

Allan MacRae, Isaiah 7-12, Lecture 11

This is lecture 11 delivered by Dr. Allan MacRae at Biblical Theological Seminary on Isaiah 7-12:

Now we were looking at chapter 9. We noticed how it begins in the first verse with pointing to the place where the Assyrian army would first enter the land, and where therefore the darkness would first come, beginning in the Northern Kingdom, in the land of Zebulun, Naphtali and Galilee. While most of this first part of Isaiah where it touches upon particular areas dealing with Jerusalem or the areas around Jerusalem, here in this verse, we look particularly to this section of the Northern Kingdom--this section where the Assyrian army first came in and where the darkness first began to come, with the horrors of the attacks and sieges and deportations. He says in that very area, light will first appear. We know that it came through the preaching of Christ who began his preaching in that area instead of down around Jerusalem.

Then there is this wonderful passage about the great joy of people in verse 5. The complete end of war that is to come and the reason for it all is given in verse 6-- "A child is born, a son is given"-- which could be just Hebrew parallelism, but on the other hand, it fits so exactly with what actually happened, that we can take it as a suggestion, though not a clear indication in advance, of the fact that this one to whom all these blessing would come would have a dual nature that he would be born a child of Mary and also a son of God who was given. As I say we don't want to say that we could know in advance exactly what was going to happen, but when it did happen and you see it exactly fit with it, we are quite sure that it was not just Hebrew parallelism but that it was an actual prediction of what would actually happen.

Then we have his name and this has been a great puzzle to the Jews all through the ages. Imagine a child born who is going to be called "mighty God," who is going to be called "everlasting Father." How would you apply those names to a child who will be born? Well you couldn't. It was merely a child who was born, but He's a child who is born a son who is given. If you apply all these names to the promised Messiah, it certainly points very definitely to Christ. In the Jewish version of the scriptures, it says,

“A child is born unto us, a son is given unto us and the government is upon his shoulder, and his name is called Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom. So the Jewish reading that version thinks, “My, what a long name that child is going to have: Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom. I never knew anybody who had a name quite that long, although there have been some pretty long ones.” It would mean nothing to him unless he happened to look at the footnote. But there is a footnote there which says, “Wonderful in counseling is God the mighty, the everlasting father, the ruler of peace.” Now there have been many names which have been like the first part of that --"Wonderful is God"--that would be, I don't know whether there was even one who had exactly that name, but many very similar names occur not only in Israel but also in all the nations of antiquity.

The greater number, I believe, of the names that children were given had the name of a god in the name. A great many of our Hebrew names begin with “Jeho.” As we pronounce it, which is the name of God, which we translate “the LORD.” In the King James Version, the LORD is in all upper case for the special divine name "Jehovah" or more correctly "Yahweh." And many names have that at the beginning; some have it at the end as “iah,” like in Hezekiah. Not all names that end in “iah,” are that, because their ancient names which were shortened, like we would shorten William to Willy. A long name could be shortened and the end of it could simply have “iah” just for a short ending form like the “ee” we put on many names. That occurs in Babylonian names very frequently. But also we have a great many of the Babylonian names, and names in other ancient lands that end with the names of particular gods. This is recognized by all scholars as in most of these names, at least that end in “iah” as being the name of God. So the divine name can occur at the beginning or at the end.

So if the name is “Wonderful is God” or even “Wonderful in Counsel is God,” that would be quite a natural name. But to give such a long description of God in the course of the name as this does would be quite without parallel, anywhere else in the Bible, or in any Babylonian, or Aramaic or other ancient name that I have ever come across. I once spent thousands of hours studying names of ancient Babylonian and related peoples. I never came across one that had a long description of the god included in a name like this

would be. It would be a very unusual type of a name. So it is much more reasonable to take it that rather than being a proper name, as a description of the character of the one who is to be born. Very often, names were very descriptive of character.

His name is “wonderful,” and “counselor.” Now in the King James, I think it has a comma, if I recall correctly, after “wonderful.” In the NIV, they leave out the comma. There’s an argument for both ways, whether it’s two names, “Wonderful” and “Counselor,” or whether it is “Wonderful Counselor.” Anyone who knows Hebrew immediately at looking at it, says it can’t be “Wonderful Counselor,” it must be “Wonderful” and “Counselor,” because an adjective in Hebrew follows the noun; it does not precede it. That is if it precedes it, then you have a verbal sentence. It would be “Wonderful is Counselor. If it was "wonderful counselor," the word "wonderful" would follow in Hebrew. However, this word, “Pele” doesn’t have to be an adjective, it could be a noun. A noun in the construct, it could be a "wonder of a counselor." Of course, if you said he was a "wonder of a counselor," in English that would be said as "a wonderful counselor." So, a good argument can be made for making it one phrase parallel with the other phrases here. But the most natural way to take it is that you have two names, there. He is wonderful, and He is a counselor.

I think we have a further evidence that it is two names, in the fact that when Menoah, I believe he was the father of Samson in Judges 13:18 when the angel came to him and predicted the birth of his son, he said, “what is your name?” And he said, “why should I tell you my name, seeing it is wonderful?” that’s the same word, “Pele.” And the angel of the Lord, which many think is an appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, one of the theophanies of the Old Testament, he there says his name is "Pele." He says his name is "Pele, yomes, El gibbor," and so on. We have here two characteristics, probably of Christ, he is wonderful and he is a counselor. Although, we do not rule out the idea that it is one name with an adjective, but the other seems to be more likely.

Incidentally, I’m not asking anybody to take my opinion on anything. I want you to interpret the Scripture for yourself, to think things out, find your own conclusion. The

translation the Jews give is “wonderful in counsel, is God the mighty, the everlasting father, the ruler of peace.” I don't think that's what it means.

Well then, we have this name given of him, and last time we spoke of this verse, there was discussion of the Son of God being called “God the everlasting father.” And we noticed as far as that is concerned, there is one God, there are not three, Jesus said “I and the Father are one.” God is not the father of the son in the sense in which a human being is the father of a son. It does not express that God the Father was first, and then God the Son was later, because he is co-eternal with the father. From all eternity God existed in three persons. And so, the word “father” is somewhat figurative, it expresses the relation of God, the first person of the trinity, to the second person of trinity. It shows a certain relationship, a certain preeminence, in a way, and yet, they are equal and awesome in a way. There are three persons, but there is only one God. The characteristics that God the father has, as he shows love, and kindness, and care for the son, and for all humanity, those same characteristics Jesus Christ the Son shows toward all of those children whom he has brought into the kingdom. So it is very proper to call him the everlasting father, the one who was to be born in Bethlehem. And he is the Prince of Peace, the one who brings not merely the cessation of hostilities, but complete end of violence, and not only that, but the coming in of life that is truly and fully worthwhile.

In Hebrews we read that Christ brought many sons to glory, that he brought many sons into the kingdom, just as Paul speaks of Timothy as “my son in the faith.” He was not his son in the physical sense. But he was one to whom Paul had brought the knowledge of Christ, one whom Paul had brought into the Kingdom through bringing him the Word of Christ. Similarly Jesus Christ is, in one sense, the father of all who believe. And so, the term “everlasting Father” is not out of place as applied to him.

Incidentally, in the King James Version the word “monogenes” is used of Christ and is translated in the King James Version “the only begotten” son in John 3:16 and in another place “the only begotten of the Father,” and the word “monogenes” could be derived from either of two Greek roots. The “mono”, of course, is “one” or “only” or “single,” but “genes” could either be derived from a verb, “to generate, to bring into

existence" or it could be derived from a noun which means "class" or "kind." In the third century A.D., there were those who took it from the verb instead of from the noun, and therefore said Christ is the only one that has been produced by the Father. The only one the Father has begotten, and then the question was since Jesus is from all eternity, coequal with the Father and coeternal with the Father, how can he be produced by the Father? Therefore they originated a theory that God the Father is always generating God the Son. That is a process which has always been going on and is still going on. Now there is no warrant for any such theory as that anywhere except from the misinterpretation of this word. The correct interpretation of the word is to take it from the noun. The "one-of-a-kind son," he is the only son, he is the one and only, he is "the unique son," that is, he is the son in the sense in which no one else is the son. We are all sons of God if we believe in Christ, but he is the son in a unique and special sense.

I saw a criticism of the New American Standard Bible a few years ago, in which a man made the statement, he said it is terrible that it says Jesus is the "only son" rather than "the only begotten." He said no one but God could have an only begotten son. Well, the person who wrote that article either was not thinking when he wrote it or he did not know Greek, one or the other. Because the word "monogenes," if I remember correctly, is used about seven times in the New Testament, and about half of them referred to Christ, and the other half referred to human beings. It is even translated "only begotten" in the book of Hebrews where it says that Abraham did not hold back from offering his "only begotten son." So there right in the King James you have Abraham said to have an only begotten son. Well, of course, he wasn't Abraham's only begotten son. Abraham beget Ishmael before he beget Isaac, so Isaac was never Abraham's only begotten son. But Isaac was Abraham's "one-of-a-kind son." He was his "unique son." He was the son through whom the promise was to come. He was the only son of Abraham through Sarah. So it is perfectly clear from that, that it means his one and only or his "one-of-a-kind, his unique son." I don't know any English word which exactly gives it.

So here we have the son described and called the everlasting father, the prince of peace, and then it goes on to say "of the increase of his government and peace there shall

be no end." Well now our country is now at peace. How can you increase its peace? You might say you could get some internal peace as well as external. We have peace with other nations now, but internally we have more violence every year than ever before, so we do want to have internal peace in our country. In certain sections of the country we have a tremendous amount of violence. So internal peace we do not have and we could increase in the amount of internal peace which we have. But of course this goes beyond the cessation of violence. It refers to well being. It refers to all that makes life worth living.

So "of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever." So here we have the marvelous prediction of the ongoing work of Christ, and then we read "the zeal of the Lord almighty will accomplish this." This word the "zeal" is an interesting word. It is the same word that is used in the first commandment where it says "thou shall have no other gods before me for the Lord thy God is a jealous God." He is a jealous God. The word is translated "jealous" in the greater number of cases. Jealousy is translated "zeal" in a number. And one asks right away what can the jealousy of God have to do with the coming of Christ in this way? But the answer is that this Hebrew word, we don't have any exact English equivalent for. It is translated "jealousy" usually and a number of times it is translated "zeal." It expresses an emotion on the part of God. A desire for recognition of his exclusive authority over that which is his. It includes his care for that which is his. His determination to do all that is best and right for that which is his. So the word as applied to human beings is a word which usually expresses that which is not desirable in human beings, but in God it represents his very rightful determination that he will have no other gods before him, that he is to have the supreme place and his interest in doing everything the very best for those who belong to him. You can't say translated because our English word doesn't really get it, but it gets the something of the idea. The word is more commonly translated "jealousy," but if we translate it here "jealousy" I'm sure it would confuse most readers. With it translated "zeal," most readers just pass over without

getting much idea from it, but the idea of the Hebrew word is one which is very important in the whole context. God is sending his son the Lord Jesus Christ in order to vindicate his honor, in order to put an end to the power of sin, in order to bring salvation and well-being to all those who are his.

There we have a break as you notice a very important break at the end of verse seven. It is a far more important break than at the beginning of verse 9 and incidentally if any of you want to check any of these things in your Hebrew Bible in this first part of chapter 9 you will immediately find yourself in difficulty unless you know Hebrew very well. If you know Hebrew only fairly well you will immediately find yourself in difficulty, a difficulty which can be easily solved by noting a very small point. That point is this that in the Hebrew in chapter 9 what we call verse seven will be called verse six and what call verse six will be called verse 5 and so on. If you look for the verse if you only know Hebrew fairly well you will immediately find yourself confused but if you look at the number down one more and you'll find it right. The reason for that is rather easy to see when the archbishop rode on his horse looking into his Latin Bible and deciding where it would be good to make chapter divisions when he came to this place, the beginning of chapter nine, he may have realized that this was the place where the Assyrians first brought the darkness and in that very place Jesus would bring the light and therefore he included verse 1 of our present in chapter 9 rather than leaving it in the previous chapter as would seem more natural.

On the other hand the archbishop may not have fully understood that we do not know whether or not he did but I feel quite sure that he was familiar enough with the New Testament to realize that when Mathew says that when describing the preaching of Christ these things were fulfilled were done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet and then quotes these two verses that Matthew quotes a part of verse 1 and part of verse 2 together and therefore it was reasonable to think they belonged together. Therefore he may have made his chapter division one verse short it would have been far better if instead of that if he had made his division after verse seven where we have a really important change of subject that would have been much more important.

When the Jews saw what the archbishop had done by adding chapter divisions they felt that he had rendered a great service to Bible study by making chapter division because it makes it so easy to find places. They already had verse divisions those were much earlier but they didn't have chapter divisions and therefore the Jews felt that it would be very helpful to put these chapter divisions into the Hebrew Bible and so they marked them in following what the archbishop had done in the Latin Bible. But in maybe one case out of seven or eight they thought he hadn't made a very good division and there are a good many places that it may be a good eight or ten verses off in the numeration, in this case they just made it one verse off by including 9:1 into chapter 8 of the Hebrew Bible. If you didn't understand the relation to Christ or if you didn't know Matthew's quotation if you're going to make a division anywhere earlier than verse seven the logical place would be to make it is where the Jews do, rather than where we do, because you're talking about darkness in all the latter part of chapter eight and also in the first verse of chapter nine and so they made their chapter division one verse late. So if you're looking up a verse in a Hebrew Bible keep that in mind.

Now the old so called American Standard Version which was issued in 1901 many Bible scholars preferred it to the King James but it did not take off with the mass of the people and so when the Revised Standard Version came out they stopped printing it. You'll hardly ever come across it anymore actually they made a version which was more up to date than the King James which corrected some of the words in which the meaning had greatly changed, but in the course of it they did not give us as good smooth flowing English as the King James had. With the mass of the people the somewhat jerkiness of some parts of it detracted greatly from its acceptance. But one thing in that version that I liked very much was that wherever the Hebrew numeration differs from the English in the chapter they put a footnote at the bottom and the footnote would indicate what verse it was in the Hebrew Bible. That's very helpful unless you know Hebrew real well if the chapter starts off ten verses from where the English does you can sometimes be rather puzzled in finding the exact place. So I'm sorry I don't think any of our recent translations versions do give us that helpful note.

About first seven: I would think that it refers to David. David was the one Hebrew king who ruled over great numbers of non-Hebrews. He extended his dominion over the Philistines, the Ammonites, the Moabites and many other peoples until he had three times as large a territory as Israel had before. When you speak of the throne of King David you think of him as the great king of the Jews but you also think of him as the king that ruled a far larger section than the Jews had ever ruled at any time and I believe that when it refers to David's throne here it refers to the promise of the throne that will eventually cover the whole world all around. I would think it includes both. I would think that it begins with the going forth of the message from Jerusalem which led people to be born again into the kingdom of God and that they who are born again are truly those who are members of David's kingdom and look to Jesus Christ as our leader and of this increase there is to be no end. I would feel it covers eventually a time when the whole world will be included by it and therefore there will be no violence and no evil, at least outward acts, done on this earth.

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