

The Child through Time

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Isa 9:5b – 6a (BHS)

וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ
פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ
אֵל גִּבּוֹר אֲבִיעֵד
שֶׁר־שָׁלוֹם:
לְרֵבֵה הַמְּשָׁרָה
וּלְשָׁלוֹם אֵי־דָקָן
עַל־כִּסֵּא דָוִד

Isa 9:6b – 7a (KJV)

and his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God, The **everlasting Father**,
The **Prince** of Peace.
Of the increase of his government
and peace there shall be no end,
upon the throne of David

The first half of 9:6 reads, “For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders.” Line 3 ends with *'ab* (= father), plus the suffix *'ad* (= until or forever). No doubt you recognize *shalom* in line 4. Note also the different versification between Hebrew and English.

The first word of line 5 is very exciting because it has a unique phenomenon seen in printed Hebrew Bibles: the *mem* (ם) is “closed,” that is, in its final form, like at the end of line 4. It is supposed to be in the open, medial form (מ). No one knows why. It is mysterious and occurs only here. [Here](#) is a page that discusses it. Does a closed *mem* indicate a closed womb, as in a virgin? What a coincidence that it is the first letter of “Mary”!

In 1955, Rignell concluded that the one on whom the government would rest is none other than God himself (email me for my Isaiah bibliography). In Isa 28:29, Yahweh’s counsel is “wonderful.” Yahweh is Mighty God (10:21). Rignell argued that the “son” represents the people of God who will live under God’s government. After all, all those titles are divine ascriptions, and would not have been understood as being about any human king.

Huh. But what about verse 7a, the “throne of David”? Isn’t this about a human king? And line 4 has *śar* (“prince”)—found 17 times in Isaiah, never referring to God. Hmm.

Twenty years later, Carlson observed that the titles are specifically designed to set the Messiah above Assyrian kings. In 2 Kings 16:7, Ahaz allied with Tiglath-*pilesar*. You can see *pile* and *sar* above: “wonderful” and “prince.” Other Assyrian titles include “Counselor,” “father to his people,” and “god.” Coleson argued that “Mighty God” and “father forever” makes the Messiah bigger than Assyrian kings. But the king is definitely human, not divine.

Twenty years after that, Wegner argued that our text is a birth announcement that used “theophoric names.” “Hezekiah” means, “My strength is Yahweh.” “Isaiah” means, “Yahweh has brought salvation.” These divine elements obviously don’t claim deity for humans. So the throne-names are theophoric and the verse should be read, “God the warrior (is) Father forever.” Or perhaps better, “The wonderful planner (is) the mighty God,” “The Father of eternity (is) the prince of peace.” This is quite a long name, but not beyond the pale. In 8:3, Isaiah named his son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil” (in class we simply call him Fred).

Twenty years after Wegner, Grogan pointed out how this text links up with the child of 7:14. For example, the son will be given “for us” (plural in 9:6a)—and in 7:14 it is for “you” (plural) that the sign of Immanuel (“with-us-God”) is given. He writes, “If the child of 7:14 – 16 ... *typifies* the ultimate divine Christ, the child of these verses is that Christ.” So it has taken scholarship all this time to finally conclude that the child born of a virgin, who is Immanuel, is

also the descendant of David who will lay claim as Messiah to all of those theophoric names. Whew!

So we have divine titles, which correspond to grandiose Assyrian names, incorporated into a long name of a coming king, who in the NT amazingly and unexpectedly is all of the things that the titles claim—including God-With-Us! In the words of Paul, “To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” (Rom 9:5). In the words of John, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (John 1:18).

Today his government is spiritual and invisible. But it won’t stay that way. Someday he will return and establish the Father’s dominion over the whole earth, again, in a literal sense, in accordance with this prophecy. So take heed now and believe the gospel!

By holding on to this hope we are able to endure suffering in his name until he comes. And we now live out each day in this fallen world, waiting to see the ultimate fulfillment of our verse. Amen, Come Lord Jesus!