

WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

Isaiah 9:1-7

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SCRIPTURE

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. ² The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. ³ You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder. ⁴ For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders. You will break the oppressor's rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian. ⁵ The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire. ⁶ For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen! (Isaiah 9:1-7 NLT).

MESSAGE

Job titles. Most everybody has a job title. But job titles have changed over the years. They have become more creative and more euphemistic. A receptionist is now known as a Director of First Impressions. A janitor is a Custodial Engineer. A factory worker is a Pneumatic Device and Machine Optimizer. Manicurists are Nail Technicians. A lifeguard is a Wet Leisure Attendant. And so on and so forth.

How do people like these new titles? According to a commissioned study by the staffing firm, Spherion, they don't. The chief objection is that the new titles are unclear and confusing. They don't tell you what the person actually does. The titles are not meaningful.

Contrast this with the titles that the prophet Isaiah gives to a special leader, called the Messiah, whom God would send to deliver his people from the power of sin:

And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (9:6).

Any one of the these titles is extraordinary but the Messiah will have all four.

In the Old Testament, kings, priests and prophets were recognized in a ceremony that involved pouring olive oil on the person's head. A person who experienced this was called an "anointed one." The Hebrew term for "anointed one" comes into the English language as "messiah." "Christ" is from the Greek form of messiah and means the same thing. Later, the term "Messiah" came to refer to a special leader whom God would send to deliver his people from oppression and evil. This Messiah was predicted by the Old Testament Prophets. Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled their predictions.

When we say that Jesus is the Christ, when we say that Jesus is the Messiah, we are saying that we recognize that he is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. We are also saying that he was not a myth or a legend but a real, historical person. More than that, like Isaiah, we can speak of him as the light of the world.

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine (9:2).

Isaiah knew that light speaks to our deepest longings since the world can be so dark. The prophet believed that light would come in the form of a child. In effect, he says, "I know things look bad. Our enemies have killed so many of our loved ones and they have taken our land. But listen. Things are going to change. A child will be born for us. This child will put things right. Now we are in darkness. Soon we will be in light."

Isaiah tells his people to have hope. Light will overcome darkness. Joy will emerge from despair. The oppressors will be driven away. The trappings of war will be tossed aside. And the One who comes to make this possible will be a wonderful counselor – acting as a true friend, a mighty God – ruling in power, an everlasting Father – whose love knows no bounds, the Prince of Peace – bringing harmony to a world torn apart by conflict. The One who comes will have these four amazing job titles and will fulfill all that they imply.

It is an incredible vision that seems like fantasy. But one night, when the world was asleep, the prophet's dream became flesh and blood reality. Jesus is born. This changes everything. Darkness will not have the last word. That belongs to the One who is the light and life of the world.

And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting

Father, Prince of Peace (9:6).

I began this message with comments about job titles. Usually when you change a job title it becomes less meaningful. However, there is way that you can change the job titles for Jesus to make them even more meaningful than they already are. Sounds unbelievable doesn't it? But it is simple really. All you have to do is add the word "my" to the front of each title. When you say of Jesus, he is . . . "My Wonderful Counselor, My Mighty God, My Everlasting Father, My Prince of Peace" this will change your whole world. The light has come into your life and will never be taken away.

Prayer:

O Wonderful, Mighty, Loving, Peace-giving God: Thank you for shining your light into our darkness. We rejoice in the Savior's birth! May our lives reflect your light and love wherever the journey takes us. Amen.