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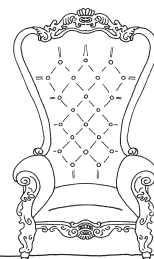
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Preface



The five studies in the first section of the book were originally published by Tyndale House in the book *His Name Is Wonderful*. The book is now out of print; but over the years I received so many expressions of appreciation for these studies that I thought it wise to include them. After all, they deal with five of the most important names of our Lord. The studies in the second section were originally given as radio messages over *Back to the Bible Broadcast*, and were published in the book *The Wonderful Names of Jesus*. I have revised and

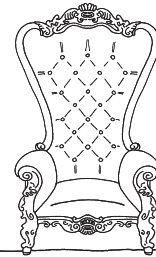
expanded them for this book. However, I have retained the informal style of the radio messages.

May his name ever be glorified!

Warren W. Wiersbe

Introduction:

What's in a Name?



What's in a name?

Juliet asked Romeo that question in Shakespeare's famous play and then answered it herself: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other word would smell as sweet."

Granted, fair Juliet. But you and I and Romeo are people, not plants, and we know what our names are. Names must make a difference; otherwise, why would some people

go to court to have their names changed? And why do many parents struggle over choosing names for their children? At some point in our childhood, many of us complained about the names our parents gave us and perhaps were grateful when somebody pinned a nickname on us. Sometimes joking about a fellow's name could be a declaration of war. Names do make a difference—if not to roses, at least to people.

Names are especially meaningful when you move into the Bible world. God named the first man “Adam,” because he was made from the dust of the ground (Genesis 1:26–27). (In Hebrew, “Adam” means “earth.”) God changed Abram's name to “Abraham,” which means “the father of many nations” (Genesis 17:5–8), a perfect description of the patriarch. When God told the aged Abraham and Sarah they were going to have a son, they laughed; so their son was named “Isaac,” which means “laughter” (Genesis 17:19; 21:1–7).

That's a much happier choice than the one Rachel made when she named her boy “Ben-oni” which means “son of my sorrow” (Genesis 35:16–20). Of course, she was dying when she

chose the name; but “son of my sorrow” is still a terrible weight to hang on any boy. Imagine going through life with a name that reminded you (and your friends) that your birth may have caused your mother's death! Jacob wisely changed the name to “Benjamin,” which means “son of my right hand.”

Jesus changed Simon's name to “Peter,” which means “a rock” (John 1:40–42). At the time, the big fisherman may have looked more like shifting sand; but Jesus saw the potential that was there and helped him to live up to his new name.

Yes, names make a difference in the world of the Bible, and the most important names are those associated with our Savior. “You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). “Jesus” is the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Joshua”; and both of them mean “the Lord is salvation.” There are hundreds of names and titles of Jesus Christ in the Bible, and each one is a dual revelation to us. It reveals what Jesus Christ is in himself, as well as what he wants to do for us. Each name that he bears indicates some blessing that he shares, and we can appropriate these blessings by faith.

Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah saw his coming. His record is in Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Isaiah saw that this child was unique, for he was “born” and he was “given.” In other words, this child was both God and man! As man, he was *born* and shared in our human nature, though sinless. As God, he was *given*—the Father’s love gift to a sinful world. This child was God in human flesh!

What would this child do? He would grow up and one day take the government of mankind upon his shoulder and bring order and peace to a world filled with confusion and war. But before taking the government upon his shoulder, he would take a cross upon his shoulder, and then die upon that cross, bearing in his body the sins of the world. Before he could wear the diadem of glory as King of Kings, he had to wear a shameful crown of thorns and give his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The kingly

Lion of the tribe of Judah first had to come as the lowly Lamb of God; for until the debt of sin had been paid, God’s righteous government could not be established.

In Isaiah 9:6, there’s but a little space between the word “given” and the phrase “and the government”; but so far, that little space represents over nineteen centuries of history. Jesus Christ finished his work on earth and then returned to heaven, promising that he would come again. One day he shall return to this earth and take the government upon his shoulder. Isaiah saw that event, too. Ponder these promises:

“Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (9:7).

“But with righteousness shall He judge the poor ... The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead

them ... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (11:4, 6, 9).

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert ... And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (35:5–6, 10).

What a marvelous planet this will be when Jesus Christ returns to take the government upon his shoulder! But must we wait until then before we can enjoy his reign? No! You and I can turn the government of our lives over to him today! And when we do, all that is expressed in his names will become real in our own daily experience—“Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

His name is *Wonderful*: this takes care of the *dullness of life*. No longer must we live on the cheap substitutes of the world in order to have

excitement and enjoyment. Jesus Christ makes *everything* wonderful because Wonderful is his name.

His name is *Counselor*: this takes care of the *decisions of life*. The problems of life need perplex and paralyze us no longer, wondering what step to take next. With Jesus Christ as our Counselor, we have the wisdom we need to make the right decisions.

His name is *Mighty God*: this takes care of the *demands of life*. And life is demanding! Sometimes we feel like giving up and running off to hide somewhere; but through Jesus Christ, we can face life courageously and have the strength we need to stay on the job and conquer.

His name is *Everlasting Father*: this takes care of the *dimensions of life*. What we are and what we do is part of eternity! A whole new dimension of living is ours through Jesus Christ, when the government of life is on his shoulder.

His name is *Prince of Peace*: this takes care of the *disturbances of life*. In the storms of life, how we long for peace within! What we wouldn't give to have poise and confidence in a threatening world! The answer is Jesus Christ, the Prince

of Peace. When he controls the government of your life, he gives you a peace that passes all understanding and explanation.

It's a mistake to profess to trust Jesus Christ to save us and then go on living the way we please. Either the profession is false or we have a faulty understanding of who Jesus is. We must surrender our all to him and let him be the Lord of our lives. We must, by faith, place the government of our lives upon his shoulder.

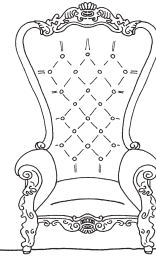
For you, individually, it means surrendering your body to him as "a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1), so that he can walk in your body and work through your body to accomplish his purposes on earth. It also means yielding your mind and learning his truth from his Word: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2a).

It also means giving Christ your will: "that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2b). Finally, it means giving him your heart, your love. "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). When he has your body, mind, will,

and heart, then he can reign in your life because the government will be on his shoulder.

As Jesus reigns in your life, you start to "reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17). Jesus doesn't ask you to abdicate the throne, for then you would become a mere puppet, without personality or the ability to act. All he asks is that you allow him to share the throne with you so that together you face life's challenges, solve life's problems, and accomplish life's purposes. Jesus doesn't do it *instead of you*, as though you were a lifeless robot; nor does he do it *in spite of you*, as though what you did made little difference. Rather, he does it in you and through you as you worship, pray, meditate on the Word, and obey him through the power of the Spirit.

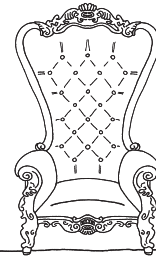
If you have never taken this step before, just now, by faith, put the government of your life in his hands and on his shoulder. Tell Jesus that you want to "reign in life," no matter what the cost might be.



Part 1

**The Names of Jesus
from Isaiah 9:6**

Wonderful



“His name will be called Wonderful ...” This takes care of the dullness of life, because “You are the God who does wonders” (Psalms 77:14).

Bertrand Russell claimed that “at least half the sins of mankind” were caused by the fear of boredom. Perhaps this explains why children don’t usually commit the kinds of sins that their elders commit, since, for the most part, children live in a world filled with wonder. A child can

stare at a butterfly perched on a flower or at fish swimming in a pool and be perfectly content. Jesus may have had this in mind when he warned a group of adults, “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

In today’s society, we’re surrounded by the miracles of modern science; yet people are bored, some of them to such an extent that they take their own lives. We face a population explosion; yet millions of people are slowly dying of the effects of loneliness and boredom. Our cities are crowded; yet hearts are empty. Henry David Thoreau once described the city as “hundreds of people being lonely together.” In a world filled with exciting, electronic marvels, you would think that life would be exciting. However, for many people, life is just plain dull. They look for new toys, but once the novelty has worn off they go back to the same old routine. Obviously, something is wrong.

Wonder versus Novelty

Let’s start with the basic question: What is wonder? Many different concepts cluster around

the word “wonder”: amazement, surprise, astonishment, awe, admiration, perhaps even bewilderment, and even worship. The Hebrew word that Isaiah used means “to separate, to distinguish.” Throughout the Old Testament, it is translated a number of interesting ways: marvelous, hidden, too high, too difficult, miracle. It carries the basic meaning of being unique and different.

But we must be careful to distinguish “wonder” from some of the substitute ideas that might lead us astray. True wonder has depth. It isn’t a shallow emotion or a passing wave of excitement. Wonder penetrates; it goes much deeper than the exciting or the sensational. The reason is that wonder has value; it isn’t cheap amusement. When a person experiences true wonder, it enriches him and leaves him a better person. True wonder will draw the very best out of us and put the very best into us. True wonder creates in us an attitude of humility: we’re overwhelmed and sense in ourselves the greatness of God and the littleness of man. David knew this feeling when he said, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your

fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man, that You visit him?" (Ps. 8:3–4).

Many people have the false notion that wonder is based on ignorance. "Bring an ignorant savage to the big city," they say, "and he'll be amazed at everything he sees." But true wonder is based on knowledge, not ignorance. The more we know, the more we wonder. This childlike spirit of wonder isn't founded on innocent ignorance; it's founded on an inquisitive and intelligent attitude toward reality.

Wise people gladly confess how little they really know. Each trickle of truth only leads to a river that takes us to the vast ocean of knowledge whose depths we can't measure. Excitement over novelty passes once the novelty is explained and understood; wonder grows deeper when knowledge increases. British mathematician and scientist Sir Isaac Newton wrote: "To myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all

undiscovered before me." Albert Einstein put it this way: "The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious ... He who knows it not, can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed out candle."

Finally, true wonder possesses the whole person, the mind, the heart, the will. Wonder isn't an isolated experience that perplexes the mind or stirs the emotions. True wonder captures the whole person; otherwise the experience is simply novelty or surprise, merely a passing entertainment. This is because true wonder is an attitude of life and not an interruption or an isolated event. The person who lives in childlike wonder always lives this way. Wonder isn't something we turn on and off like a radio; true wonder is the total outlook and attitude of life at all times. In other words, all of our being is involved in wonder all of the time. This kind of wonder is hard to find these days.

Substitutes for Wonder

Why is there so little true wonder in our world today? One reason is that the world God made is disappointing to most people. In every area of

life we seem to see nothing but problems: low wages and high prices, discrimination, political immorality, slums and smog and pollution, hypocrisy—the list is a long one. The good seem to suffer and the bad seem to succeed. It's very easy to develop a “what's-the-use” attitude, become cynical, pull into our own little shell, and let the rest of the world go by.

But the real reason for our present-day loss of wonder goes much deeper. We're living in a mechanical world that's very impersonal. Most people look at the world and think of scientific law instead of a gracious Lawgiver. We are persons, made in the image of God; therefore, we must have a personal world if life is to have any meaning. When life loses its meaning, life loses its wonder; then we become machines! A false view of science and technology has robbed us of a heavenly Father who makes the lilies more glorious than Solomon's wardrobe and who puts out his hand when the sparrow falls.

We live in a mechanical world, and we live in a commercial world. The two questions that seem to control society are “Does it work?” and “Does it pay?” with the emphasis on the

latter question. To quote Thoreau again, we have “improved means to unimproved ends.” For centuries the philosophers and mystics have been reminding us that we can't enjoy the things that money can buy if we lose the things money can't buy. Making a living has replaced making a life, and searching after new schemes and methods has replaced discovering truth and building character. The very fact of wonder demands values, for we don't wonder at that which is cheap and contemptible. When values vanish, wonder must vanish, too.

Our world is a busy world. We have little time to pause, contemplate, and wonder. Even vacationers pause only long enough to take photos or make videos that they can look at back home when they have more time. They don't have time to get close to people or God's creation, to stand and wonder at what he has made. Quick! Get a picture or two and buy some postcards. We have miles to cover before the day ends!

The child lives in a world of wonder because he stands still long enough to watch and to ponder. Our lives are so full they are perpetually empty. We boast about the quantity of our

activity without admitting the lack of quality in our experience. We know how to count activities, but we don't know how to weigh experiences, and we're the losers in the long run.

Perhaps the greatest cause for the lack of wonder is this: we live in an artificial world. Most people are living on substitutes and don't know it. Stupid vulgar comedy has replaced true wit and humor; cheap amusement has replaced wholesome recreation; and propaganda has replaced truth. Millions of bored people depend on manufactured experiences to rescue them from their tedious existence. Each experience must be greater than the previous one, and the result is a nervous system so taxed by substitute stimulants that the person finds it harder and harder to recognize and enjoy an emotional experience that is normal and real. When you exist on artificial stimulants, you gradually lose the ability to recognize and enjoy the real.

The greatest substitute of all is sin, and this is what lies at the root of the whole matter. Unless you and I do something about our sins, we'll never be able to experience and enjoy the wonder that God wants to bring into our

lives. The essence of idolatry is worshiping and serving something other than God; living, if you please, on substitutes. But it's a basic law of life that we become like the gods we worship, so if our god is an artificial substitute, we will become artificial too. The very senses that ought to thrill us with wonder become jaded, then paralyzed, then dead.

"They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; noses they have, but they do not smell. . . Those who make them [the idols] are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them" (Ps. 115:5-6, 8).

The only person who can deal with our basic needs and restore wonder to our lives is Jesus Christ, because his name is Wonderful.

The Wonders of Jesus

Why is Jesus Christ called Wonderful? To name his name is to give the answer, for we would be amazed if he were not called Wonderful! Everything about Jesus Christ makes the believing heart say, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight!"

To start with, he's wonderful in his person.
Imagine God coming to earth as man!

*Christ, by highest heaven adored;
Christ, the Everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the virgin's womb:
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th' Incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emanuel.*

(Charles Wesley)

When the shepherds shared the news of the birth of Jesus, “all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds” (Luke 2:18). It was something to wonder at: “God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

Christ was wonderful in the life he lived on earth. Everything that yielded to him participated in wonder. It was just another wedding until Jesus arrived, and he transformed it into a wonderful occasion that is still pondered by devout souls. Ordinary servants put ordinary

water into ordinary stone pots and then the extraordinary happened! The wonder of it all—water was transformed into wine! But this is the wonder of his life. Whatever he touched took on new substance and new meaning.

Peter and his fisherman friends would have lived ordinary lives and died ordinary deaths had they never met Jesus; but when Jesus started giving the orders, catching fish was a totally new experience for them. “Launch out into the deep!” “Cast the net on the right side of the ship!” Peter had experienced storms on the Sea of Galilee, but the experience was different when Jesus Christ was in control. “Peace! Be still!” Jesus even empowered Peter to walk on the water!

Whatever Jesus touched, he blessed and beautified and made wonderful. He longed for people to open their eyes to see the world around them: the splendor of the lilies, the freedom of the sparrows, the miracle of the children, the message of the wind. He took everyday bread and wine and gave these necessities a depth of meaning that transformed them into luxuries of God's grace. A little seed suddenly becomes a sermon: “The seed is the Word of God.” Water

becomes a picture of the Holy Spirit. A lost sheep is a lost soul. He wrote in the dust and confounded the angry religious leaders. Perhaps the greatest wonder of all was his transforming a shameful cross into the meeting place of God's love and man's sin.

Everything about Jesus is wonderful: his birth, his life, and his words. "So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22). Unlike the scribes, who quoted authorities, Jesus spoke with authority. His teaching was no secondhand tradition; his message was firsthand truth from God. "I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him" (John 8:26). And he practiced what he taught! "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46). In his words we find simplicity—the common people heard him gladly—and yet profundity, a depth of meaning that the greatest minds are still trying to fathom. He was at home with the lowliest peasant or the most learned rabbi.

The greatest wonder of his teaching is that in his words we have life. "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

When we read the greatest writings of the ages, our hearts may be stirred and our minds instructed, but when we meditate on the words of Christ, we share in the wonder of his life. His Word feeds the inner person and satisfies. They give much more than enlightenment; they give enablement and help us to live in him.

Consider the wonder of his death. He came to die; he knew he would die; he was willing to die. If any man ever had a right to live, it was Jesus Christ; yet he willingly died, "even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8).

*Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut His glories in
When Christ the mighty Maker died
For man the creature's sin.*

(Isaac Watts)

Far greater than the three hours of darkness, or the earthquake that rent the tombs, was the loving surrender of the Son of God as he willingly bore the sins of the world on his own body. What wondrous love is this! Add to this the wonder of his resurrection and his ascension,

the wonder of the salvation that he purchased for us, and the wonder of the grace he lavishes on us! Oh, my soul! What a wonder he is!

The Wonder of Jesus in Us

Do we need wonder in our lives? Yes, we do; otherwise life becomes bland and blind, dull and dead, and we miss much of what God has prepared for us. The dullness of life isn't caused by circumstances on the outside, but by spiritual conditions on the inside. Jesus lived in the same world as the multitudes that followed him, and yet it was not the same world. Christ's world was a different and more wonderful world. No wonder he lamented, "Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matt. 13:13).

Whenever he spoke about the deeper spiritual realities, the people (including his own disciples) thought he was referring to the material things they could see. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" was thought to be referring to the Jewish temple, but "He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:19, 21). "You must be born again," he told Nicodemus, who

then asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus thought of physical birth, but our Lord was speaking of spiritual birth. The woman at the well thought Jesus was speaking of physical water (John 4:11); the crowds in the Capernaum synagogue thought he was speaking about literally eating his flesh and drinking his blood (John 6). Oh, the blindness of those who have no wonder in their hearts!

Wonder is important. That's why his name "Wonderful" leads the list. Unless I know something of his wonder, I'm not likely to come to him for counsel, power, or any other spiritual essential. Wonder leads to worship, and worship to growth, and growth to character and service. Wonder begins with receiving Christ into the heart and life, experiencing the forgiveness of sins, and the invasion of a whole new life. "Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). When we ask him in, Jesus promises, "I will come in to him, and dine with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20).

When you are born again into God's family, you receive a whole new set of spiritual senses, and the inner person is raised from the dead and given divine life. Everything becomes different.

*Heav'n above is softer blue.
 Earth around is sweeter green!
 Something lives in every hue
 Christless eyes have never seen:
 Birds with gladder songs o'erflow.
 Flow'rs with deeper beauty shine.
 Since I know, as now I know,
 I am His, and He is mine.*

(George Wade Robinson)

Wonder comes into your life as you walk with him in obedience and consecration. How much the disciples learned as they listened to him, followed him, and let him guide their lives! There's no substitute for daily fellowship with the Lord in his Word and in prayer, and then walking with him in obedience. This kind of daily experience sharpens the spiritual senses of the inner person. Your eyes begin to see the way he sees; your ears start to hear what he hears; and (most important of all) your heart begins to love what he loves. Your values change as your vision sharpens. Your deepening love for Christ opens new windows and doors for you, and life begins to fulfill the promise of 1 Corinthians 2:9—"Eye

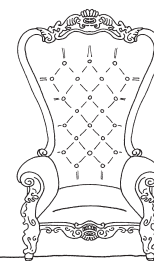
has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." Wonder is a liberating experience. It breaks the shackles and calls us to a life of faith and love.

This life of wonder with the Wonderful One climaxes in glory: "We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as he is" (1 John 3:2). Eternal wonder! We will see with perfect vision, love with sinless hearts, and obey with wills that are lost in the wonder of the glory of God! The glory of heaven is its wonder in Christ; the tragedy of hell is the absence of Christ and his wonder. Darkness, dullness, frightening monotony, eternal loneliness, eternal purposelessness, pain and sorrow—this is hell. Pain, yes; judgment, yes; but permeating it all, that awful dullness that sin always brings when that first "pleasure" is gone. To be forsaken by God means that the wonder is taken out of your life for all eternity. Jesus called hell "Gehenna," referring to the garbage dump burning outside Jerusalem. What a tragedy: sinful man ceases to be man and ends up just a piece of junk, a cast-off thing on an eternal garbage heap!

Those who walk with Christ by faith know the meaning of wonder in their daily lives. Ordinary people experience extraordinary things because of the wonder of Christ. These wonders may not be obvious to those outside the family of God, but they're clearly visible to those inside the family. His wonders are seen in so-called little things, such as a flower, or a bird, or a baby's smile. And they're seen in big things as well, such as the courage to say "No" or the strength to keep going when the road is difficult. Little things become big things when they're touched by the wonder of Christ. He can make your life wonderful because his name is Wonderful.

2

Counselor



"His name is ... Counselor." This takes care of the decisions of life. "You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Ps. 73:24).

Where people turn for help is some indication of their character and faith. One man turns to the local bar where he pours out his troubles into the ears of anybody he thinks will be sympathetic. (But then he has to listen to their troubles!)