

# ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

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## *The Child Who Would Be King*

Arguably, George Frideric Handel's majestic oratorio, *Messiah*, is one of the greatest pieces of music ever written and is certainly a highlight of the Christmas season. Of special value to those of the Christian faith is that Handel's *Messiah* connects the Old and New Testaments. Part 1 of the oratorio gives focus to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah and the "Prophecy of Christ's Birth": "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." In fact, Handel constructed scene 3 around Isaiah's entire prophecy in 9:6-7 so that this child, whom the New Testament affirms is Jesus, would be worshiped and adored; this child, son, and king would rule forever. Further, the names that Isaiah used to describe this child and son are all names for God:

- "Wonderful Counselor." The term "wonderful" is never used in Scripture of a human being; only of God, who resolves the unsolvable problems of humanity. This child would have insight and wisdom into how to successfully implement His plans.
- "Mighty God." This child would have the resources of God to effect the salvation of His people.
- "Eternal Father" is literally "my Father forever," as the one who cares for, nurtures and provides. As Jesus declared in John 14:9, "Since you have seen me, you have seen the Father." Jesus is the revelation of God the Father.
- "Prince of Peace." This child would establish peace on earth "and of His peace there will be no end," Isaiah declares. The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*, which conveys not so much the absence of conflict as the notion of positive blessing, of a healthy relationship with God. It also suggests the fullness of well-being, a freedom from anxiety, and goodwill and harmony in human relationships. The New Testament teaches that Jesus provides peace with God through His cross, which then produces the peace of God as a quality of life. It also teaches that His return will bring true global peace, which humanity has sought for over five millennia. In fact, Isaiah 2:4 prophesies that at that time, the nations "will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war."

As Isaiah 9:7 declares, this child is the Davidic King, whose throne of justice and righteousness would be established forever.

Handel's *Messiah* reminds us that the primary message of Christmas is one of hope, encouragement and fulfillment. God's care for His world is best evidenced by what happened that Christmas morning. All eyes that day were on Rome with its power, majesty and glory. But

in that small village a few miles south of Jerusalem, God “showed up.” His plan to establish His peace on earth began with this child, His Son, whose kingdom would one day be established. For two thousand years, Christians have celebrated the birth of this child with the expectation that only through Him would peace be established. Christmas 2013 is a time for us to reaffirm that the hope of humanity is not in political, economic or financial power. It is in the power manifested by that child who grew to be a man and who offered salvation to the world through His cross and His resurrection; in the Christian faith Christmas must always be connected with Easter. May the peace of God, which comes through His son, be your portion this Christmas.

See Larry J. Waters in *Dallas Seminary Christmas Devotional* 2010.