

**Exegetical Notes – Isaiah 7:13-17**  
**“The Prophecy Fulfilled: A Son Is Born”**

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(During Advent 2024, we will leave our study of 2 Samuel and do an exegetical study entitled, **The Prophecy Fulfilled**. We will look at four passages from the book of Isaiah which Christians believe prophesy the birth of the Messiah. It is important for those joining this study to remember several things as we begin this study.

The first of these things is that this is a Christian view of these passages. The Jewish community does not believe that these passages speak to the birth of THE Messiah. They believe that these passages speak to specific times in the history of Israel and to particular events in Israel’s history.

The second of these things is that the Jews do not believe in the coming of THE Messiah but in the coming of messiahs. In Hebrew, the word “messiah” is plural. The word means “anointed ones.” The Jews believe that God raises up a messiah, or anointed one, to lead them through the current crisis that they face. These messiahs are many throughout their ancient and modern history. The Jews believe that there have been many messiahs.

Christians believe that the Hebrew word refers to Jesus. They explain the plural nature of the word is an “honorific plural.” The use of the plural to impart honor to the one who bears it is common in our history. (The king of England, for instance, is referred to as “we,” even though he is only one person.) This use of the plural has fallen into disfavor in our time. None-the-less, Christians believe that this is why the Hebrew plural is used in passages in the Old Testament which refer to THE Messiah.

The third of these things is that the Old Testament gives a very specific test for determining if a prophet is a “TRUE” prophet. Deuteronomy 18:22 says, *“If what a prophet proclaims in the name of YHWH does not take place or come true, that is*

*a message YHWH has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.*" The prophet whose words do not come true is to be put to death (see Deuteronomy 13:2). This would be an ineffective test of the prophet's veracity if the words the prophet spoke were about events far in the future. How could this test be applied to Isaiah if Isaiah was speaking about events which would not happen for a thousand years after his death?

Christians believe that the prophecy of Isaiah is a dual prophecy. It talks about two things. One of these things happens during the life of Isaiah and affects the immediate future and the other speaks of the coming of THE MESSIAH, Jesus.

These problems prevented the Jews from understanding who Jesus was in the first century, too. Jesus and Paul spoke of Jesus as THE Messiah, the savior of the world. But the Jews of their day were looking for A messiah; one who would come to free them from Roman rule.)

### **The Historical Meaning:**

For the historical background to which this passage speaks see 2 Kings 16:5-18 and 2 Chronicles 28:5-21. Aram (Syria) and Israel (the Northern tribes of the once united kingdom of Israel) rebelled against Assyria (the kingdom which controlled them). Ahaz, the son of Tabeel, was king of Judah (the Southern kingdom of Israel) at this time. Aram and the Northern tribes (Israel) threatened to invade Judah to force it to ally with them against Assyria (see Isaiah 7:6). To force this alliance, Rezin, the king of Aram, and Remaliah, the king of Israel, invaded Judah. This happened in 735 BC. Ahaz hoped to form a strong alliance with Assyria. Pekah was the king of Assyria.

Isaiah was the cousin of Ahaz. He served God as Prophet to the king of Judah, his cousin Ahaz. Isaiah opposed Ahaz's plan to form an alliance with Assyria. Because Isaiah spoke against the king's plan, the king ordered Isaiah not to speak. So Isaiah named his children with names that proclaimed his message to the king. Whenever Isaiah appeared with one of his children before the king, the name of the child would remind the king of the prophet's message.

In Isaiah 7:3, God commands Isaiah to “go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz, at the end of the aqueduct of the upper pool..., Say to him, ‘be careful, keep calm, and do not be afraid.’” “Shear Jashub” means “a remnant will return.” Isaiah’s message to the king is to trust God and not a military alliance with Assyria. The child’s name is a reminder to the king that God will be faithful. God will provide for Judah. In Isaiah 7:7-9, Isaiah reminds the king of all this. Isaiah says that the invasion of Judah will come to nothing. In Isaiah 7:10, Isaiah invites King Ahaz to ask God for a sign that will prove to him that Isaiah’s words are true, but Ahaz refuses to ask for a confirming sign from God. So Isaiah says that he will give Ahaz a confirming sign.

The sign is this. Isaiah 7:14 says, “The virgin” (In Hebrew the word means a young woman who is of marriageable age. In this case, most likely Mrs. Isaiah) “will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (In Hebrew the word means “God is with us.” This is the message Isaiah wants the king to hear and believe.) So the confirming sign to Ahaz is the birth of a son to Isaiah’s wife who Isaiah will name Immanuel. Isaiah goes on to say that before this child grows to maturity, the two kingdom’s Ahaz fears will be destroyed. This happened in 732 BC. Later, the Assyrians invaded Judah and took her captive.

All of this happened within the lifetime of Isaiah, thus proving him to be a reliable prophet according to the test established in the Old Testament.

### **The Greater Meaning:**

#### **Isaiah 7:13-17**

##### **Verses 13-14:**

**<sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.**

- See Matthew 1:22-23. When the angel Gabriel appeared to the unconvinced Joseph, the espoused husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus, the angel quoted the words of Isaiah 7:14 to convince the skeptic to trust God. Like Ahaz, Joseph needed a sign to convince him to trust God.

- However, the angel changes one word when he quotes Isaiah. Isaiah had used the Hebrew which meant a young woman of marriageable age. The angel uses the Greek word which means a young woman who has had no sexual experience, a virgin. The angel tells Joseph that a young woman who has had no sexual involvement with any man will conceive and give birth. This will require a miracle of God. The sign is that this miracle will occur. In fact, when Joseph receives this message from the angel, the miracle has already occurred, for Mary has already told him she is pregnant (see Matthew 1:18).
- The naming of the child is NOT the sign. It is the conception of the child which is the sign. Mary names the child Jesus in accord with the instruction of the angel given to her (see Luke 1:31). We call Jesus, Immanuel, because he is the sign given to Joseph found in Isaiah's prophecy. It is the same confirming sign given by Isaiah to Ahaz.

#### **Verses 15-17**

**<sup>15</sup> He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, <sup>16</sup> for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. <sup>17</sup> The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria."**

- The angel does not quote this part of the Isaiah passage to Joseph because it is not part of the sign which was given to Joseph. These words do not apply to Jesus but to Immanuel, the son born to Isaiah.
- It is important to note that Isaiah did not understand that the words he spoke to King Ahaz would be used by God in the way they would be to announce the Messiah's birth to Joseph. We see the "long view" because we stand on the other side of the Christmas story. God knew that Isaiah's words would be used in two ways: to speak to Ahaz and to convince Joseph to marry Mary.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on Isaiah 7:13-17. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)