

The Messiah

"... whose origin is from ..."

"everlasting" (KJV) or "ancient days" (NRSV)?

One of the most beautiful verses in the Old Testament concerns a prophecy in Micah 5:1-2 about the "coming forth" of the "Messiah." This prophecy is referred to in Matt. 2:1-6 as regards his place of birth - i.e. Bethlehem. Though Matthew gives no hint of a pre-existence of the Messiah, the KJV translation of Micah 5:2 "from .. everlasting" has had an enormous, and, unfortunately, erroneous influence on the thinking of millions of Christians in this regard. But as J.D. Dunn states, there is nothing in the Hebrew text of this verse "to suggest the idea of pre-existence" (*Christology in the Making* p. 71). Most modern versions translate similar to the NRSV:

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.

The Hebrew words translated "from of old, from ancient days" are, according to most OT scholars,

referring to the times of Jesse ... The addition of "days" shows this to be a historical reference [*New Bible Commentary*, p. 828].

The appearing of this ruler is to be validated by hereditary right ... He is to come ... of kingly lineage and this constitutes the guarantee of his coming ... allusion is being made to a finite time in history ... This time can only be the days of David ... [*NICOT, Micah*, p. 343].

In short, the reference in Micah 5:2 is to the fact that the Messiah would be a descendant of David.