

# ISAIAH 9:6

## Mighty God • Everlasting Father ?

TRINITARIAN? · by Ingo Sorke, PhD

וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּלֵא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גִּבּוֹר אָבִיעַד שֶׁר-שְׁלוֹם :

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, **Mighty God, Everlasting Father**, Prince of Peace” (NKJV).

### TRANSLATIONS

- Bible in Basic English: Strong God, Father for ever
- Elberfelder 1905: starker Gott, Vater der Ewigkeit [strong God, Father of Eternity]
- Buber: Ratsmann des heldischen Gottes, Vater des Siegesgewinns [Counselor of the heroic God, Father of the Bounty]
- Luther 1912: Held, Ewig-Vater [Hero, Eternal-Father]
- Zürcher: Heldengott, Vater für alle Zeit [Hero-God, Father for all time]

#### PRINCIPLE

“Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions:  
**for my name is in him**”  
(Exodus 23:21).

“Jehovah is the name given to Christ” (ST May 3, 1899, par. 19).

### PARALLELS

- Ps 24:8: “the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle” (יְהוָה עֲזִיז וְגִבּוֹר יְהוָה מִלְחָמָה)
- Isa 10:21: “the mighty God” (אֵל גִּבּוֹר)
- Isa 42:13: “the Lord shall go out as a mighty one” (יְהוָה כְּגִבּוֹר)
- Isa 63:16; 64:8: “You, O Lord, are our Father” (אַתָּה יְהוָה אֲבִינוּ)

### NOTES

#### MODALISM: SON ≠ FATHER

**NET Bible: Representation/Substitution - the name and life of the child is a revelation of the Father!**

tn “and he called his name.” The prefixed verbs with vav (ו) consecutive are used with the same rhetorical sense as the perfects in v. 6a. ... There is great debate over the syntactical structure of the verse. No subject is indicated for the verb “he called.” If all the titles that follow are ones given to the king, then the subject of the verb must be indefinite, “one calls.” However, some have suggested that one to three of the titles that follow refer to God, not the king. For example, the traditional punctuation of the Hebrew text suggests the translation, “and the Wonderful Adviser, the Mighty God called his name, ‘Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’”

**Note:** וַיִּקְרָא wayyiqrā is the same form as the first word (and Hebrew title) of Leviticus: וַיִּקְרָא wayyiqrā, translated actively as “he called”. Most translations render this verb passively, “his name shall be called”.

גִּבּוֹר (gibbor) is probably an attributive adjective (“mighty God”), though one might translate “God is a warrior” or “God is mighty.” Scholars ... have argued that the title portrays the king as God’s representative on the battlefield, whom God empowers in a supernatural way (see J. H. Hayes and S. A. Irvine, *Isaiah*, 181-82). ... this sense seems more likely in the original context of the prophecy. ... having read the NT, we might in retrospect interpret this title as indicating the coming king’s deity, but it is unlikely that Isaiah or his audience would have understood the title in such a bold way. Ps 45:6 addresses the Davidic king as “God” because he ruled and fought as God’s representative on earth. Ancient Near Eastern art and literature picture gods training kings for battle, bestowing special weapons, and intervening in battle. According to Egyptian propaganda, the Hittites described Rameses II as follows: “No man is he who is among us, It is Seth great-of-strength, Baal in person; Not deeds of man are these his doings, They are of one who is unique” (See Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2:67). ... Isa 9:6 probably envisions a similar kind of response when friends and foes alike look at the Davidic king in full battle regalia. When the king’s enemies oppose him on the battlefield, they are, as it were, fighting against God himself.

The other option is to regard this title as a reference to God, confronting Isaiah’s readers with the divinity of this promised “child.” The use of this same title that clearly refers to God in a later passage (Isa 10:21) supports this interpretation. Other passages depict Yahweh as the great God and great warrior (Deut 10:17; Jer. 32:18). Although this connection of a child who is born with deity is unparalleled in any earlier biblical texts, Isaiah’s use of this title to make this connection represents Isaiah’s attempt (at God’s behest) to advance Israel in their understanding of the ideal Davidic king for whom they long.

tn This title must not be taken in an anachronistic Trinitarian sense. (To do so would be theologically problematic, for the “Son” is the messianic king and is distinct in his person from God the “Father.”) Rather, in its original context the title pictures the king as the protector of his people. For a similar use of “father” see Isa 22:21 and Job 29:16. This figurative, idiomatic use of “father” is not limited to the Bible. In a Phoenician inscription (ca. 850-800 B.C.) the ruler Kilamuwa declares: “To some I was a father, to others I was a mother.” In another inscription (ca. 800 B.C.) the ruler Azitawadda boasts that the god Baal made him “a father and a mother” to his people. (See *ANET* 499-500.) The use of “everlasting” might suggest the deity of the king (as the one who has total control over eternity), but Isaiah and his audience may have understood the term as royal hyperbole

emphasizing the king's long reign or enduring dynasty (for examples of such hyperbolic language used of the Davidic king, see 1 Kgs 1:31; Pss 21:4-6; 61:6-7; 72:5, 17). The New Testament indicates that the hyperbolic language (as in the case of the title "Mighty God") is literally realized in the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy, for Jesus will rule eternally.

"Isaiah does not intend that we should understand that in actual life the Child would bear or be addressed by these names, anymore than in actual life He should bear the name Immanuel. . . . The thought is that the Child is worthy to bear these names, and that they are accurate descriptions and designations of His being and character" (Young, 1:331. Cf. Delitzsch, 1:250-51).

**Jewish Study Bible** (2nd ed.): "This long sentence is the throne name of the royal child. Semitic names often consist of sentences that describe God; thus the name Isaiah in Heb means "The LORD saves"; Hezekiah, "The LORD strengthens"; in Akkadian, the name of the Babylonian king Merodach-baladan (Isa. 39.1) means "the god Marduk has provided an heir." These names do not describe that person who holds them but the god whom the parents worship. Similarly, the name given to the child in this v. does not describe that child or attribute divinity to him, but describes God's actions."

**Andrews Bible Commentary:** "**"Mighty God"** (*'el gibbor*; 9:6) could literally be translated "God of a Warrior," "God is a Warrior," or "Warrior God." Although this name does not by itself demonstrate that this messianic king is divine, in light of 10:21 we can claim that He is divine. There the title "Mighty God" (*'el gibbor*) is used to identify God. This qualification enables the King to overcome all enemies (cf. 11:1-10). The Child is revealed as both divine and human (the Mighty God born of a woman).

**Everlasting Father** (*'abî'ad*) literally means "Father of Eternity." Although the dynasty and kingdom of a faithful king were thought to continue forever (2 Sam. 7:16; Pss. 21:1-4; 72:5, 17; 132:11-14), no king in Israel was called by this name. The reference to the messianic "son" as also being the "eternal Father" is not a confusion of the persons of the Trinity. The language of fatherhood could be applied to the Messiah because He brought His people into existence, redeemed them, and has treated them as a loving father would, with care and mercy (cf. Is. 22:21; John 1:1-3; 1 John 2:29). The passage also bears witness to the fact that the Messiah has always been—He is eternal."

**New American Commentary:** "The second dual name "Mighty God" (*'el gibbôr*) includes a divine name similar to the name Ezekiel (God will be my strength). If one supplies a verb, the name might mean, "God is mighty" or "God is a mighty warrior," similar to Deut 10:17; Ps 24:8; 89:14. By itself, this name does not automatically mean that this son is a divine person, because many names include the name of God in them. But the later use of this same name to describe God himself in 10:21 demands that this son be identified with God in a very close manner. No other person ever has God's name and God is never called Moses, Abram, David, or Jeremiah, so there must be something very special about this son that causes him to have God's name.

... The third name is one word in Hebrew, combining two ideas in one concept. It is possible to translate it as an adjective and noun "Everlasting Father" (*'ăbî'ad*), as a sentence "my father [is] eternal," or as a genitive phrase "father of eternity." "Father" is a relatively rare way of describing God in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 32:6; Jer 3:4, 19; Isa 63:16; 64:7; Mal 2:10) and a rarer way of describing a king (1 Sam 24:12), though the Israelites are frequently called God's sons (Exod 4:22-23). This tendency may be a conscious attempt to avoid pagan images of the gods giving birth to people. Since fathers were the heads of tribes who wisely led the people, it is a fitting title for a ruler if one wants to avoid some of the negative connotations of kingship. "Everlasting" is a title that does not apply to any human ruler, except that the Davidic promise speaks of one who will rule on the throne of David forever (2 Sam 7:16). Since 9:7 refers to a person ruling forever on the throne of David, the "everlasting father" in 6 must be the same ruler."

**Joseph Harvey Waggoner:** "Much stress is laid on Isa. 9:6, as proving a trinity, which we have before quoted, as referring to our High Priest who shed his blood for us. The advocates of that theory will say that it refers to a trinity because Christ is called the everlasting Father. But for this reason, with others, we affirm that it can have no reference to a trinity. Is Christ the Father in the trinity? if so, how is he the Son? or if he is both Father and Son, how can there be a trinity? for a trinity is three persons. To recognize a trinity, the distinction between the Father and Son must be preserved. Christ is called "the second person in the trinity;" but if this text proves a trinity, or refers to it at all, it proves that he is not the second, but the first. And if he is the first, who is the second? It is very plain that this text has no reference to such a doctrine" (*The Atonement In The Light Of Nature And Revelation*. 1884. 167-169).

**Ellen White:** "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6. In the Teacher sent from God, heaven gave to men its best and greatest. He who had stood in the councils of the Most High, who had dwelt in the innermost sanctuary of the Eternal, was the One chosen to reveal in person to humanity the knowledge of God" (Ed 73.2).

"Jesus Christ is our heavenly Father. Jesus Christ is the Father with us. God is the Father, and there is the link of the chain brought right down to bind His children in connection with the Father" (Ms 141, 1908, par. 11).

"Jesus represents us as his children. He declares that he is our Father, and that we are to come to him as children come to an earthly parent" (YI September 13, 1894, par. 6).

"God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father" (8T 268).

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:14).