

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Who was Melchizedek?

by Charles Hunting

The very Jewish way of thinking displayed in the Melchizedek material in Hebrews 7 has opened the door for possible misunderstanding of the identity of the king and high priest Melchizedek. The Melchizedek Order of Priesthood is held now by the Messiah Jesus. That much is very clear. One translation (NASB) speaks of this mysterious personage as “without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest forever.”

Believers in a preexisting Son of God find in this and similar translations proof of Jesus’ pre-human state. But one Bible annotates our passage with the following: “Some believe the appearance of Melchizedek to be a manifestation of Christ before His incarnation, but the comparison ‘like the Son of God’ argues against such an interpretation.” The very fact that Melchizedek was described as *like* the Son and not actually the Son should alert us to the fact that he could not *be* Jesus. Jesus *was* the Son of God. Melchizedek was a “type,” a pointer to the coming Son of God, the Messiah.

The translation given in the highly respected *Word Biblical Commentary* is illuminating. “His father, mother, and line of descent are unknown, and there is no record of his birth or of his death, but having been made to *resemble* the Son of God, he remains a priest continuously.” Such a rendering clears up all difficulties and gives no support for a pre-historic Jesus as Son of God.

Looking more closely at the context of our passage we find that “every high priest is taken from *among men* and appointed their representative before God, to offer sacrifices for sin. For he is able to bear patiently with the ignorant and erring since he too is beset by weakness” (Heb. 5:1, 2). Thus it is said of Jesus: “Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every way, so that he might be merciful and faithful as their high priest before God” (Heb. 2:13). Paul emphasized the uniqueness of Jesus’ priesthood and his relationship with his Father in 1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, himself *man*.”

Consistent with the idea that high priests are chosen from among *men*, God appointed the man Messiah Jesus (cp. I Tim. 2:5) to the order of Melchizedek’s priesthood (Ps. 110:4). The point to be grasped is that there is *no record of Melchizedek’s parentage*. That is what is meant by his having “no father and mother.” It is not said of Melchizedek that he was fatherless! His father is simply unknown. Jewish writings state that Sarah was motherless, because the name of her mother is not recorded.

What *is* known about Melchizedek is that he did not belong to the family of Levi. Hebrews 7:6 implies that Melchizedek’s family history *is* traceable to someone, but not to Levi. Melchizedek was an exalted man, a “type” of the ultimate priest, Jesus Christ. He represented a priesthood superior to that given to Levi under the Law. According to Psalm 110:1 Jesus was a human being, just as Melchizedek was. The Messiah is designated *adoni* in Psalm 110:1 and *adoni* (“my lord”) is never a title for Deity. This convinces us that Jesus was not God, but the human Son of God. Melchizedek, likewise, was a human person, chosen by God to typify that later non-Levitical priesthood of Jesus, who was of the seed of Judah and David. ✧

It is hard to shake the traditions of churches. A mass of scholarship (see our newly reprinted booklet *What Happens When We Die?* available at 800-347-4261) recognizes that the immortality of the soul — and thus the concept that human beings continue in life, in heaven or hell, the moment they die — is false to the Bible. Church of England scholars long ago admitted that man is not inherently immortal. This prompted us to write to the Archbishop of Canterbury, appealing for a return to Scripture in this important matter of the nature and destiny of man and of what happens to us at death:

The Most Reverend the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury,

In a class on biblical eschatology here at Atlanta Bible College, we used sections of your most interesting book *I Believe in Man*. I wondered whether I might be permitted to reflect on a couple of points you raised in your last chapter, “The Destiny of Man.”

As one born and bred in the Church of England, and having “gone back to school” (as Americans say) to

get a degree in theology and then to teach in a Bible College since 1981, I now realize that I earlier had only the vaguest notion of the various options in eschatology [our Christian hope for the future].

Following the excellent work of the biblical theologians of the 60s (Alan Richardson was particularly helpful), I am now fully convinced that, as you say, “man is by nature mortal” (p. 163), that “the ancient Greek concept of the immortality of the soul is at complete variance with the idea of the resurrection” (p. 167), that “it is impossible to conceive of personality or the self existing without a body” (p. 167), and that “a body-less soul is therefore alien to the Christian faith.”

If as you further state, “we [Christians] do not step out with the immaterialist who postulates an immaterial soul over and above his physical body,” why is it that the average Church of England churchgoer (and members of the mainline denominations in general) *does* in fact believe in just such a surviving soul, based on what is the clear implication of funeral sermons and what appears to be the accepted consensus amongst the clergy?

If “it is a false trail to look within the human body for an immortal ‘soul,’ mind or residual self which *somehow* survives the destruction of the flesh” (pp. 172, 173), might it be possible to initiate (in this decade of evangelism) an exciting return to biblical teaching on this fundamental question of the nature of man, death and hope? Surely a more vigorous Christianity would result from a clear view of the future, as the Bible presents it. By asserting the hope of resurrection of the whole person and of all the faithful at Christ’s return (I Cor. 15:23), we would immediately bring understanding to our personal Bible study and enjoy the immense advantage of reflecting the voice of the Apostles. Though the corporate resurrection of the faithful is clearly laid out in I Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4, many read these passages (and hear them preached at funerals) in the confusing shadow of a preconceived notion that the individual’s moment of death is the instant of immediate conscious glory in heaven.

Far outweighing the moment of death is the hope for the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth and the resurrection which introduces it. This view of the future pervades both Testaments.

You observe what I think many of us can confirm that “sermons and talks on eschatology are rare indeed in Christian congregations” (p. 177). This must be because our accepted traditional teaching confuses the whole issue by speaking of “souls” departing their bodies at death. This must lead to a loss of the central NT teaching on resurrection from Hades as the only

way out of death. The God of the Bible is one who “brings down to the grave and raises up.” But I seemed in those early days to be presented with a prospect of going up without having to go down at all! Jesus emerged from the “heart of the earth” or Hades only via resurrection. And his experience is the model for our own expectation.

An appeal for a reform of basic Christian thinking along these lines is nothing new. The report in memory of Archbishop Temple, “Towards the Conversion of England” of 1945, contained in section 53 the assertion that “the idea of the inherent indestructibility of the human soul (or consciousness) owes its origin to Greek, not to Bible, sources.” It seems to me that so far we have merely talked about the biblical view of death. Nothing has been achieved in terms of a revolution of thought to bring pulpit and pew into line with the Hebraic biblical view of man as a unity in need of resurrection *from* death, not survival of death. It is not surprising that eschatology is not a vital subject in the Church when our own teaching about surviving disembodied souls has made the NT so difficult to understand. The great virtue of Hope is undermined if not abandoned when we do not share the clear expectation of Jesus and the early Church of a future, corporate “awakening” from death.

I write as one brought up in the Anglican community who was not exposed to biblical teaching in any depth until my 20s. What has been such a comfort to me is a clear view of the destiny of man as needing to be resurrected from death and of that resurrection being an event of the eschatological future. The whole matter of the Parousia is brought into focus when we abandon the false notion that the dead survive immediately. Traditional teaching (to which Tyndale also objected) changes the Bible’s insistence that resurrection is essential for the gaining of immortality.

Thank you again for your encouraging teaching about the mortality of man. Our prayer is that a campaign might be launched so that the desires of the 1945 committee and the wisdom of the Bible theologians might bear fruit in the lives of many in England and the Christian West. ✧

Isaiah 9:6: What is Meant by the Messiah being “God” and “Father”?

by Frank Toth

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on his shoulders; and his name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

Some Trinitarians attempt to support the concept of a Triune God from this passage. They claim that the titles “Mighty God” and “Eternal Father” point to a second member of the Godhead.

The Bible is from cover to cover a unitarian document (i.e., God is a single Divine Person). It teaches that “there is but **one God, the Father**” (1 Cor. 8:6) and that the Father is “the only one who is truly God” (John 17:3; cp 5:44 and I Tim. 2:5). Since Jesus His Son was *given, sent* or *begotten* by Him (John 3:16, 17; 17:1, 3, Matt. 1:20), we need to grasp the meaning of the terms “God” or “Father” as legitimate titles for the Messiah. Some translations, even several produced by Trinitarians, do not use the term “God” for the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6:

“Wonder-Counsellor, Divine Champion, Father Ever, Captain of Peace.”—*Byington*

“A wonder of a counsellor, a divine hero, a father for all time, a peaceful prince.”—*Moffatt*

“In purpose wonderful, in battle God-like, Father for all time, Prince of Peace.”—*NEB*

“Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty Hero, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”—*Revised English Bible*

“Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty One, Potentate, Prince of Peace, Father of the age to come.”—*The Septuagint*, as found in the *Codex Alexandrinus*, translated by Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton, c. 1850.

“Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty, Judge, Everlasting, Father, Prince, and Peace.”—Sanhedrin 94a, in the *Talmud*.

Two translations apply neither “God” nor “Father” to the Messiah: “the Messenger of great counsel: for I will bring peace upon the princes, and health to him.”—*The Septuagint*, as found in the *Codex Vaticanus*, published in 1851 by Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton.

“Wonderful counsellor of the mighty God, of the everlasting Father, of the Prince of peace.”—*Tanach* translation of the Hebrew Masoretic text.

Ancient and modern Jews, as well as others, believe the text describes a mortal human ruler. They have included in its reference Judah’s King Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz. The following quotations show that not all Trinitarians understand the verse as a reference to Christ only. Many of them accept a possible application initially to Hezekiah and ultimately to Christ. They refer

to “Hezekiah, who was very unlike his father Ahaz. This passage is acknowledged, not only by Christians, but by the Chaldee interpreter, to relate in the same manner, but in a more excellent sense, to the Messiah” (*Annotationes ad Vetus et Novum Testamentum*, by Hugo Grotius, a Dutch Arminian Christian, 1583-1645).

Regarding the titles given to the Messiah: “Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace,” a footnote in *The Jerusalem Bible* speaks of “a prophetic proper name, cp. Isa. 1:26. [*I will restore your judges as of old, your counsellors as in bygone days.*] The child possesses to a supreme degree the qualities of all the great figures of his race: the wisdom of Solomon, the valor of David, the virtues of Moses and the patriarchs. Cp. 11:2. [*On him the spirit of Yahweh rests, a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh.*] Christian tradition and the Christmas liturgy apply these titles to Christ, presenting him as the true Immanuel.”

The hope of Israel was founded on the permanence of David’s dynasty. The names given to the royal child signified more than a continuation of the royal House of David. They pointed to a decisive intervention by God whose own greatness would become manifest in His dealings with and blessings upon Hezekiah and the Messiah. This is suggested by the Jewish Publication Society’s *Masoretic Text* rendering of Isaiah 9:6: “And his name is called *Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom*. [Footnote: That is, *Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty, the everlasting Father, the Ruler of peace.*]”

Whether applied to Hezekiah or to Christ or to both, the title “Mighty God” does not, of course, identify the person as God the Father (nor as “God the Son”). Jesus is certainly not his own Father! Others in the Bible are called “gods” because God the Father Himself conferred that title on them. The term “Mighty God” is defined by the leading Hebrew lexicon as a “mighty hero” or “divine hero, reflecting the divine majesty” (*Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Brown, Driver and Briggs, p. 42). This mighty hero is “a warrior and defender of his people, like God himself” (*The Catholic Study Bible*, p. 888). It is interesting that the Protestant Reformer John Calvin, who was responsible for the execution of the unitarian scholar Michael Servetus, gave the following reasonable and Scriptural explanation of God’s appointment of other “gods”:

“‘I said you are gods.’ Scripture gives the name of ‘gods’ to those on whom God has conferred an

honorable office. He whom God has separated to be distinguished above all others [His Son] is far more worthy of this honorable title...The passage which Christ quotes [in John 10:34] is in Psalm 82:6, 'I have said, "You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High,"' where God expostulates with the kings and judges of the earth, who tyrannically abuse the authority and power for their own sinful passions, for oppressing the poor, and for every evil action...Christ applies this to the case in hand, that they receive the name of gods, because they are God's ministers for governing the world. For the same reason Scripture calls the angels gods, because by them the glory of God beams forth on the world...In short, let us know that magistrates are called gods, because God has given them authority" (*Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, by John Calvin, pp. 419-20).

Martin Werner, DD, states: "The word 'God' did mean, in the first place, the absolute divine omnipotence but it was also used for the beings who served this *deus verus* [the True God]. That these were designated 'gods' implies reverence and recognition of Him who sent them and whom they thus represented. Consequently in the Scriptures (Exod. 22:28), not only angels, but even men could be called 'gods' [cp. Ps. 8:5; Heb. 2:7, 9; Ps. 82:6, 7; John 10:34, 35] without according them the status in the strict sense. Even Lactantius [260-330 C.E.] had thought in this way" (*The Formation of Christian Dogma: An Historical Study of Its Problems*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957, p. 140).

It is wise to understand the words of Isaiah 9:6 in the unitarian manner intended by Isaiah himself writing to his ancient Jewish audience. As explained by a Trinitarian scholar, historian and scientist at the time of the Reformation:

"The words of Isaiah, *Deus fortis*, 'strong God,' have been differently interpreted. It is evident that the term God is in Hebrew applied figuratively to those who excel — to angels, heroes, and magistrates; and some render it here, not God, but brave or hero" (*Apud Sandium*, p. 118, by Esromus Rudingerus [1523-90], as quoted in *The Concessions of Trinitarians*, by John Wilson, Boston, 1845).

Martin Luther himself was aware of these important facts of language. "In several places of his *Expositions and Sermons*, Luther maintains that the epithets [of Isaiah 9:6] belong, not to the person of Christ, but to his work and office. He understands [*el*] in the sense of power or ability, citing for his authority Deut. 28:32, where, as in about four other places, the expression occurs of an action's being or not being 'in

the power of the hand'" (Dr. J.P. Smith, *Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*, London, 1837).

Another Trinitarian of the Reformation period wrote: "The word [*el*] here used is applicable, not only to God, but to angels and men worthy of admiration. Whence it does not appear, that the Deity of Christ can be effectually gathered from this passage" (*Apud Sandium*, p. 118, by Sasbout Vosmeer, Archbishop of Utrecht, 1602-1614, as quoted in *The Concessions of Trinitarians*).

Referring to Isaiah 9:6 and other Hebrew texts often cited as evidence of the Trinity, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* makes the following admission: "Even these exalted titles did not lead the Jews to recognize that the Savior to come was to be none other than God Himself."

There is no doctrine of the Incarnation of a preexisting eternal Son in the Old Testament. The weight of the evidence favors a unitarian view of the Godhead: "Thus it appears that none of the passages cited from the Old Testament in proof of the Trinity are conclusive...We do not find in the Old Testament clear or decided proof upon this subject" (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, by McClintock and Strong).

It is therefore incorrect to imagine that the term "God" in the Bible describes *only* the supreme Deity. Israel's ancient judges were called "gods." Seven centuries before Jesus was born, Jews had no problem viewing Hezekiah as "Mighty God." Why, then, should anyone today insist that the Messiah is the absolute God simply because he also is called "Mighty God"? Hezekiah and the Messiah in Hebrew are called *El Gibbor*. But they are never called *El Shaddai*, a term exclusively applied to God the Father. The Father has always had absolute and unlimited power, while the Messiah claimed no such thing for himself. Furthermore, the Messiah is called a "Prince," a title that is never applied to God, the universal Ruler who has no King above himself.

The Hebrew for "God" in Isaiah 9:6 is *el*, defined in Strong's Concordance as "strength; as adjective mighty; especially the Almighty (but used also of any deity)." We also read: "It is evident that [*el*] properly denotes strong, powerful, and is used in Ezek. 31:11 of king Nebuchadnezzar, who is called 'the mighty one of the heathen'" (*Scholia in Vetus Testamentum*, 1828-36, by Ernst F.K. Rosenmuller, Prof. of the Arabic Language at Leipzig, d. 1836).

The fact that *el* is used in Isaiah 57:5 to describe idols shows that it is a general term. It can be applied to any mighty being, not exclusively to God the Father.

There are instances where *el* does not even refer to a god or idol (Job 41:25; Ps. 29:1; 82:1; 89:6; Ezek. 31:11). Thus, God the Father is the chief *el* and rules over all other mighty ones called *el*. There is one “only true God” in the absolute and unlimited sense, without qualification. Jesus makes this more than clear in John 17:3. The Father remains in the biblical unitarian sense “God of gods and Lord of lords” (Deut. 10:17). Others exist as gods in a subordinate sense. The highest form of worship is to be given only to the one Almighty God, namely “the God and Father of the Lord Jesus.”

To worship or show reverence for the Messiah as “Mighty God” is not a breaking of the first of the Ten Commandments, where God wrote upon stone: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3). It is the will of God the Father “that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father.” That is a new commandment from God as valid as any of the Ten Commandments, and if we disregard it we dishonor God (John 5:23). The Father says of His Son, “Let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb. 1:6). Any angel refusing to worship the Son opposes the Father. Children inherit the name of their father, and the Son of God “has inherited a more excellent name [office] than” the angels (Heb. 1:4). That is why Jesus could pray to God concerning his disciples, “keep them in your name, the name which you have given me” (John 17:11). The Father speaks to the Son as Israel’s chief king: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever” (Heb. 1:8; cp Ps. 45:1-11). When Jesus returns to the earth his waiting people will exclaim, “Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that he might save us” (Isa. 25:9).

Nevertheless, the Son is nowhere called “the Almighty God.” He is “Mighty God.” There is only One in the Bible who is called “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” whom he worships and serves as his God (Eph. 1:3, 17; 1 Pet. 1:3; Rev. 3:12). Jesus sits upon the throne of God because his Father gives him that throne. Because Jesus “loved righteousness and hated lawlessness,” he is rewarded as promised: “Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions” (Heb. 1:9). Jesus is so gloriously great because “God has *made him* both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36, quoting Ps. 110:1). But note that he is lord *in the sense provided by Psalm 110:1*, where the word is *adoni* (*my lord*), a title which never denotes Deity.

The Father has given the Messiah “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). For that reason, Jesus could say, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father” (Matt. 11:27). He is “Lord of all”

next to the Father, for “God is the head of Christ” (Acts 10:36; 1 Cor. 11:3).

Just as the young child Jesus “continued in subjection to” Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:51) the glorified Christ now continues to render obedience to his God and Father in heaven (Heb. 5:8). The time will come when he will demonstrate his subjection to the One God on a universal scale: “When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:27, 28).

Some might object that Isaiah 10:20, 21 refers to God the Father as “the mighty God.” Those verses say: “Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.” Some are puzzled because the title “Mighty God” seems to suggest a measure of equality between God the Father and His Son. If there truly is only one Almighty God, as Scripture elsewhere clearly teaches, why are both Father and Son called “Mighty God”? (1 Cor. 8:4; Isa. 43:10; 44:6).

We should not hastily conclude that a given title must always refer to one person. In the Bible, men bore the name Eli, meaning “my God,” even though Jesus addressed his Father as Eli (1 Sam. 1:9; Matt. 27:46). Both Nebuchadnezzar and Jesus Christ were called “king of kings” (Dan. 2:37; Rev. 17:14). Both Jesus and his disciples were called “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14; John 8:12). Jesus was called “Son of God” and many others in the Bible were called “sons of God” (Gen. 6:2; Job 2:1; Matt. 5:9; Mark 1:1; Luke 3:38). The context in each case shows the distinction between the persons bearing similar titles. Children call men their “father,” but that does not equate them with God who is the greatest Father of all.

Oneness Pentecostals or “Jesus Only” churches find in Isaiah 9:6 evidence that Jesus *is* God the Father — meaning that there is only one Person within the Godhead. They do not believe in the Trinity but claim that the one God assumes three different roles of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This concept is known as modalism.

The title “eternal Father” does not mean that Jesus *is* God the Father. The “Son” of “God the Father” cannot himself be called “God the Father” (John 1:18; 3:16). “Our Lord Jesus Christ” cannot be “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 11:31)! Even Trinitarians acknowledge that the Bible makes a clear distinction between the Father and the Son. They

understand that Father and Son do not either simultaneously or in sequence perform the same role. Thus Isaiah 9:6 cannot be used as proof of the doctrines of either the Oneness Pentecostals or Trinitarians, for then Jesus would be the Father within the Godhead, and he would not be the Son.

A person is not God simply because somewhere in the Bible he is spoken of as "father." Certainly Abraham was not God, though he is called "Father Abraham" and "the father of us all" (Luke 16:24; Rom. 4:16). Paul and John made no claim to deity when they spoke of becoming "your father through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15) or addressed fellow Christians as "my children" (3 John 4).

Jesus became the Father of children in a grander way than John and Paul and even Abraham. He is called "the eternal Father," not because he is God the Father, but because of those he calls "the children whom God has given me" (Heb. 2:13; cp. Isa. 8:18). Concerning the children God has given him to resurrect and glorify, Jesus said, "However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them to eternal life at the last day" (John 6:37, 39, NLT). Christians are the children of Christ in the sense that he gives them new life, begetting them through the seed of his Kingdom of God Gospel (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:11). Through Jesus' supervision they are granted immortality and glory (Phil. 3:20, 21; Col. 3:3, 4).

Perhaps someone will object, "Doesn't 'eternal' mean that he always has been a Father, even from eternity past?" The answer is, "not at all." According to Romans 6:23, "the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Surely that does not mean that Christians were always in existence in the past! There is another Hebrew word to describe eternity both past and present. The word translated "eternal" in Isaiah 9:6 means, according to the *Hebrew Lexicon* by Brown-Driver Briggs: "for ever (of future time)." Strong's *Dictionary* defines it as "duration, in the sense of advance or perpetuity," and Strong's *Concordance* gives as the primary definition: "perpetuity, for ever, continuing future." In harmony with those meanings, *The Septuagint* gives Messiah's title as "father of the age to come" (*Codex Alexandrinus*, translated by Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton and *Septuagint* translation by Archimandrite Ephrem Lash. See also *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 326). Interestingly, the Catholic *Douay-Rheims Version* of the Bible calls Messiah "the Father of the world to come."

The same Hebrew word is used in Psalm 37:29: "The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever." Certainly no one would claim that the righteous never had a beginning. The meaning is that their lives will never have an end. Clearly, Jesus is an eternal "Father of the world to come," the "Father of the age to come," since both he and the children given to him by God will live forever.

Christ is appropriately called "Father" because he is the second Adam. Adam was the father or life giver to the human race, just as Eve was the mother of all living. Through disobedience Adam became a dying sinner and lost his own right to life. He passed on to his posterity his own sinful, mortal nature. Thus Adam failed to become the "eternal Father" or life giver that God intended him to be. Christ receives that title because he will accomplish what Adam failed to do. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:22, 47, RSV). "Christ became to all those who obey him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9). In this way Christ does more than replace "Father Adam." From Adam we inherited a life of sin, sorrow and death in a body that is weak, dishonorable, mortal and perishable. From Christ we receive eternal life in a body that is powerful, glorious, immortal and imperishable (1 Cor. 15:35-50; Rom. 5:18, 19).

While Jesus occasionally addressed the disciples as children, he apparently did so in the same way as the apostles John and Paul addressed their converts (Mark 10:24; John 13:33; 21:5; Gal. 4:19; 1 John 2:1; 4:4; 5:21). Nowhere is it recorded that the disciples called him "Father." Why not? Because God adopts those whom he calls out in this age as His own sons (Rom. 8:14,15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). In view of this adoption, Jesus instructed his followers to pray "Our Father." Luke 11:2: "Pray to your Father who is in secret and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matt. 6:6, 8). He also told them to "glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). "Be children of your Father" (Matt. 5:45, NRV). Jesus also said: "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:17).

Jesus said regarding his relationship with his disciples: "For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt. 12:50). "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, he who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9). And we read in Hebrews 2:11 that "both he [Christ] who sanctifies and those [the disciples] who are

sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason he [Christ] is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Isaiah 9:6 is therefore simply another unitarian passage helping us understand how both God and Jesus can be our Father, while only one of them is God in an unqualified sense. Jesus is Father in the same sense that he is “God,” not as a member of a triune Godhead, but representatively, as the chief agent of God who is the Father. While Jesus said “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give eternal life to them,” Paul explains that it is because “God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through his power” (John 10:27, 28; 1 Cor. 6:14). There is no contradiction. Jesus imparts eternal life to others because God has empowered him to do so.

The source of Jesus’ authority and power is the same now as it was during his earthly ministry. However, his authority and power have been expanded to an unfathomably greater extent since his resurrection and ascension to heaven. When the crowds observed Jesus’ miracles, “they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to *men*” (Matt. 9:8; 15:31; Luke 5:25; 17:15; 23:47). Jesus was the agent performing the works of God. The people rightly glorified God the Father. Jesus was not God Himself, any more than were the apostles, whose ministry also resulted in many “people...all glorifying God for what had happened” (Acts 4:21; Gal. 1:24).

The authority and power Jesus now has is a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6. He now gives us even greater reason to render glory to God. He said, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). His explanation of how he received that derived authority is decidedly unitarian following the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6: “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son [as ‘Father of the Coming Age’] also gives life to whom he wishes. For not even the Father judges anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son [as ‘Mighty God’], so that all will honor the Son [as ‘Mighty God’] even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son [as ‘Mighty God’] does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word [as ‘Wonderful Counsellor’], and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God [as ‘Father of the Coming Age’], and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, even so he gave to the Son [as ‘Father of the Coming Age’] also to have life in himself; and he gave him authority to execute judgment

[as ‘Prince of Peace’], because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice [as ‘Prince of Peace’], and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment [as ‘Prince of Peace’] is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me” (John 5:21-30).

These words of Jesus offer a unique explanation of how Isaiah 9:6 has been, is, and will be fulfilled in him. As “the Son of Man,” *the Human Being*, who has been “given all judgment,” he possesses a perfect understanding of our weaknesses. To us he is “Wonderful, Counsellor” indeed. He judges according to what he hears from his Father, and whoever listens and obeys him “has eternal life, and does not come into judgment.” Jesus shows that he is the “Mighty God” by seeking not his “own will, but the will of him who sent” him. Jesus demonstrates that he is the “Father of the Coming Age” because he “raises the dead and gives them life” and “gives life to whom he wishes.” The life he gives is eternal. He is the “Prince of Peace” because he will judge and punish “those who committed the evil deeds” and reward and bless “those who did the good deeds.”

In Philippians 2:9, Paul the Apostle wrote of Jesus: “God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.” The prophet Isaiah helps us to know what that name is. The “name” (singular) he is given is “Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” He does not receive that “name” by a popular vote of the people. Isaiah 9:7 says, “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.” God the Father will put in place a perfect government with His chosen Messiah ruling from “the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore.”

By showing appreciative respect and reverential honor for Jesus’ “name”— the great authority and power given to him by God — we come to be among those of whom it is said: “Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11). Jesus is the Lord *Messiah* (Luke 2:11), the *adoni* of Psalm 110:1, but he never claimed to be the Lord God. There is only *One God*. ✧