

WE BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

Isaiah 9:6

One hundred and eighty three years ago a small group of Baptists gathered together in Fosters and decided that it was the will of God for them to start a church. And they did, and through three major wars and numerous others, through economic recessions and one major depression, and through times of peace and prosperity, which can be just as perilous for the soul, God's people have clung together and worked together and encouraged one another and God's church still stands. And this old church has held steadfastly to many precious beliefs for all these years. We've already looked at three of them – our belief in God, in the Bible, and in Creation. We will look at numerous others in coming weeks. But today we are going to look at the one belief that overshadows all others. Not that they are not all important, because they are. But everything that we believe as Christians and as members of Grants' Creek Baptist Church all culminates in what we are going to discuss today and that is our faith in Jesus Christ.

We believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that as Peter wrote, Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone upon which the church is built (1 Peter 2:6). We believe that He is our only Cornerstone, and that without Him we have no reason for being and we have no hope. And as Peter also wrote in v. 7, to us who believe He is precious. In fact, He is so precious there is really no way our human vocabulary can describe just how precious He is. W.A. Criswell said that there are no less than 286 names in the Bible for Jesus (video sermon, His Name is Wonderful). Can you imagine that? Jesus is so magnificent that the inspired writers used 286 different ways to describe His magnificence. And one of those ways came through the prophet Isaiah, when he declared in Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be on His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful..."

Now, the Hebrew definition for the word "wonderful" is simply "marvelous". It means something amazing, extraordinary, something highly unusual, beyond human comprehension. And it means all of these things in the best sense of the word. Something amazingly and unusually good. Back in 1975 Dr. Criswell preached an entire sermon on that one name of our Lord Jesus, the name Wonderful. And I've taken his skeleton and tried to put a little meat on those bones, and today we are going to see just why the Holy Spirit said to Isaiah, "Isaiah, tell My people that My Son is Wonderful!"

Why is Jesus so wonderful today? Well, first of all we see His wonder in His **pre-incarnate existence**. You and I, unlike what some cults teach, did not exist before you were conceived. You have never lived on the earth in any other body than the one that carries you around today, as the reincarnationists will tell you. Before you were born you did not exist as a spirit baby in Heaven as the Mormons teach. You began to exist in your mother's womb nine months before you were born. So, for all of you young people who are so eager to turn fifteen and get your permit, or sixteen and get your license, or nineteen and sign for a car loan, if your birthday is coming up within the next nine months, you might try going in and getting your permit or license or loan a few months early. And if someone questions the date on your birth certificate, point out to them that that date is the day you were born, but you are actually nine months older than that. And I would suggest that you do one more thing. And that is, before you walk in the door, pray real hard.

No, you and I did not have a life before this life. But Jesus did. Jesus lived in Heaven before He was born upon this earth. But not only did He live in Heaven, He lived there eternally. John writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God....." Jesus was not the first creation of God, as many cults teach. He was not created at all. He was in the beginning with God. And John repeats himself for emphasis in v. 2: "He was in the beginning with God". The writer of Hebrews says in ch. 7 that Jesus was without beginning and without end (v. 3). So here we see just Who Jesus really is, for the only Person Who didn't have a beginning is God.

What a wonder is the Lord Jesus, Who as God the Son has no beginning! And from eternity past until He was born in Bethlehem He shared all the glory of Heaven with His Father (Jn. 17:5). When John was on the isle of Patmos God allowed him to see a vision of Jesus in all of His exalted glory. Listen to how John described the scene:

"...and in the midst of the seven lamp stands (I saw) *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength" (Rev. 1:13-17)

What a sight!! Jesus in all of His glory! And the sight was just about more than John could take. For the next thing John says is, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead..." And if you were to ask him, John would loudly proclaim to you, "YES! He is wonderful!"

But that is not all we can learn about the pre-incarnate life of Jesus. As we studied last week, God created the Heavens and the earth in six days. And it was God the Son that did it. John writes in John 1:3: "All things were made by Him"...by Jesus. Jesus merely spoke the words, and all creation sprung into being. And as the pre-incarnate Christ, it was Jesus Who appeared to Abraham and told him that as his 90 year old his wife Sarah would have a son, it was Jesus Who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and it was Jesus who appeared to Joshua as the Commander of the Lord's army. It was Jesus Who walked with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the fiery furnace, and it was Jesus Who appeared to Samson's parents to teach them how to raise their son (Judges 13). And when Samson's father asked the Heavenly visitor what His name was, He said, "Why do you ask My name, seeing it is Wonderful". And the word "Wonderful" is the same Hebrew word that Isaiah uses, for it was the same wonderful Jesus.

We see how wonderful that Jesus is just a few months before He was born, while He was still in Mary's womb, when He met his cousin John the Baptist for the first time, while John was still in Elizabeth's womb. Impossible, you say? No, sir! For when those two mothers greeted each other and the two unborn babies came into each other's presence, John the Baptist leaped for joy, because even as an unborn baby he knew that he was in the presence of God's anointed Savior of the whole world.

Yes, Jesus was wonderful in His pre-incarnate existence, but He was also wonderful in His **birth**. By the most conservative estimations there have been approximately 50 billion people who have lived since Jesus declared on day one of Creation, "Let there be light". And all 50 billion have had one thing in common – they all have had a mother and father. All that is, except One. For the Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. Now, there have been many miraculous births in the history of mankind. Isaac's birth to Sarah was certainly miraculous. John's birth to Elizabeth was just as miraculous. Some of you might have been a miracle baby, or some of you may have had a miracle baby. But no one ever had a miracle baby like Mary. No one ever had the joy of an angelic visit and an announcement like Gabriel's when he came to Mary and said, "Mary, you don't have a husband, but it doesn't matter. You're still going to have a Son, and He will be called the Son of God". No wonder that Jesus was to be called Wonderful!

Oh, but there is so much more that was wonderful at His birth. It was wonderful when the heavens were lit from one end to the other in the middle of the night, filled with a chorus of angels proclaiming, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men". It was wonderful when a supernatural star guided the magi

hundreds of miles for months and months until it stood over where the young child lay. And I know the theory that Jesus was two years old when the magi came, but there is no solid biblical proof behind it. But what a wonder that the Creator of the universe would come and dwell with His creation. And what a wonder that He would come in such a humble manner! The King of glory, born in a stable, lying not in an expensive, polished, monogrammed crib, but in a feeding trough. The King of glory, to Whom free access was given to the smelliest, most rejected members of society, lowly shepherds! What a wonder!

Oh, but we are not yet done speaking of the wonders of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was not only wonderful in His pre-incarnate existence, and in His birth, but He was **wonderful in His life**. What superlatives can adequately describe Jesus' earthly life? Everywhere Jesus went, He went about doing good. Healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk. Raising the dead. Jesus dared to befriend those that no one else would befriend. In fact, that was one of the charges the Pharisees railed against Him. "Look at Him, eating with tax collectors and sinners" (11:9). Jesus dared to reach out to an adulteress at a well and bring her to faith. When the disciples walked up they marveled that He would talk to such trash. But Jesus didn't care. Jesus dared to allow another adulteress come to Him in a Pharisee's house and wash His feet, and his host had the same thoughts as His disciples. But Jesus didn't care. Jesus Christ showed more compassion for the down and outers than anyone who has ever lived. But He also had the same compassion for the up and outers like Nicodemus and Matthew. No one ever loved like Jesus loved.

But that is not the half of the wonders of Jesus' life. He was wonderful in what He said. Over and over the multitudes marveled at His gracious words. Down through the years God's people have had to endure a lot of dull, boring, and even unbiblical sermons. But can you image listening to someone who, every time they spoke, spoke perfect truth in the most interesting, forceful way it could be spoken? There were no clock watchers in Jesus' congregation! No day dreamers. No snoozers and best of all, no snorers. The people couldn't get enough. At one point, when the Pharisees sent a group of soldiers to arrest Jesus, they came back empty handed. And when the Pharisees asked them why, they simply said, "Never a man spoke like this Man".

But the story of Jesus' wonderful life is not yet told. Jesus was attending a wedding one day, and the unthinkable happened. The groom had either underestimated the crowd or their guzzling capacity and they ran out of wine. And that was a faux pas in that culture that you never recovered from. But Jesus stepped in and saved the day by turning six huge water pots full of water into wine. What a

wonder! Jesus saved the day again when he multiplied five loaves and two fish into enough to feed probably 15,000 people or more. Jesus walked on the water to His disciples and saved them from a raging storm, and even gave Simon Peter the power to walk on water, too. At one point Jesus' enemies led Him up to the precipice of a high mountain and planned to toss Him over the edge, and at the last moment Jesus just made Himself invisible or encircled Himself with an impenetrable shield and just walked away from the crowd untouched. Luke said, "And passing through the midst of them He went His way" (Luke 4:30).

But the wonder of Jesus' life comes to its apex not by what He did, but by what His enemies said about Him. At His trial before the high priest the Pharisees and chief priests brought forth every charge they could concoct against Him in order to have Him crucified. And you can believe that they had the best of the best prosecuting His case. But after all of their scheming, when they finally brought witnesses to the stand that they thought would seal their case, Mark writes that even their testimonies did not agree (Mark 14:59). But the crooked high priest condemned Jesus and sent Him on to Pilate anyway, and when Pilate heard the case he said, "I find no fault in Him".

Beloved, down through the centuries men of many different religions and men with no religion at all have denied that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. But all of the countless infidels who've sought to tear away His Deity from Him and strip Him of all His glory; they all have one thing in common. And that is, they can find no fault in Him!! They will deny that He said that He was the Son of God; they will deny that He really performed miracles. They will deny that He died on the cross for the sins of all mankind and deny He rose from the grave, but as much as they would love to dig up dirt on Jesus and damage His character, do you know what they discover? The more they dig for dirt, the more they dig up gold! For everything about His life was wonderful.

But we must press on, for the wonders of our Lord Jesus continue to cry out to us this morning. He was not only wonderful in His life, but He was wonderful in His death and resurrection. As we approach the cross of Jesus Christ, we truly begin to walk on holy ground. We begin the walk in Gethsemane, where Jesus faced the strongest temptation of His entire life. When He was tempted on the mountain in the wilderness, it is said that the devil tempted Him with all the sinful pleasures that life could offer. And each time Jesus quoted Scripture the devil tucked tail and ran. And we believe that the temptations, though they were very real from the devil's point of view, were nothing more to Jesus than an Indian in a canoe that set out to sink a battleship.

But it was totally different in Gethsemane. This time it was Satan's last shot at saving his own scheme for rulership of the world and saving his own skin, and he knew it. And He must have surely mustered every demon in the heavens and on the earth for the battle. And this time the temptation was not with pleasure, but pain. For the devil flashed before Jesus all of the horrors of Hell, all that He would endure on the cross, and when Jesus saw it Mark writes that He was deeply distressed (14:33). But that translation does not do justice to the language. The literal meaning is that Jesus was **astonished** at what He saw, and that He was **struck with terror**. As long as He had been anticipating His passion and death, in His flesh He still didn't realize how horrible it would be. And He was under so much stress that great drops of blood began to pour from His brow, and He cried out, "Father, if it be Your will, let this cup pass from Me", but quickly added, "Father, not My will, but Yours be done".

But the wonder of wonders is that He didn't even have to be there! For when the band of at least 200 Roman soldiers came to arrest Jesus, His almighty power knocked them all flat on their backs when He simply told them His name. And then when Peter tried to defend Jesus by attacking the high priest's servant Jesus said, "Put up your sword, Peter. Don't you know that I could call twelve legions of angels to whisk Me back up to Heaven if I wanted to?" Oh, friends, it was an unspeakable wonder when the King of Kings and Lord of Lords was led away as a lamb to the slaughter by those that He could have slaughtered Himself.

But listen! God has more wonders of His Son to share today. By now the crises of Gethsemane are past. Jesus has conquered the temptation to forsake the cross; He has won the battle for our souls. Now behold the wonder of His strength as He endures the curses, the scourging, and the spitting at His trial. Behold His compassion as He hung on the cross, as He provided for His mother's care, as He forgave those who crucified Him, and as He saved the thief hanging next to Him. Behold the wonder of Him hanging there with the weight of every sin of every man who ever lived on His cursed soul. For the Scripture says, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree". Behold the wonder of the hard-hearted Roman centurion, who likely had witnessed countless crucifixions. Who thought of going to a crucifixion as just another ho-hum day at work. But it was not like that on this day! For after observing all that Jesus said and all the love that He showed as He died, he and all of his companions glorified God by saying, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54).

Friends, they tell us that there are seven wonders of the ancient world. Well, I'm sorry to say to the historians that they are dead wrong! There is only one wonder of the ancient world. It is the wonder of the Cross of Calvary. And all other wonders are

as filthy rags in comparison. Can you see now why Isaiah said, “His name shall be called Wonderful”?

But beloved, we have one more tier to scale to reach the heights of beholding the wonderful Jesus today. Look back to the first part of the verse in our text. Isaiah says, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given”. Do you see it? First of all Isaiah calls the Lord Jesus the Son of Man and the Son of God in the same verse. The Son of Man is born. Jesus became flesh. The Son of God was given. Jesus was God in the flesh. What a wonder! But the wonders of wonders is, unto US a child was born. Unto US a Son is given! Friend, that precious thought should cause the “glory hallelujahs” to start springing up out of your soul! Put that pronoun in the singular! Unto me a child is born! Unto me a Son is given! Me, the chief of sinners. Me, who was Jesus’ enemy when He died for my sins. Me, who deserves the lake of fire and brimstone. Jesus chose to be born for me! Oh, what a wonderful Jesus!!!

The hymn writer penned these lines:

Fairest Lord Jesus
 Ruler of all nations
 Son of God and Son of Man
 Glory and honor, Praise, adoration
 Now and forevermore be Thine!

I wonder, is Jesus truly the “Fairest Lord Jesus” to you today? Is He wonderful to you, as Isaiah said that He was? Is your heart cry this morning, “Jesus, glory and honor, praise and adoration, now and forevermore be Thine?” He can be wonderful to you today. He can become your Savior, your Lord, and your Friend that will never, ever forsake you. And some of you need to claim Him as your Savior today. You are still lost in your sins and you need Him to be your Savior. Others of you are saved, but He is not wonderful to you like He once was. And today you need to repent of your sins and elevate Him once more to the throne of your life. However He is speaking to you, will you respond to Him today?