 1 verse 12 that God is the God who strengthens us. Christ Jesus in particular is the one who strengthens us. And by that he means like, it's as though Christ were standing with me. That the Lord stood with me and he strengthened me, right? How is that? Well, I can look back and see times that I would have died, and God redirected circumstances so that I didn't die even when I was slated to go be killed by the lions, I was spared. Well, now you've just told Timothy, by the way, in Chapter 4 of Second Timothy that you are going to be killed by the Romans. You know they're going to execute you this time. How is it then that a past, you know, somehow being accused of this execution makes you think that you're somehow going to be saved by the strength of Christ? Well, it's because there is no evil, really, that I'm going to be overcome by even if I'm killed. As he said in Philippians Chapter 1, "I'm going to honor Christ in my body." Why? Because I'm going to have bold and confident assurance, because I'm going to have strength.

Matter of fact, he puts it that way. I'm going to be brought safely into the heavenly kingdom. There is a courage, a resolve, a fortitude that non-Christians just don't have, because Christ stands with Christians. And I know this is weird to the outsiders, an esoteric spiritual connection with the God of the universe that dwells in me, that allows me to look at the future completely different. Now, I doubt any of you are going to be thrown to some execution by the government for being a Christian this week, but you got plenty of things that Satan is going to throw at you, our culture is going to throw at you. You might lose your job, you might have cancer, you might have financial collapse, you might have relational problems, and you're going to see a set of challenges as it's put in Hebrews 12. There's going to be a race set before you and what you're going to need is perseverance to run that race. Well, here's the promise of Christ. "I will be with you to the end of the age." Right? You don't have to worry. I



will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I will be intimately involved in every challenge of your life.

Even in looking forward to how uniquely intimate that would be in the New Testament, there is that picture in the Old Testament in Isaiah Chapter 40 of God who has all power, the creator of the ends of the earth, who is one "who never himself grows weary." He has understanding. He knows every detail. He knows every situation. He controls every situation. But in the end, he gives through those bad situations "power to those who are fainting." Matter of fact, "the one who lacks might," the one who has no strength, no might, no power, well, "he increases strength." There's something that he does individually and personally, and particularly to people in their challenges. "Even though young people they can faint, they can be weary, and young men can fall exhausted." If you would see this relationship with God as much more intimate and personal than you have in the past, because you've trusted in him as your Joshua to recuse you of the punishment your sins deserve, if you see him as the light of life that you follow in, you know how you're supposed to live, you guarantee in your own mind because of his authority, I have no doubt that he's going to come good on his promises. Then I'm going to "wait on the Lord," I'm going to have a confidence in the Lord "that's going to renew my strength; I'm going to mount up," poetically speaking, "like an eagle with wings," and I'm going to fly. I'm going to fly through, I'm going to sail through this. I'm going to "run and I'm not going to grow weary; I'm going to walk and I'm not going to faint."

You've got to get through the challenges of your life as a Christian, knowing that Christ promised to never leave you, never forsake you to walk you through that all. If you're not a Christian, you don't have that. But if you are a Christian, you want to talk about consolation and hope? That's amazing. Christ, our Emmanuel, think about the promise of that, imparts strength to you, no matter what is the next challenge of your life. And there are things around the corner that you don't even know that are going to press you hard and it's going to be a challenge. But as a Christian, God says, I'll walk you through all of that.

He's the "Mighty God." That's one of the names of the Son of God, the child that would be born in Bethlehem was going to be called, and God said he was one of his names Mighty God and that mighty God says, I will be with you, Emmanuel. I will walk you through every season of life. Talk about consolation. That's consolation. It's consolation the world doesn't have. And if they're not celebrating Christmas with an intimate relationship with the child of Bethlehem, if they don't have that, they don't have these things. They don't have any of the benefits really, of any of his titles, except the title "judge." Right? That's it. That's all they have. But for us he's so much more. In particular, these four concepts, he removes our guilt. Think about this. He provides direction. I know what I'm supposed to do for the rest of my life. I have absolute guaranteed security that the promises that he's made to me are going to be held true. And between here and there I'm going to be able to have all the strength I need to face every challenge, including death itself. All of that really reflected in the way that God, the Father, named his Christ. And I hope this Christmas he becomes a devotional and fueling, encouraging, energizing act of worship for you as you remember the Christ who we celebrate this Christmas.



Let's pray God help us as Christians in the 21st century to go back in our minds to the first century and see that the living Christ who conquered death is the one who conquered for us the penalty of our sin. And that we can have complete forgiveness. That he's provided for us a pathway, a light that we can look at what he said, what he taught, and we can say this is my goal, regardless of my feelings, regardless of my culture. And I understand that everything I've entrusted to him, he's good for. Every fact that he has revealed to me and everything I trust in that he's promised about forgiveness, about real life, you're good for it because there's no one more powerful than you. And God, you'll give me strength so that I will enter safely into the kingdom, even if it means my own execution in this world. There's nothing else they can do to me and therefore I can face it all with great strength and confidence and hope and resolve and fortitude and courage. So grant us more of that, please as we continue to worship every Christmas Eve that baby in Bethlehem, so aptly named by you.

In Jesus name we do pray. Amen.