
Observations from Isaiah

LESSON VII : THE VIRGIN BORN MESSIAH (7: 1-25)

General chapter outline (from Young's *Isaiah*):

- A. Introduction to the Entire Prophecy (1:1-31)
- B. Early Messages of Isaiah (2:1-5:30)
- C. Judah's True Hope: The Messianic King (6:1-12:6)
 - 1. Isaiah's Vision of the Holy God (6:1-13)
 - a. The vision itself (6:1-7)
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 - a. Ahaz the fearful (7:1-9)
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2. The Crisis and the Promise (7:1-25)

a. Ahaz the fearful (7:1-9)

When Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it. Now the house of David was told, "Aram has allied itself with Ephraim"; so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind. Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field. Say to him, 'Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these

And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not,

And it cometh to pass in the days of Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, gone up hath Rezin king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, to Jerusalem, to battle against it, and he is not able to fight against it. And it is declared to the house of David, saying, 'Aram hath been led towards Ephraim,' And his heart and the heart of his people is moved, like the moving of trees of a forest by the presence of wind. And Jehovah saith unto Isaiah, 'Go forth, I pray thee, to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-Jashub thy son, unto the end of the conduit of the upper pool, unto the highway of the fuller's field, and thou hast said unto him: 'Take heed, and be quiet, fear

two smoldering stubs of firewood — because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah's son have plotted your ruin, saying, "Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it." Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: " 'It will not take place, it will not happen, for the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is only Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah's son. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.' " (NIV)

neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established. (KJV)

not, And let not thy heart be timid, Because of these two tails of smoking brands, For the fierceness of the anger of Rezin and Aram, And the son of Remaliah. Because that Aram counselled against thee evil, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, saying: We go up into Judah, and we vex it, And we rend it unto ourselves, And we cause a king to reign in its midst — The son of Tabeal. Thus said the Lord Jehovah: It doth not stand, nor shall it be! For the head of Aram [is] Damascus, And the head of Damascus [is] Rezin, And within sixty and five years Is Ephraim broken from [being] a people. And the head of Ephraim [is] Samaria, And the head of Samaria [is] the son of Remaliah. If ye do not give credence, Surely ye are not stedfast.' (YLT)

"Uzziah is dead, but Isaiah has seen the true King, the Lord of hosts.... The ministry of hardening is beginning." [Young, *Isaiah*]

A DIFFICULT PASSAGE — The passage before us has several difficulties. (1) The chapter surrounds a **historical event in the days of Judah** which is covered in several other portions of scripture (2 kings 16; 2 chron 28), but there is enough information missing that it is not possible to reconstruct exactly what happened. "Indisputable as the credibility of these events may be, it is nevertheless very difficult to connect them together, either substantially or chronologically, in a certain and reliable manner." [K&D, *Commentary*] (2) Of great difficulty is **the prophecy of the virgin birth** itself, v14. The prophecy appears to have a direct historical application coupled with a secondary fuller application (at least at this time, that is my interpretation of those verses). "Probably no portion of the Bible has been regarded as so difficult of interpretation, and has given rise to so great a variety of expositions, as the prophecy which is commenced in this chapter, and which is closed in Isaiah 9:7. The importance of the prophecy respecting the Messiah (Isaiah 7:14ff; 8:7; 9:1-7), is one reason why interpreters have been so anxious to ascertain the genuine sense; and the difficulties attending the supposition that there is reference to the Messiah, have been among the causes why so much anxiety has been felt to ascertain its true sense. The prophecy which commences at the beginning of this chapter, is continued to Isaiah 9:7. An this was evidently delivered at the same time, and constitutes a single vision, or oracle." [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

GENERAL OVERVIEW — Some background information is necessary: the time frame in question is approx. 735 BC. The conflicting powers are **Rezin** king of Syria [NIV: Aram], **Pekah** king of Israel, **Tiglath-Pileser** king of Assyria, and **Ahaz** king of Judah. One perspective on what happened is as follows:

- During the reign of Ahaz, Syria and Israel had formed an alliance for the purpose of overthrowing the Judean king. According to 2 Kings 15:37 they had actually begun the siege of Judah during the days of Jotham. “Their object was probably to unite the three kingdoms against Assyria. Egypt seems to have favored the plan, so as to interpose these confederate kingdoms between her own frontier and Assyria (compare Isa 7:18, ‘Egypt’; and 2 Kings 17:4, Hoshea’s league with Egypt). Rezin and Pekah may have perceived Ahaz’ inclination towards Assyria rather than towards their own confederacy; this and the old feud between Israel and Judah (1 Kings 12:16) occasioned their invasion of Judah.” [Faussett, *JFB Commentary*] **Who was Ahaz?** — Ahaz is described in the Word of God as being very wicked (2 Kings 16:2-4; 2 Chron 28:2-4): he restored graven images, revived the worship of Molech in the Valley of Hinnon, even to the point of sacrificing some of his sons in the fires of Molech. After Assyria had helped win the day, he even brought back sketches of an idol found in Damascus and had the Levitical priests take materials from God’s temple to build this new god he had discovered.
- During the reign of Ahaz the Syrian king Rezin came up against Jerusalem, and with him was Pekah of Israel. Their purpose was to wage war but they were unable to overcome it (2 Kings 16:5-7; Isa 7:1). *Could not prevail*; Hebrew, ‘*could not fight against it*,’ that is, *with happy result, or with success*.
- According to 2 Chron 28:5-8 Ahaz was delivered into the hands of the Syrians, and 120,000 men in Judah slain, 200,000 taken captive. One of those killed that day was one of Ahaz’s sons. But it does not say the city was taken. It records Ahaz as being smitten and a great number of captives taken to Damascus, but it does not say Ahaz was taken to Damascus and may only be referring to the men of war. Apparently Ahaz was given to the Israelite king, who struck him with a great blow. The spoil from Jerusalem was taken to Samaria.
- At Samaria, a prophet Obed advised Israel to return the captives (2 Chron 28:9-15). The prisoners were taken to Jericho and set free.
- For whatever reason, Israel later decides to come up against Judah again with Syria. Ahaz learned Syria was “resting upon Israel” (Isa 7:2) so although they had once captured Ahaz and let him go, their hostile intentions had not been abandoned. “*Syria is confederate with Ephraim* — The phrase, ‘*is confederate with*,’ is in Hebrew ‘*resteth on*’ ... meaning, that Syria was ‘supported by’ Ephraim, or was allied with Ephraim. The kingdom of Israel, or Ephraim, was situated between Syria and Jerusalem. Of course, the latter could not be attacked without marching through the former, and without their aid. In this sense it was that Syria, or the Arameans, relied or ‘rested’ on Ephraim. Though Syria was by far the stronger power, yet it was not strong enough to attack Jerusalem had the kingdom of Israel been opposed to it.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]
- Scared of his prospects, Ahaz has the intentions of appealing to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria for help (2 Kings 16:7; 2 Chron 28:16). It is here we find Isaiah chapter 7, just prior

to Ahaz asking Assyria for help.

- “Ahaz, at the *second* inroad of his enemies (cp 2 Chron 28:1-26 and 2 Kings 15:37, with Isa 16:5), smarting under his former defeat, applied to Tiglath-Pileser, in spite of Isaiah’s warning in this chapter, that he should rather rely on God; that king accordingly attacked Damascus, and slew Rezin (2 Kings 16:9); and probably it was at the same time that he carried away part of Israel captive (2 Kings 15:29), unless there were *two* assaults on Pekah — that in 2 Kings 15:29, the earlier, and that in which Tiglath helped Ahaz subsequently. Ahaz was saved at the sacrifice of Judah’s independence and the payment of a large tribute, which continued till the overthrow of Sennacherib under Hezekiah (Isa 37:37; 2 Kings 16:8,17,18; 2 Chronicles 28:20).” [Faussett, *JFB Commentary*]

Some might argue of these reconstruction of events, e.g. why didn’t Ahaz go to Assyria for help at the first sign of trouble with Syria/Ephraim? We don’t have all the answers but the scriptures say the Syria/Ephraim alliance was coming against Judah as early as the reign of Jotham (2 Kings 15:37), therefore this was not a new thing to Ahaz. 2 Kings and 2 Chron both seem to place the appeal for help after the invasion of Judah had begun.

AHAZ SCARED — Upon hearing of the confederacy of Syria/Ephraim, Ahaz and his people were “shaken as the trees of the forest” — “This is a very beautiful and striking image. It expresses universal trembling, consternation, and alarm, as the trees are moved ‘together’ when the wind passes violently over them.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

THE SENDING OF ISAIAH — “In this season of terror Isaiah received the following divine instructions. The fuller’s field was situated ... on the western side of the city, where there is still an ‘upper pool’ of great antiquity (2 Chron 32:30). Near to this pool the fullers, i.e., the cleaners and thickeners of woollen fabrics, carried on their occupation. Robinson and his companions saw some people washing clothes at the upper pool when they were there; and, for a considerable distance round, the surface of this favorite washing and bleaching place was covered with things spread out to bleach or dry. The road, which ran past this fuller’s field, was the one which leads from the western gate to Joppa. King Ahaz was there, on the west of the city, and outside the fortifications — engaged, no doubt, in making provision for the probable event of Jerusalem being again besieged in a still more threatening manner. Jerusalem received its water supply from the upper Gihon pool, and there, according to Jehovah’s directions, Isaiah was to go with his son and meet him.” [K&D, *Commentary*]

ISAIAH’S MESSAGE — It is a time of desperate need; hence it is a time when the Lord intervenes with gracious help. The Lord gives the message to Isaiah and tells Isaiah to meet with king Ahaz. **The message of his son** — Isaiah’s instructed to take his son Shear-Jashub, meaning in the Hebrew *remnant will return, remnant will repent, the remnant is converted*. “The two together were, as it were, a personified blessing and curse, presenting themselves to the king for him to make his own selection. For the name Sheâr-yâshub, i.e., *the remnant is converted* (Isa 10:21-22), was a kind of abbreviation of the divine answer given to the prophet in ch. 6:11-13, and was indeed at once threatening and promising, but in such a way that the curse stood in front and the grace behind. *The prophetic name of Isaiah’s son was intended to drive the king to Jehovah by force, through the threatening aspect it presented; and the prophetic announcement of Isaiah himself, whose name pointed to salvation, was to allure him to Jehovah with its promising tone.*” [K&D, *Commentary*] Young notes in the boy’s name the emphasis is on the remnant, not on the return, paraphrasing: “there is to be a remnant, and what is significant about this remnant is

the fact that it will return unto the Lord.” **The message of encouragement** — *“No means were left untried.... as Calvin expresses it, exhorted him ‘to restrain himself outwardly, and keep his mind calm within.’ ... The two allies are designated at once as what they were in the sight of God, who sees through the true nature and future condition. They were two tails, i.e., nothing but the fag-ends, of wooden pokers (lit. stirrers, i.e., fire-stirrers), which would not blaze any more, but only continue smoking. They would burn and light no more, though their smoke might make the eyes smart still.* Along with Rezin, and to avoid honoring him with the title of king, Aram (Syria) is especially mentioned; whilst Pekah is called Ben-Remaliah, to recall to mind his low birth, and the absence of any promise in the case of his house.” [K&D, *Commentary*] *Son of Remaliah* — or Pekah, Isa 7:1. “It is by way of contempt that the king of Israel is not called by his own name. The Hebrews and Arabians, when they wish to speak reproachfully of anyone, omit his proper name and call him merely the son of this or that, especially when his father is but little known or respected. So Saul names David, in contempt, the son of Jesse; 1 Sam 20:27,31.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*] *The son of Tabeal* — “Nothing more is known of this person. He might have been some disaffected member of the royal family of David, who had sought the aid of Rezin and Pekah, and who would be allied to them, or tributary to them. It is possible that he had already a party in Jerusalem in his favor; cp Isa 8:12. Probably, the two kings wished to cut off such portions of the territory of Judah as should be convenient to them, and to set a king over the remainder, who should be under their control; or to divide the whole between themselves, by setting up a king who would be tributary to both.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*] *Threescore and five years* — “It was 65 years from the beginning of the reign of Ahaz, when this prophecy was delivered, to the total depopulation of the kingdom of Israel by Esarhaddon, who carried away the remains of the ten tribes which had been left by Tiglath-pileser, and Shalmaneser, and who planted the country with new inhabitants. That the country was not wholly stripped of its inhabitants by Shalmaneser appears from many passages of the history of Josiah, where Israelites are mentioned as still remaining there, 2 Chron 34:6, 7, 33; 35:18; 2 Kings 23:19, 20. This seems to be the best explanation of the chronological difficulty in this place, which has much embarrassed the commentators.” [Clarke, *Commentary*] **The message of choice** — *believe, ... be established* — “There is a paronomasia, or play on the words, in the Hebrew: ‘if ye will not *confide*, ye shall not *abide*.’ Ahaz brought distress on himself by distrust in the Lord, and trust in Assyria.” [Faussett, *JFB Commentary*] *“If ye believe not, ye shall not be established; i.e., unless ye believe this prophecy of the destruction of Israel, ye Jews also, as well as the people of Israel, shall not remain established as a kingdom and people; ye also shall be visited with punishment at the same time: as our Savior told the Jews in his time, ‘Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;’* [Clarke, *Commentary*]

b. The Lord’s sign (7:10-17)

<i>Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, “Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.” Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not</i>	<i>Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a</i>	<i>And Jehovah addeth to speak unto Ahaz, saying: ‘Ask for thee a sign from Jehovah thy God, Make deep the request, or make [it] high upwards.’ And Ahaz saith, ‘I do not ask nor try Jehovah.’ And he saith, ‘Hear, I pray you, O house of David, Is it a little thing for</i>
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enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. But 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. 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.” (NIV)

small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father’s house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria. (KJV)

you to weary men, That ye weary also my God? Therefore the Lord Himself giveth to you a sign, Lo, the Virgin is conceiving, And is bringing forth a son, And hath called his name Immanuel, Butter and honey he doth eat, When he knoweth to refuse evil, and to fix on good. For before the youth doth know To refuse evil, and to fix on good, Forsaken is the land thou art vexed with, because of her two kings. Jehovah bringeth on thee, and on thy people, And on the house of thy father, Days that have not come, Even from the day of the turning aside of Ephraim from Judah, By the king of Asshur. (YLT)

THE GRACE OF GOD IN SEEKING AHAZ — “Ask for ‘thyself;’ ask a sign that shall be convincing to ‘thyself,’ since thou dost not fully credit the words of the prophet. It is evident that the words of the prophet had made no impression on the mind of Ahaz. God, therefore, proposes to him to ask any ‘proof or demonstration’ which he might select; anything that would be an indication of divine power that should put what the prophet had said beyond doubt. Had Ahaz put confidence in God, he would have believed what the prophet said without miraculous proof. But he had no such confidence.... *Ask it either in the depth ... He gave him his choice of a miracle — any sign or wonder in heaven, or on earth — above or below; a miracle in the sky, or from beneath the earth....* It may refer to the earth, or to the region under the earth, since it stands in contrast with that which is above. If it refers to the region under the earth, it means that Isaiah would raise the dead to life if Ahaz desired it; if to the earth, that any wonder or miracle that should take place in the elements — as a tempest, or earthquake — should be performed.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

AHAZ’S FALSE PIETY — When Ahaz rejects God’s offer for a sign, he displays both his obstinance and his ingratitude. Note that while the appeal is given to Ahaz, it is made to “your God” (v11), but after his rejection Isaiah refers to the Lord as “my God” (v13). Ahaz was being addressed previously as an individual, but also note that now Isaiah turns his message to the entire house of Judah (v13; the *you*’s are plural). “*neither ... tempt* — hypocritical pretext of keeping the law (Deut 6:16); ‘*tempt*,’ that is, put God to the proof, as in Matt 4:7, by seeking His miraculous interposition without warrant. But here there *was* the warrant of the prophet of God; to have asked a sign, when thus offered, would not have been a *tempting* of God. Ahaz true reason for declining was his resolve not to do God’s will, but to negotiate with Assyria, and persevere in his idolatry (2 Kings 16:7,8,3,4,10). *Men often excuse their distrust in God, and trust in their own devices, by professed reverence for God.*” [Faussett, *JFB Commentary*]

THE SIGN OF THE VIRGIN BEARING — “*The prophet could very well have borne that the members of the house of David should thus frustrate all his own faithful, zealous human efforts. But they were not content with this: they also wearied out the long-suffering of his God, by letting Him exhaust all His means of correcting them without effect. They would not believe without seeing; and when signs were offered them to see, in order that they might believe, they would not even look. Jehovah would therefore give them, against their will, a sign of His own choosing.*” [K&D, *Commentary*] The meaning of the sign will be discussed later.

THE PROMISED DELIVERANCE OF GOD — “Perhaps there is no prophecy in the Old Testament on which more has been written, and which has produced more perplexity among commentators than this. And after all, it still remains, in many respects, very obscure. *Its general original meaning is not difficult. It is, that in a short time — within the time when a young woman, then a virgin, should conceive and bring forth a child, and that child should grow old enough to distinguish between good and evils — the calamity which Ahaz feared would be entirely removed. The confederacy would be broken up, and the land forsaken by both those kings.* The conception and birth of a child — which could be known only by him who knows ‘all’ future events — would be the evidence of such a result. His appropriate ‘name’ would be such as would be a ‘sign,’ or an indication that God was the protector of the nation, or was still with them.” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*] Historically, we know this came to pass as the Lord had said. The land of the two kings, Syria and Israel, was first of all laid waste by the Assyrians, whom Ahaz called to his assistance. Tiglath-pileser conquered Damascus and a portion of the kingdom of Israel, and led a large part of the inhabitants of the two countries into captivity (2 Kings 15:29; 16:9). *Curds and honey* (NASV, NIV; KJV has “butter and honey”) was a food produced during times of peace and plenty, the sense being that before the child was of discriminate age, the land would be at peace. *Curds* denotes not butter, but thick and curdled milk. This was the common mode of using milk as an article of food in the East, and is still. *Refuse evil and choose good*: an age of moral discrimination; within 12 years of this prophecy (c. 735BC) Damascus was captured by Assyria (732BC) and Israel had fallen (722BC).

THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF AHAZ’ ASSYRIAN POLICY — “Though temporary deliverance (Isa 7:16 8:4) was to be given then, and final deliverance through Messiah, sore punishment shall follow the former. After subduing Syria and Israel, the Assyrians shall encounter Egypt (2 Kings 23:29), and Judah shall be the battlefield of both (Isa 7:18), and be made tributary to that very Assyria (2 Chron 28:20; 2 Kings 16:7,8) now about to be called in as an ally (Isa 39:1-6). Egypt, too, should prove a fatal ally (Isa 36:6 31:1, etc.).” [Faussett, *JFB Commentary*] There is an obvious lesson on sin in these verses which we cannot pass:

- **SIN HARDENS THE HEART BEYOND ALL RATIONAL THINKING** — even though God promised Ahaz everything would be OK if he would only trust Him, even beseeching him by promising to give him any sign he would ask, Ahaz rejects God’s offer and turns to the world for help
- **THE DECEPTION OF SIN** — initially the thing Ahaz did seemed to be the right thing to do — Assyria helped him and he won the battle against Syria. A dishonest businessman initially sees positive results; a lie initially deceives; living for the world typically at least “pays off”
- **THE RESULTS OF SIN** — after fighting Syria Assyria kept coming against Judah — *sin costs more than we initially think, even eventually our losing of our souls* — note then there is no offer from the Lord to help.

c. The coming desolation (7:18-25)

In that day the LORD will whistle for flies from the distant streams of Egypt and for bees from the land of Assyria. They will all come and settle in the steep ravines and in the crevices in the rocks, on all the thornbushes and at all the water holes. In that day the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the River — the king of Assyria — to shave your head and the hair of your legs, and to take off your beards also. In that day, a man will keep alive a young cow and two goats. And because of the abundance of the milk they give, he will have curds to eat. All who remain in the land will eat curds and honey. In that day, in every place where there were a thousand vines worth a thousand silver shekels, there will be only briers and thorns. Men will go there with bow and arrow, for the land will be covered with briers and thorns. As for all the hills once cultivated by the hoe, you will no longer go there for fear of the briers and thorns; they will become places where cattle are turned loose and where sheep run. (NIV)

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes. In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep; And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land. And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall even be for briers and thorns. With arrows and with bows shall men come thither; because all the land shall become briers and thorns. And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle. (KJV)

And it hath come to pass, in that day, Jehovah doth hiss for a fly that [is] in the extremity of the brooks of Egypt, And for a bee that [is] in the land of Asshur. And they have come, and rested all of them in the desolate valleys, And in holes of the rocks, and on all the thorns, And on all the commendable things. In that day doth the Lord shave, By a razor that is hired beyond the river, By the king of Asshur, The head, and the hair of the feet, Yea, also the beard it consumeth. And it hath come to pass, in that day, A man keepeth alive a heifer of the herd, And two of the flock, And it hath come to pass, From the abundance of the yielding of milk he eateth butter, For butter and honey doth every one eat Who is left in the heart of the land. And it hath come to pass, in that day, Every place where there are a thousand vines, At a thousand silverlings, Is for briers and for thorns. With arrows and with bow he cometh thither, Because all the land is brier and thorn. And all the hills that with a mattock are kept in order, Thither cometh not the fear of brier and thorn, And it hath been for the sending forth of ox, And for the treading of sheep!’ (YLT)

THEIR FORMER PLACE OF TRUST WILL BECOME THEIR INSTRUMENT OF SHAME

— The Lord in that day will call Egypt and Assyria from their lands to judge Judah’s rebellion. “The Egyptian nation, with its vast and unparalleled numbers, is compared to the swarming fly; and the Assyrian nation, with its love of war and conquest, to the stinging bee which is so hard to keep off (Deut 1:44; Ps 118:12). The emblems also correspond to the nature of the two countries:

the fly to slimy Egypt with its swarms of insects (see Isa 18:1), and the bee to the more mountainous and woody Assyria, where the keeping of bees is still one of the principal branches of trade.” [K&D, *Commentary*] **Shave their beards** — “The nation of Judah is regarded here, as in Isa 1:6, as a man striped naked, and not only with all the hair of his head and feet shaved off, but what was regarded as the most shameful of all, with the hair of his beard shaved off as well.” [K&D, *Commentary*] “The Eastern people have always held the beard in the highest veneration, and have been extremely jealous of its honor. To pluck a man’s beard is an instance of the greatest indignity that can be offered. The king of the Ammonites, to show the utmost contempt of David, ‘cut off half the beards of his servants, and the men were greatly ashamed; and David bade them tarry at Jericho till their beards were grown,’ 2 Sam 10:4, 6. Niebuhr gives a modern instance of the very same kind of insult. ‘The Turks greatly esteem a man who has a fine beard; it is a very great affront to take a man by his beard, unless it be to kiss it; they swear by the beard.’ D’Arvieux gives a remarkable instance of an Arab, who, having received a wound in his jaw, chose to hazard his life, rather than suffer his surgeon to take off his beard.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

“The remaining verses of this chapter, 21-25, contain an elegant and very expressive description of a country depopulated, and left to run wild, from its adjuncts and circumstances: the vineyards and cornfields, before well cultivated, now overrun with briars and thorns; much grass, so that the few cattle that are left, a young cow and two sheep, have their full range, and abundant pasture, so as to yield milk in plenty to the scanty family of the owner; the thinly scattered people living, not on corn, wine, and oil, the produce of cultivation; but on milk and honey, the gifts of nature; and the whole land given up to the wild beasts, so that the miserable inhabitants are forced to go out armed with bows and arrows, either to defend themselves against the wild beasts, or to supply themselves with necessary food by hunting.” [Clarke, *Commentary*]

What is the Reference of Isaiah 7:14?

This is one of the most difficult passages in all of scripture and I am not foolish enough to believe this short SS lesson contains all the answers. Although there were areas of general agreement, every work I referenced differed in certain specifics. *Is this a direct reference to the Messiah’s virgin birth?* — that was my understanding prior to studying the passage. But after having read many different sources, one word kept popping into my mind: *forced*. By that I mean every commentary I’ve read which tries to exclusively limit this to Jesus leaves me the impression that they were forcing their rendering into the verses before us. Even if we come to the wrong conclusion considering this verse, one lesson I would want us all to learn is **the necessity to be pure and honest while handling the word of God**. As much as is humanly possible (and I realize it is impossible to fully accomplish this), ***we should read and study without pre-conceived notions. We need to let the word of God speak for itself and not to approach a passage in the sense that we must “come to the rescue” lest God seem to contradict Himself.*** Imagine this as it was originally being given to the people of Judah. What was intended by this? There is no evidence that those hearing were amazed of a new revelation of the advent of their Messiah; in fact to me the emphasis appears to be the timing and not so much on the child itself.

THE SECONDARY SENSE OF SOME SCRIPTURE — *While not being dogmatic, my personal understanding is these verses speak of a very human situation which happened during the life of Isaiah as a direct, historical sign to Ahaz, with a much fuller, secondary sense in which it refers to the virgin born Christ.* I see a double reference here, one understood by the Jews present and one of a much fuller meaning understandable to us because of the light of the NT.

Sometimes when God recorded prophecy it was very direct and straight-forward, as in Isa 9:6 or Micah 5:2. Other times the prophecy appears veiled behind an event or person which historically lived long ago but is a prophecy or type of Christ Himself, as with Solomon in 2 Sam 7:12-16 (note v14 “*when he does wrong I will punish him*” referring to Solomon, but that could not be stated of Christ; but this passage is universally accepted to be a reference to Jesus).

WHAT IS A “SIGN” FROM GOD? — The word itself means *a pledge, a token, an evidence of the fulfillment of what is predicted*. Keil and Delitzsch lists some of the OT signs as being: (1) **visible miracles** performed at once, Ex 4:8,9; (2) **appointed symbols of future events**, Isa 8:18; 20:3; or (3) **predicted occurrences** which, whether miraculous or natural, could not possibly be foreseen by human capacities, and therefore, if they actually took place, were a proof either retrospectively of the divine causality of other events (Ex 3:12), or prospectively of their divine certainty (Isa 37:30; Jer 44:29-30). “The word does not, of necessity, denote a miracle, though it is often so applied. Here it means a proof, a demonstration, a certain indication that what he had said should be fulfilled.... *It means here, that an event was to occur which demanded the attention of the unbelieving monarch, and the regard of the people — an event which would be a full demonstration of what the prophet had said, that God would protect and save the nation.*” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

WHO WAS THIS “ALMAH”? — Part of the surrounding controversy concerns the word used by Isaiah. He used the word *almah* which has the basic meaning of either *virgin, young maid*. The controversy exists because there is another more strict Hebrew word for virgin which Isaiah chose not to use, *bethulah*. “Hengstenberg contends, that it means one ‘*in the unmarried state;*’ Gesenius, that it means simply *the being of marriageable age, the age of puberty*. The Hebrews usually employed the word *bethulah* to denote a pure virgin; but the word here evidently denotes one who was ‘then’ unmarried; and though its primary idea is that of one who is growing up, or in a marriageable state, yet the whole connection requires us to understand it of one who was ‘not then married,’ and who was, therefore, regarded and designated as a virgin.... The idea of a ‘virgin’ is, therefore, the most obvious and natural idea in the use of this word. It does not, however, imply that the person spoken of should be a virgin ‘when the child’ should be born; or that she should ever after be a virgin. It means simply that one who was ‘then’ a virgin, but who was of marriageable age, should conceive, and bear a son.... *The expression means no more than that one who was then a virgin should have a son, and that this should be a sign to Ahaz.*” [Barnes, *Notes on OT*] It should be noted that while Isaiah used a word which might be taken in several manners, the NT does not. When Matthew quoted this verse (Matt 1:22,23) he used the Greek *parthenos* *which is always used of a virgin*. There is another looser term which Isaiah could have used, *neanis*, which refers to a young maid. *My personal opinion, if our understanding of each of the two Hebrew words is correct, is the Holy Spirit directed Isaiah to use a word which might be taken in a single sense at the time but still could be taken in a much more stricter sense at a later and fuller time, in reference to Christ.*

WHO WAS ISAIAH SPEAKING OF IN V14? — *I agree with those commentators which see a double reference in this passage: one then and there for Ahaz, and another fuller sense in which the prophecy is fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ, born of a virgin without the seed of a man.* There has been so much written on this passage that it would be beyond the scope of this present study to reproduce it. Rather than duplicate the efforts of better men before me, the best I can do is provide the text of which I am in most agreement. The following comes from Barnes’ *Notes on the Bible, Volume 7 -Isaiah* by A. Barnes:

*“And shall call his name — ‘We are not, then, to suppose that the child should actually receive the name Immanuel as a proper name, since, according to the usage of the prophet, and especially of Isaiah, that is often ascribed to a person or thing as a name which belongs to him in an eminent degree as an attribute; see Isa 9:5; 61:6; 62:4.’ (Hengstenberg). The idea is, that that would be a name that might be ‘appropriately’ given to the child. Another name was also given to this child, expressing substantially the same thing, with a circumstantial difference. **Immanuel — Hebrew ‘God with us.’ The name is designed to denote that God would be with the nation as its protector, and the birth of this child would be a sign or pledge of it.** The mere circumstance that this name is given, however, does not imply anything in regard to the nature or rank of the child, for nothing was more common among the Jews than to incorporate the name, or a part of the name, of the Deity with the names which they gave to their children. Thus, ‘Isaiah’ denotes the salvation of Yahweh; ‘Jeremiah,’ the exaltation or grandeur of Yahweh, each compounded of two words, in which the name Yahweh constitutes a part. Thus, also in ‘Elijah,’ the two names of God are combined, and it means literally, ‘God the Yahweh.’ Thus, also ‘Eliab,’ God my father; ‘Eliada,’ knowledge of God; ‘Eliakim,’ the resurrection of God; ‘Elihu,’ he is my God; ‘Elisha,’ salvation of God. **In none of these instances is the fact, that the name of God is incorporated with the proper name of the individual, any argument in respect to his rank or character. It is true, that Matthew (Matt 1:23) uses this name as properly expressing the rank of the Messiah; but all that can be demonstrated from the use of the name by Matthew is, that it properly designated the nature and rank of the Lord Jesus. It was a pledge, then, that God was with his people, and the name designated by the prophet had a complete fulfillment in its use as applied to the Messiah. Whether the Messiah be regarded as himself a pledge and demonstration of the presence and protection of God, or whether the name be regarded as descriptive of his nature and dignity, yet there was an ‘appropriateness’ in applying it to him. It was fully expressive of the event of the incarnation....***

MINOR OPINIONS REGARDING WHO THE PROPHECY REFERS — “(1) The first opinion is that which supposes that by the **‘virgin’ the wife of Ahaz is referred to, and that by the child which should be born, the prophet refers to Hezekiah.** This is the opinion of the modern Jewish commentators generally.... Ahaz reigned in Jerusalem but sixteen years (2 Kings 17:2), and Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign (2 Kings 18:2), and of course was not less than nine years old when this prophecy was delivered. Kimchi and Abarbanel then resorted to the supposition that Ahaz had a second wife, and that this refers to a child that was to be born of her. This supposition cannot be proved to be false, though it is evidently a mere supposition. It has been adopted by the Jews, because they were pressed by the passage by the early Christians, as constituting an argument for the divinity of Christ. The ancient Jews, it is believed, referred it mainly to the Messiah. (2) Others have supposed, that the prophet designated some virgin who was then present when the king and Isaiah held their conference, and that the meaning is, **‘as surely as this virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, so surely shall the land be forsaken of its kings’....** (3) Others suppose that **the ‘virgin’ was not an actual, but only an ideal virgin.** Thus Michaelis expresses it: ‘By the time when one who is yet a virgin can bring forth (that is, in nine months), all will be happily changed, and the present impending danger so completely passed away, that if you were yourself to name the child, you would call him Immanuel’.... (4) Others suppose that **the ‘virgin’ was the prophet’s wife....** Against this supposition there is only one objection which has been urged that is of real force, and that is, that the prophet already had a son,

and of course his wife could not be spoken of as a virgin. But this objection is entirely removed by the supposition, which is by no means improbable, that the former wife of the prophet was dead, and that he was about to be united in marriage to another who was a virgin.

THREE MAJOR OPINIONS — “In regard to the prophecy itself, there have been three opinions:

“(1) That it refers ‘exclusively’ to some event in the time of the prophet; to the birth of a child then, either of the wife of Ahaz, or of the prophet, or of some other unmarried female. This would, of course, exclude all reference to the Messiah....

“(2) The second opinion is, that it has ‘exclusive and immediate’ reference to the Messiah; that it does not refer at all to any event which was ‘then’ to occur, and that to Ahaz the future birth of a Messiah from a virgin, was to be regarded as a pledge of the divine protection, and an assurance of the safety of Jerusalem....

“(3) The third opinion, therefore, is that which blends these two, and which regards the prophet as speaking of the birth of a child which would soon take place of someone who was then a virgin — an event which could be known only to God, and which would, therefore, constitute a sign, or demonstration to Ahaz of the truth of what Isaiah said; but that the prophet intentionally so used language which would also mark a more important event, and direct the minds of the king and people onward to the future birth of one who should more fully answer to all that is here said of the child that would be born, and to whom the name Immanuel would be more appropriately given. This, I shall endeavor to show, must be the correct interpretation. In exhibiting the reasons for this opinion, we may, FIRST, state the evidence that the prediction refers to some child that would be born ‘soon’ as a pledge that the land would be forsaken of its kings; and SECONDLY, the evidence that it refers also to the Messiah in a higher and fuller sense.

“I. EVIDENCE THAT THE PROPHECY REFERS TO SOME EVENT WHICH WAS SOON TO OCCUR — TO THE BIRTH OF A CHILD OF SOMEONE WHO WAS THEN A VIRGIN, OR UNMARRIED

“(1) **It is the ‘obvious’ interpretation.** It is that which would strike the great mass of people accustomed to interpret language on the principles of common sense. If the passage stood by itself; if the seventh and eighth chapters were all that we had; if there were no allusion to the passage in the New Testament; and if we were to sit down and merely look at the circumstances, and contemplate the narrative, the unhesitating opinion of the great mass of people would be, that it must have such a reference. This is a good rule of interpretation. That which strikes the mass of people; which appears to people of sound sense as the meaning of a passage on a simple perusal of it, is likely to be the true meaning of a writing.

“(2) **Such an interpretation is demanded by the circumstances of the case.** The immediate point of the inquiry was not about the ultimate and final safety of the kingdom — which would be demonstrated indeed by the announcement that the Messiah would appear — but it was about a present matter; about impending danger. An alliance was formed between Syria and Samaria. An invasion was threatened. The march of the allied armies had commenced. Jerusalem was in consternation, and Ahaz had gone forth to see if there were any means of defense. In this state of alarm, and at this juncture, Isaiah went to assure him

that there was no cause for fear. It was not to assure him that the nation should be ultimately and finally safe — which might be proved by the fact that the Messiah would come, and that, therefore, God would preserve the nation; but the pledge was, that he had no reason to fear this invasion, and that within a short space of time the land would ‘be forsaken of both its kings.’ *How could the fact that the Messiah would come more than seven hundred years afterward, prove this? Might not Jerusalem be taken and subdued, as it was afterward by the Chaldeans, and yet it be true that the Messiah would come, and that God would manifest himself as the protector of his people?* Though, therefore, the assurance that the Messiah would come would be a general proof and pledge that the nation would be preserved and ultimately safe, yet it would not be a pledge of the specific and immediate thing which occupied the attention of the prophet, and of Ahaz. It would not, therefore, be a ‘sign’ such as the prophet offered to give, or a proof of the fulfillment of the specific prediction under consideration. This argument I regard as unanswerable. It is so obvious, and so strong, that all the attempts to answer it, by those who suppose there was an immediate and exclusive reference to the Messiah, have been entire failures.

“(3) It is a circumstance of some importance that Isaiah regarded himself and his children as ‘signs’ to the people of his time; see Isa 8:18. In accordance with this view, it seems he had named one child SHEAR-JASHUB, Isa 7:3; and in accordance with the same view, he afterward named another MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ — both of which names are significant. This would seem to imply that he meant here to refer to a similar fact, and to the birth of a son that should be a sign also to the people of his time.

“(4) An unanswerable reason for thinking that it refers to some event which was soon to occur, and to the birth of a child before the land should be forsaken of the two kings, is the record contained in Isa 8:1-4. That record is evidently connected with this account, and is intended to be a public assurance of the fulfillment of what is here predicted respecting the deliverance of the land from the threatened invasion. In that passage, the prophet is directed to take a great roll (Isa 7:1), and make a record concerning the son that was to be born; he calls public witnesses, people of character and well-known reputation, in attestation of the transaction (Isa 7:2); he approaches the prophetess (Isa 7:3); and it is expressly declared (Isa 7:4) that before the child should have ‘knowledge to say, My father, and my mother,’ that is, be able to discern between good and evil (Isa 7:16), ‘the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria’ should be ‘taken away before the king of Assyria.’ This is so evidently a completion of the prophecy in Isaiah vii., and a solemn fulfilling of it in a manner that should be satisfactory to Ahaz and the people, that it is impossible, it seems to me, to regard it any otherwise than as a real transaction. Hengstenberg, and those who suppose the prophecy to refer immediately and exclusively to the Messiah, are obliged to maintain that that was a ‘symbolical transaction’ — an opinion which might, with the same propriety, be held of any historical statement in the Bible; since there is nowhere to be found a more simple and unvarnished account of mere matter of historical fact than that. The statement, therefore, in Isaiah 8, is conclusive demonstration, I think, that there was a reference in Isa 7:14-16, to a child of the prophet that would be soon born, and that would be a pledge of the divine protection, and a proof or sign to Ahaz that his land would be safe. It is no objection to this that Isaiah then had a son (Isa 7:3), and that, therefore, the mother of that son could not be a virgin. There is no improbability in the supposition that the mother of that son was deceased, and that Isaiah was about again to be married. Such an event is not so uncommon as to make it a matter of ridicule; or to render the supposition wholly incredible.

“Nor is it any objection that another name was given to the child that was born to Isaiah; Isa 8:1,3. Nothing was more common than to give two names to children. It might have been true that the name usually given to him was Maher-shalal-hash-baz; and still true that the circumstances of his birth were such an evidence of the divine protection, and such an emblem of the divine guardianship, as to make proper the name Immanuel. It may be observed, also, that on the supposition of the strict and exclusive Messianic interpretation, the same objection might be made, and the same difficulty would lie. It was no more true of Jesus of Nazareth than of the child of Isaiah, that he was commonly called Immanuel. He had another name also, and was called by that other name. Indeed, there is not the slightest evidence that the Lord Jesus was “ever” designated by the name Immanuel as a proper name. All that the passage means is, that such should be the circumstances of the birth of the child as to render the name Immanuel proper; not that it would be applied to him in fact as the usual appellation. Nor is it any objection to this view, that the mind of the prophet is evidently directed onward to the Messiah; and that the prophecy terminates (Isa 8:8: 9:1-7) with a reference to him. That this is so, I admit; but nothing is more common in Isaiah than for him to commence a prophecy with reference to some remarkable deliverance which was soon to occur, and to terminate it by a statement of events connected with a higher deliverance under the Messiah. By the laws of prophetic suggestion, the mind of the prophet seized upon resemblances and analogies; was carried on to future times, which were suggested by something that he was saying or contemplating as about to occur, until the mind was absorbed, and the primary object forgotten in the contemplation of the more remote and glorious event.

“II. EVIDENCE THAT THE PROPHECY REFERS TO THE MESSIAH

“(1) The passage in Matt1:22,23, is an evidence that he regarded this as having a reference to the Messiah, and that it had a complete fulfillment in him. This quotation of it also shows that that was the common interpretation of the passage in his time, or he would not thus have introduced it. *It cannot be proved, indeed, that Matthew means to affirm that this was the primary and original meaning of the prophecy, or that the prophet had a direct and exclusive reference to the Messiah; but it proves that in his apprehension the words had a fulness of meaning, and an adaptedness to the actual circumstances of the birth of the Messiah, which would accurately and appropriately express that event. The prophecy was not completely ‘fulfilled, filled up, fully and adequately met,’ until applied to the Messiah. That event was so remarkable; the birth of Jesus was so strictly of a virgin, and his nature so exalted, that it might be said to be a complete and entire fulfillment of it.* The language of Isaiah, indeed, was applicable to the event referred to immediately in the time of Ahaz, and expressed that with clearness; but it more appropriately and fully expressed the event referred to by Matthew, and thus shows that the prophet designedly made use of language which would be appropriate to a future and most glorious event.

“(2) An argument of no slight importance on this subject may be drawn from the fact, that this has been the common interpretation in the Christian church. I know that this argument is not conclusive; nor should it be pressed beyond its due and proper weight. It is of force only because the united and almost uniform impression of mankind, for many generations, in regard to the meaning of a written document, is not to be rejected without great and unanswerable arguments. I know that erroneous interpretations of many passages have prevailed in the church; and that the interpretation of many passages of Scripture which have prevailed from age to age, have been such as have been adapted to bring the

whole subject of scriptural exegesis into contempt. But we should be slow to reject that which has had in its favor the suffrages of the unlearned, as well as the learned, in the interpretation of the Bible. The interpretation which refers this passage to the Messiah has been the prevailing one in all ages. It was followed by all the fathers and other Christian expositors until the middle of the eighteenth century; and is the prevailing interpretation at the present time....

“(3) The reference to the Messiah in the prophecy accords with the ‘general strain and manner’ of Isaiah. It is in accordance with his custom, at the mention of some occurrence or deliverance which is soon to take place, to suffer the mind to fix ultimately on the more remote event of the ‘same general character,’ or lying, so to speak, ‘in the same range of vision’ and of thought. It is also the custom of Isaiah to hold up to prominent view the idea that the nation would not be ultimately destroyed until the great Deliverer should come; that it was safe amidst all revolutions; that vitality would remain like that of a tree in the depth of winter, when all the leaves are stripped off (Isa 6:13); and that all their enemies would be destroyed, and the true people of God be ultimately secure and safe under their great Deliverer. It is true, that this argument will not be very striking except to one who has attentively studied this prophecy; but it is believed, that no one can profoundly and carefully examine the manner of Isaiah, without being struck with it as a very important feature of his mode of communicating truth. In accordance with this, the prophecy before us means, that the nation was safe from this invasion. Ahaz feared the extinction of his kingdom, and the ‘permanent’ annexation of Jerusalem to Syria and Samaria. Isaiah told him that that could not occur; and proffered a demonstration, that in ‘a very few years’ the land would be forsaken of both its kings. ‘On another ground also it could not be.’ The people of God were safe. His kingdom could not be permanently destroyed. It must continue until the Messiah should come, and the eye of the prophet, in accordance with his usual custom, glanced to that future event, and he became “totally” absorbed in its contemplation, and the prophecy is finished (Isa 9:1-7) by a description of the characteristics of the light that he saw in future times rising in dark Galilee (Isa 9:1,2), and of the child that should be born of a virgin then.

“In accordance with the same view, we may remark, as Lowth has done, that to a people accustomed to look for a great Deliverer; that had fixed their hopes on one who was to sit on the throne of David, the ‘language’ which Isaiah used here would naturally suggest the idea of a Messiah. It was so animated, so ill adapted to describe his own son, and so suited to convey the idea of a most remarkable and unusual occurrence, that it could scarcely have been otherwise than that they should have thought of the Messiah. This is true in a special manner of the language in Isa 9:1-7.

“(4) An argument for the Messianic interpretation may be derived from the public expectation which was excited by some such prophecy as this. There is a striking similarity between it and one which is uttered by Micah, who was contemporary with Isaiah. Which was penned first it would not be easy to show; but they have internal evidence that they both had their origin in an expectation that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. In Mic 5:2,3, the following prediction occurs: *‘But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler over Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity. Therefore, will he give them up, until the time when she which travaileth hath brought forth.’* That this passage refers to the birth of the Messiah, is demonstrable from Matt 2:6.

Nothing can be clearer than that this is a prediction respecting the place of his birth. The Sanhedrim, when questioned by Herod respecting the place of his birth, answered without the slightest hesitation, and referred to this place in Micah for proof. The expression, '*she which travaileth*,' or, '*she that bears shall bear*', refers evidently to some prediction of such a birth; and the word '*she that bears*' seems to have been used somewhat in the sense of a proper name, to designate one who was well known, and of whom there had been a definite prediction. Rosenmuller remarks, 'She is not indeed expressly called a virgin, but that she is so is self-evident, since she shall bear the hero of divine origin (from everlasting), and consequently not begotten by a mortal. The predictions throw light on each other; Micah discloses the divine origin of the person predicted, Isaiah the wonderful manner of his birth.' In his first edition, Rosenmuller remarks on Mic 5:2: 'The phrase, "she who shall bear shall bear," denotes the "virgin" from whom, in a miraculous manner, the people of that time hoped that the Messiah would be born.'

"If Micah refers to a well-known existing prophecy, it must evidently be this in Isaiah, since no other similar prophecy occurs in the Old Testament; and if he wrote subsequently to Isaiah, the prediction in Micah must be regarded as a proof that this was the prevailing interpretation of his time. That this was the prevailing interpretation of those times, is confirmed by the traces of the belief which are to be found extensively in ancient nations, that some remarkable person would appear, who should be born in this manner. The idea of a Deliverer, to be born of a virgin, is one that somehow had obtained an extensive prevalence in Oriental nations, and traces of it may be found almost everywhere among them. In the Hindoo Mythology it is said, respecting Budhu that he was born of Maya, a goddess of the imagination — a virgin. Among the Chinese, there is an image of a beautiful woman with a child in her arms, which child, they say, was born of a virgin....

"(5) But the great and the unanswerable argument for the Messianic interpretation is derived from the conclusion of the prophecy in Isa 8:8, and especially in Isa 9:1-7. The prophecy in Isa 9:1-7 is evidently connected with this; and yet cannot be applied to a son of Isaiah, or to any other child that should be then born. If there is any passage in the Old Testament that "must" be applied to the Messiah, that is one; see the notes on the passage. And if so, it proves, that though the prophet at first had his eye on an event which was soon to occur, and which would be to Ahaz full demonstration that the land would be safe from the impending invasion, yet that he employed language which would describe also a future glorious event, and which would be a fuller demonstration that God would protect the people. He became fully absorbed in that event, and his language at last referred to that alone. The child then about to be born would, in most of the circumstances of his birth, be an apt emblem of him who should be born in future times, since both would be a demonstration of the divine power and protection. To both, the name Immanuel, though not the common name by which either would be designated, might be appropriately given. Both would be born of a virgin — the former, of one who was then a virgin, and the birth of whose child could be known only to God — the latter, of one who should be appropriately called "the" virgin, and who should remain so at the time of his birth. This seems to me to be the meaning of this difficult prophecy. The considerations in favor of referring it to the birth of a child in the time of Isaiah, and which should be a pledge to him of the safety of his kingdom "then," seem to me to be unanswerable. And the considerations in favor of an ultimate reference to the Messiah — a reference which becomes in the issue total and absorbing — are equally unanswerable; and if so, then the twofold reference is clear."

[Barnes, *Notes on OT*]

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:
The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a
son, and will call him Immanuel.”

— Isaiah 7:14 NIV