

Advent 2025
Session One: Hope
Commentary

Psalm 130:5-8

130:5 Using the synonyms *qwh*, “wait” (twice) and *yhl*, “put my hope,” (cf. *qwh*, “put their hope,” in Isa 51:5), the psalmist emphasizes that the Lord’s faithfulness inspires hope in him. This is not a tepid, half-hearted trust, but the psalmist is all in for the Lord as he completely places himself and his need into the Lord’s hands. The repetition in lines b and c suggests a strong sense of expectancy, as he waits for the Lord’s word of forgiveness (cf. v. 4), trusting that the Lord will respond graciously to his supplication. His waiting necessarily involves listening; the psalmist has cried out of the depths to the Lord, and now he is silent before the Lord as he anticipates the divine reply.

130:6 Although the psalmist uses no verb in v. 6, his words imply a fourth reference to waiting, now with an illustrative word picture that discloses his feeling as he waits. He says that his soul waits for the Lord more than the city watchmen long for dawn to end their nighttime vigil with its attendant dangers. This comparison combines intense yearning with confident hope, thus providing a window into the heart of the psalmist as he waits for the Lord to respond to his cry so that he can emerge from the darkness of guilt into the light of forgiveness. In the OT the morning was the time for legal judgment to be given (e.g., Ps 101:8). Perhaps even more relevant to Psalm 130, the morning is often depicted as the time of God’s intervention on behalf of his people in need (cf. Exod 14:24; 2 Chr 20:15–22; Pss 30:5[6]; 46:5[6]; Isa 37:36)

130:7 The psalmist’s renewed hope spills over to affect others, as in v. 7 he calls on others in Israel to join him in hoping in the Lord as he seeks to set into motion concentric circles of confidence in the Lord. His personal experience in vv. 1–6 prompts his public exhortation in vv. 7–8. He has come to know that the Lord is faithful and forgiving (cf. 1 John 1:9). The redemption that he provides is ample for all who hope in him because with the Lord is faithful love (*hesed*), an essential component of the divine self-description in Exod 34:6. It is possible that “redemption” (*pādût*; cf. Ps 111:9) may echo the exodus experience, but it is clear in Isa 50:2 (“Is my arm too weak to redeem?”) that the Lord’s redemptive power must never be underestimated. As Paul’s testimony in 1 Tim 1:13–16 indicates, not even a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man like Saul of Tarsus was beyond the range of God’s mercy.

130:8 In the final verse the psalmist extends the thought of “redemption” (*pādût*) in v. 7 by using the related verb from *pādāh*, “redeem” (in the future imperfect form, *yipdeh*) to assert that the Lord “will redeem Israel from all its iniquities” (the same word for “iniquities” as in v. 3). Just as the psalmist in v. 3 had to face the problem of his sins, so the nation as a whole shares the same sin problem. What the Lord has done in forgiving him he can also do for Israel, so the nation can hope in the Lord, just as the psalmist has. Because no fault is too great for the Lord’s forgiveness, there is always hope due to the divine pattern of redemption. As Ross notes,

“Every experience of forgiveness is a foreshadowing of the final redemption from sin and everything connected to it.”¹

Isaiah 9:2,6-7

In 9:2 the actual poetic royal birth announcement begins. The verse contrasts those who “are walking” (a participle) in darkness with those who “will see” (not “have seen” as in NIV) a light of hope in the future. At this point the light is not identified, but it was certainly a sign of hope and deliverance from the darkness that pervaded the land. This light was a sign that God had not completely given up on his people. A new day of hope and light will eventually arrive. Elsewhere God is the light (Ps 27:1) or God’s words are a light (Ps 119:105; Isa 8:20). Later in 60:1–3 God’s glorious coming to his kingdom is pictured as a light. The following verses explain what this light will be.

9:6–7 This positive oracle comes to a climactic end by announcing the birth of a son who would reign forever as a righteous Davidic ruler (one very different from Ahaz). The prophet’s message provides information about his (a) birth; (b) role in government; (c) names; (d) reign of peace; and (e) just eternal rule on the throne of David. It also offers strong assurances that God will accomplish all these things.

The initial announcement that a child “will be born” (yullad prophetic perfect verb) is further explained in the parallel phrase, God “will give a son to us,” that is, to the people of Judah. The second line emphasizes that this is a work of God’s gracious giving, not just a coincidence. No date of birth in the future is hinted at, and the only comparable son promised by God in earlier oracles was Immanuel in 7:14–15. An identification marker that links these two sons is that they both will be righteous Davidic rulers. But the two sons do not have identical names. Concerning this Davidic ruler, “he [presumably God] will call his name” (not passive, “he will be called” as in NIV) titles that represent his character and roles. The eight words that follow could be eight names, but since Immanuel, Shear-Jashub, and many other Hebrew names comprise two words (Isaiah means “God saves”), it seems natural to divide these eight words into four titles.

a) “Wonderful Counselor” combines the idea of doing something “wonderful, extraordinary, miraculous” (pele’) with the skill of “giving wise advice, making plans, counsel.” This suggests that this son’s life will somehow exhibit “miraculous acts of God” employed in the sphere of wise planning or decision-making. Since God is the source of all miraculous events and his plans are the wisest counsel to follow, God will work in and through this son to demonstrate his extraordinary wisdom to plan wonderful miraculous things. These unspecified wonderful plans will be the subject of later revelation.

R. A. Carlson noticed that if one connects the first word of the first name pele’ and the first word of the last name śar (a connection that few readers would naturally put together) one gets a word (pele’śar) almost identical to the second name of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, thus he thinks this future Jewish king is being presented as one greater than their Assyrian

¹ Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019).

overlord who was trusted to save Ahaz from Pekah and Rezin in the Syro-Ephraimite War. Although Carlson hypothesized this and other Akkadian connections to make this message an anti-Assyrian oracle, these connections are not particularly strong and draw attention away from the prophet's fundamental purpose of focusing his audience's attention on their future Davidic messianic king.

b) The second dual name "Mighty God" ('ēl 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.

c) 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.

d) The last pair, "Prince of Peace" (šar šālôm), is less controversial because every king wanted to bring peace and prosperity to his subjects. Peace implies an end of war and is reminiscent of the ideal peace described in the kingdom of God in 2:4. It is also comparable to the promise in the Davidic covenant that God's people will not be oppressed again and that they will have rest from their enemies (2 Sam 7:10–11). No specific examples or illustrations of this peace are included (as in 2:4). In 11:6–9 this ideal is discussed in more detail.

9:7 Four things are known about the government this ruler will establish. First, when this new son rules, he will limitlessly expand his influence and create peace without end (cf. Ps 2:8). This promise implies that no one will be able to successfully oppose his authority or undermine the positive effects of his government. Such strong statements imply that Isaiah is talking about the final eschatological ruler. Second, this ruler will reign on the throne of David and reestablish his kingdom. This pledge certifies beyond the shadow of a doubt that the text refers to the ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic covenant through a "messianic" figure. Third, his method of ruling will be based on the principles of justice and righteousness. This fact is consistent with the emphasis on justice in 11:4–5 (and 7:15) and contrasts with the behavior of Ahaz, Judah's

present king. Fourth, this Davidic ruler will reign forever as explained in the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:16). These descriptive parameters, titles, time frame, and interlinking references to the Davidic promises rule out any attempt to identify this son with Ahaz, Hezekiah, or Josiah.

Finally, Isaiah offers a rhetorical assurance to his listeners concerning the fulfillment of this promise. Simply stated, God Almighty himself will do it. With unassailable zeal, determination, and passion God will concentrate his efforts to accomplish this marvelous deed. Isaiah's listeners can be absolutely sure that an omnipotent, sovereign God will stand behind the fulfillment of this wonderful plan.²

Jeremiah 33:14-16

33:14 The section begins with a well-known phrase that alerts the reader to future events: "days are coming" (see 30:3). The time will come when God will fulfill "the gracious promise" (lit. "the good word"; cf. 29:10) he had made to Israel and Judah.

33:15–16 These verses are a prose parallel to the poetic messianic statement of 23:5–6 but with a slight difference in emphasis. The verses promise the restoration of the Davidic dynasty. "A righteous Branch" (see 23:5 for explanation of "Branch") of David's family would do what is just and right, as contrasted with the many wicked kings who occupied the throne since David's death. Under the leadership of this new ruler, Judah would be saved and the people would live in safety. The city would be given a new name: "The Lord our righteousness." In 23:6 the name was promised to the coming ruler, but here the name is given to the city. The meaning of the new name is that Jerusalem would finally become what God intended for it to be all along—a city noted for its righteousness. See also Isa 1:26; 62:2–4; Jer 3:17; Ezek 48:35; Zech 8:3; Rev 11:8 for other descriptive names of Jerusalem..³

² Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007).

³ F.B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1993).