

Prophecy and Birth Narrative II: The Virgin Birth
A Miraculous Sign

1A Introduction:

- 1B** It is 734 B.C.
- 2B** Isaiah 7:14-16 is a stealth messianic prophecy. That is to say, Israelites in Christ's time did not consider this a messianic prophecy at all.
- 3B** They discussed the messianic portions of Isaiah 9 and 11 with great fervor, but not this little gem.
- 4B** The objective of this study is to put Isaiah 7 in context, and then to see how verse 14 works as a messianic prophecy.
- 5B** Furthermore, we must see how the continuation of verse 14 into 15 and 16 connects to the messianic time, if at all.
- 6B** The other big issue is the nature of *almah* in this context – the expecting virgin. There has been much liberal criticism of *almah*:
 - 1C** Admittedly the word has a much wider range of meaning than “virgin.”
 - 2C** The question is, does Isaiah mean “virgin” when he uses the word *almah*?

2A The Context

- 1B** Historical Background: (from *BSac* 137:546 (Apr 80) p. 142)
 - 1C** “The historical situation can be summarized in the words of Isaiah 7:1. “And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz...king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the...king of Israel went up to Jerusalem to war against it; but could not prevail against it.”
 - 2C** “In 735 B.C. Ahaz ascended the throne. Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, had been occupied in the far east for the preceding two years.
 - 3C** “Rezin and Pekah formed an alliance and used the occasion to launch an invasion against Judah—an adventure they would not have dared had Uzziah still been alive.
 - 4C** “Rezin marched down the eastern side of the Jordan and conquered Edom; Pekah swept over Judah and defeated the armies of Ahaz in one great battle, slaughtering 120,000 Judeans and carrying off 200,000 captives along with a large amount of spoil (2 Chron 28:5; 2 Kings 16:5).
 - 5C** “Their motive was probably vengeance against Ahaz for refusing to enter into an alliance with them against Assyria. It is no wonder that Ahaz was afraid that his enemies would prevail, end the kingdom of Judah, and annihilate the family of David.
 - 6C** “In his distress Ahaz was about to appeal to Assyria for military assistance. However, Assyria was a selfish, conquering power; and an alliance with them could have been purchased only at the price of Judah's independence. It would not have been long before Jehovah would have been swept from His own Temple and the gods of Assyria installed in His place.
 - 7C** “Isaiah met Ahaz to assure him that God would deliver Jerusalem and to warn him against a disastrous entanglement with Assyria.
- 2B** Isaiah 7:1-17:

- 1C The Syro-Israeli alliance campaign against Judah, v.1, 1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to make war against it, but could not prevail against it.
- 1D An alliance between Syria and Israel (the northern kingdom) was moving against Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah.
- 2D They failed to take the capital, but the rest of the chapter narrates how the failure came about.
- 2C The nearby threat and response, v.2, 2 And it was told to the house of David, saying, "Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim." So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.
- 1D The house of David, king Ahaz' royal family, receives a report from the front.
- 2D Syria has deployed to the region immediately to the north of Jerusalem, aiming for Judah's capital, Jerusalem (see map).
- 3D The response was great fear in the king and among the people of Judah. They did not think they could withstand this attack. The original Hebrew describes as trembling or quaking. We would compare their physical response to the leaves of our aspen trees.
- 3C The sending to rendezvous of Isaiah and son, v.3, 3 Then the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field,
- 1D The Fuller's Field was a well-known location, a place where for centuries sheep-shearers washed their wool due to a surplus of water.
- 2D The Lord tells Isaiah to take his own son along, an important presence for the sake of the prophecy which God will give.
- 1E His children are signs and wonders for Israel, significantly named even as were the children of Hosea. Isaiah 8:18, 18 Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel From the Lord of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion.
- 2E Shear-Jashub means, "a remnant will return," a reference to the return of the holy remnant of Israel which will return, post-exile.
- 3E Isaiah 10:20-21, 20 And it shall come to pass in that day That the remnant of Israel, And such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, Will never again depend on him who defeated them, But will depend on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21 The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, To the Mighty God.
- 4C God's message to Ahaz through Isaiah, vv.4-9:
- 1D The encouragement against fear, v.4, "4 and say to him: 'Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah.
- 1E The Lord commands Isaiah to convey a message of encouragement and stillness, and in the stillness listening.

- 2E The two kings are just extinguished torches, on the ground with nothing left but smoke. Their history is all but finished, even if in their estimation they are still the bright lights of history.
- 3E We might think of many kings and political leaders of our own times. Of the roaring flames of leaders and moments that now hardly glow or smoke in the aftermath of their demise. Imperial Japan; Taliban Afghanistan; Hussein Iraq.
- 4E They are not to fear or lack courage, but to be ready to resist.
- 2D The recap of the situation, vv.5-6, 5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, 6 “Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabel”—
- 1E A gap in the wall is the compromise and doom of a walled fortress-city.
- 2E They have a particular man in mind to set up as the puppet king over Judah. A man whose name is the only thing left to us now. No other history preserves his character or deeds. He was the man who would be king.
- 3D The Lord’s flat declaration of failure, v.7, 7 thus says the Lord God: “It shall not stand, Nor shall it come to pass.
- 1E God declares that it “ain’t gonna happen.” He is sovereign and almighty God. It ain’t gonna happen.
- 2E The reason for the failure, the fate of Rezin’s family, v.8, 8 For the head of Syria is Damascus, And the head of Damascus is Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken, So that it will not be a people.
- 1F The reason for the failure is that first, the capital of Syria is Damascus, and the head person is Rezin. This is a Gentile king of a Gentile city in a Gentile nation. God has given His Word about His nation, city, and king.
- 2F The second is a plain prediction that within sixty five years it will be over for Ephraim, the northern kingdom.
- 3E The reason for the failure, the fate of Remaliah’s son (Pekah), v.9, 9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria, And the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son. If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established.” ’ ’
- 1F Samaria is the capital city, and Pekah is the head of Samaria. Pekah is not in the line of the Messiah, not of David’s royal family. His rule contradicts the promise of the Davidic Covenant.
- 2F The final phrase is a call to believe God’s covenant promise to His people and to David His Messiah pattern king.
- 3F They must believe the promise of God about the Davidic covenant even under the current threat, otherwise they cannot expect the establishment of that king in their time.
- 4D The offer of a sign to Ahaz, vv.10-11, 10 Moreover the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 11 “Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above.”
- 1E Isaiah is the Lord’s spokesman. Through him, the Lord offers a sign to king Ahaz.

- 2E He is given to ask anything in the depths (the watery deeps of the ocean) to the heights (the sky). It is a way of declaring that he may ask anything in the physical universe, just make it up and it will occur.
- 3E God is anticipating the weakness of this king, and his reluctance to ask a sign.
- 5D The application of Ahaz, v.12, 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!"
 - 1E Though the Lord may test us, Deuteronomy 8:2, 2 And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.
 - 2E We are not to test Him, Deuteronomy 6:16, 16 "You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah.
 - 3E The nature of the temptation was to ask for the food and water they desired because they had no apparent provision.
 - 4E Because God offers the sign, there is no compromise. He wants to encourage Ahaz.
- 6D The insistence of God, v.13, 13 Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?
 - 1E God through Isaiah addresses not just Ahaz, but the house of David, the people of the royal line of the Messiah of Israel.
 - 2E He calls them to attention, telling them that although they weary men, but their lack of faith threatens to weary God.
 - 3E The point of weariness is not physical weariness, but the end of patience, where God's integrity must demand discipline.

3A The Prophecy:

- 1B The sign to the house of David, v.14, 14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.
- 1C The sign of the survival of the line of David is the *almah* who conceives and brings forth a Son.
- 2C Since this is a sign that exceeds height and depth, it is a unique and miraculous sign.
- 3C There are a variety of ways to understand *almah* – young woman, virgin, even a young woman in a harem who is hardly a virgin.
- 4C A young woman who gives birth is not a miracle at all. It is exceedingly common, and in fact the norm in that day.
- 5C But a virgin, also a meaning of *almah*, is a great and unique sign – deeper or higher than anything Ahaz might have imagined.
- 6C Although in our modern frame of reference we might imagine surgical and technical scenarios where a virgin might conceive. No such ideas existed.
- 7C The virgin will call her Son, "God is with us."
- 8C Not only is the Son of the virgin a symbol of God's nearness, He is God Himself.
- 9C This is the second prophecy that declares the deity of the Messiah, a blasphemous idea to the religious scholars of Jesus' time.
- 10C This also helps refute the notions of many modern religions who call themselves Christians and at the same time deny the deity of Jesus Christ.

- 11C The miraculous birth of the Messiah is a crucial part of the plan of God for Israel, and God's covenant with the royal line of David.
- 2B The nature of the child's upbringing, v.15, 15 Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.
 - 1C Curds are sour, curdled milk. Honey is a natural product, gathered from rocks and trees where found, and not a delicacy in a grocery store.
 - 2C These are products that are the staples of the poor, who have little to trade or offer for more variety and excellence in their diets.
 - 3C This austere condition of the Messiah's early life will enable Him to resist temptation and choose good.
- 3B The forsaking of the land as prior to the child's adulthood, v.16, 16 For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.
 - 1C Yet before this Messiah child is able to know these matters of conscience, before He is operational as a moral agent in the world, the lands to the north, Ephraim and Syria will be forsaken.
 - 2C In reality it is 700 years to the time of the Messiah. The advantage of this prophecy is that it is something that they will witness in their day, giving them hope even though they will not see Christ in their time.
 - 3C Syria and Ephraim would be devastated in a dozen years' time, fulfilling the first part of this prophecy completely. Samaria and the northern kingdom fall in 722 B.C.
 - 4C As they saw this destruction, they have ready hope that the remainder will come, the sign of the virgin.
- 4B The coming of the king of Assyria upon Judah, v.17, 17 The Lord will bring the king of Assyria upon you and your people and your father's house—days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah."
 - 1C The king of Assyria will also come upon Ahaz and Judah.
 - 2C This also is the Lord's doing, but they will not be destroyed as the others are.
 - 3C This first prophecy is to precede the second of the virgin sign. It is meant as a confirmation that the second will surely occur.
 - 4C Two parts:
 - 1D The destruction of Syria and Ephraim, the smoking brands of history;
 - 2D And the survival of Judah against all odds.
- 4A The Fulfilment: Matthew 1:18-25:
 - 1B The timing of the conception, v.18, 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.
 - 2B The plan of Joseph, v.19, 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.
 - 3B The appearance of the angel in a dream, v.20a, 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying,
 - 4B The explanation of the conception, v.20b, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

- 5B The calling of the name, v.21, 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”
- 1C It is not *Immanuel!* It is Jeshua, Savior!
- 2C We are expecting the literal, and we get the symbolic. The God who is with His people, is with them as their Savior from their sins!
- 3C Immanuel is the literal, while Jeshua is underlying meaning of the “God is with us.”
- 6B The event as fulfillment, v.22, 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:
- 7B The quotation of Isaiah 7:14, v.23, 23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”
- 8B Joseph’s compliance and careful actions to preserve Mary as a virgin, v.24, 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.
- 5A The Meaning of the Virgin Birth of Christ.
- 1B The virgin birth of Christ is a unique sign that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel, the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant to Israel.
- 2B The virgin birth of Christ makes clear the divine origins of Jesus. He is the God-man in hypostatic union, the unique person of the universe. God is the Father of Jesus – not through blasphemous or carnal means, but through a miraculous birth that did not include normal sexual relations.
- 3B The virgin birth of Christ has no physical transmission of the sin nature of Adam or imputation of the penalty of his original sin.
- 4B Romans 5:12, 12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—
- 5B Romans 5:15, 15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.
- 6B Romans 5:17-19, 17 For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.
- 7B 1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.