

## Isaiah 9:6

“And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace....” (NIV)

1. Trinitarians should admit that this verse is translated improperly just from the fact that Jesus is never called the “Everlasting Father” anywhere else in Scripture. Indeed, Trinitarians correctly deny that Jesus is the “Everlasting Father.” It is a basic tenet of Trinitarian doctrine that Christians should “neither confound the Persons nor divide the Substance” (Athanasian Creed). Thus, if this verse is translated properly, then Trinitarian Christians have a real problem. However, the phrase is mistranslated. The word translated “everlasting” is actually “age,” and the correct translation is that Jesus will be called “father of the [coming] age.”

In the culture of the Bible, anyone who began anything or was very important to something was called its “father.” For example, because Jabal was the first one to live in a tent and raise livestock, the Bible says, “he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock” (Gen. 4:20). Furthermore, because Jubal was the first inventor of musical instruments, he is called, “the father of all who play the harp and flute” (Gen. 4:21). Scripture is not using “father” in the sense of literal father or ancestor in these verses, because both these men were descendants of Cain, and all their descendants died in the Flood. “Father” was being used in the cultural understanding of either one who was the first to do something or someone who was important in some way. Because the Messiah will be the one to establish the age to come, raise the dead into it, and rule over it, he is called “the father of the coming age.”

2. The phrase “Mighty God” can also be better translated. Although the word “God” in the Hebrew culture had a much wider range of application than it does in ours, the average reader does not know or understand that. Readers familiar with the Semitic languages know that a man who is acting with God’s authority can be called “god.” Although English makes a clear distinction between “God” and “god,” the Hebrew language, which has only capital letters, cannot. A better translation for the English reader would be “mighty hero,” or “divine hero.” Both Martin Luther and James Moffatt translated the phrase as “divine hero” in their Bibles. (For more on the flexible use of “God,” see the notes on Heb. 1:8).

3. A clear example that the word translated “God” in Isaiah 9:6 can be used of powerful earthly rulers is Ezekiel 31:11, referring to the Babylonian king. The Trinitarian bias of most translators can be clearly seen by comparing Isaiah 9:6 (*el* = “God”) with Ezekiel 31:11 (*el* = “ruler”). If calling the Messiah *el* made him God, then the Babylonian king would be God also. Isaiah is speaking of God’s Messiah and calling him a mighty ruler, which of course he will be.

The phrase translated “Mighty God” in Isaiah 9:6 in the NIV in the Hebrew, *el gibbor*. That very phrase, in the plural form, is used Ezekiel 32:21 where dead “heroes” and mighty men are said, by the figure of speech personification, to speak to others. The phrase in Ezekiel is translated “mighty leaders” in the NIV, and “the strong among the

mighty” in the KJV and NASB. The Hebrew phrase, when used in the singular, can refer to one “mighty leader” just as when used in the plural it can refer to many “mighty leaders.”

4. The context illuminates great truth about the verse, and also shows that there is no justification for believing that it refers to the Trinity, but rather to God’s appointed ruler. The opening verse of the chapter foretells a time when “there will be no more gloom for those in distress.” All war and death will cease, and “every warrior’s boot...will be destined for burning” (v. 5). How will this come to pass? The chapter goes on: “for to us a child is born and to us a son is given” (v. 6). There is no hint that this child will be “God,” and reputable Trinitarian scholars will assert that the Jews of the Old Testament knew nothing of an “incarnation.” For them, the Messiah was going to be a man anointed by God. He would start as a child, which of course *Yahweh*, their eternal God, could never be. And what a great ruler this man would grow to be: “the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Hero, Father of the Coming Age, Prince of Peace.” Furthermore, “he will reign on David’s throne (v. 7), which could never be said of God. *God* could never sit on *David’s* throne. But God’s Messiah, “the Son of David,” could (Matt. 9:27, *et al*). Thus, a study of the verse in its context reveals that it does not refer to the Trinity at all, but to the Messiah, the son of David and the Son of God.

Buzzard, pp. 45 and 51;  
Farley, pp. 47-49;  
Morgridge, pp. 105 and 106;  
Snedeker, pp. 397-403.

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