

The Virgin Birth

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This study explains how the Holy Spirit through the prophet Isaiah used the Hebrew word for “virgin” to fulfill the prophecies at two different times in history.

The **PROPHECY** of the Virgin Birth

Here is what the Book of Matthew says about the virgin birth:

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”

Now all this took place that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’” (Matthew 1:20-23)

Matthew is quoting from Isaiah 7:14. The prophet Isaiah delivered this message to King Ahaz: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.” (Isaiah 7:14-16).

This prophecy is a “double-reference” prophecy” with a dual fulfillment—a partial fulfillment for that present time and a complete fulfillment 750 years in the future.

- 1) **The first part of the fulfillment was a sign for King Ahaz and the entire house of Judah (v.13).** Ahaz was afraid that two kings, Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Samaria would invade and destroy Judah. God gave him a sign that a young woman (living at that time) would be a virgin when she got married, would have sexual relations with her husband, and then would have a baby. Before the child would be old enough to tell the difference between good and evil, the alliance of kings Rezin and Pekah would be destroyed. Within three years, this was fulfilled when Tiglath-Pileser, the king of the Assyrian empire, killed Rezin. Pekah was killed by Hoshea.
- 2) **The second part of the fulfillment was the sign of the virgin conceiving who would give birth to the Messiah.** This mother would be a virgin when she gave birth to the Son, who would be the Messiah. Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit and Joseph kept her a virgin until she gave birth to Jesus (Matthew 1:25). Matthew, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, explains that this was fulfillment of the prophecy from Isaiah 7:14.

The **PROBLEM** with the word “Virgin”

In Isaiah 7:14, the Hebrew word for virgin is *‘almah*, literally means “an unmarried woman of marriageable age.” The Old Testament never uses the word *‘almah* for a married person. A different Hebrew word, *bethulah*, means “a pure and unspotted virgin; a virgin just married.” Some people argue that if Isaiah meant a virgin birth, he would have used the word *bethulah* and not *‘almah*.

The question is why does Isaiah 7:14 use the word ‘almah instead of bethulah?

Remember, there are two fulfillments to this prophecy:

The first part was a young woman in Isaiah’s day who was a virgin when she got married and afterward had sexual relations with her husband. This is a non-supernatural conception.

The second part was for a young woman in the future who was a virgin of marriageable age and would not have sexual relations, but would conceive a Son through the Holy Spirit. This is a supernatural conception.

Isaiah did not use the word *bethulah* because both the ideas of virginity and marriageable age had to be combined in ONE WORD to meet the immediate historical situation of Isaiah's day AND the prophetic aspect centering in a virgin-born Messiah.

Between the third and second centuries B.C., the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek in a version called the Septuagint. When translators came to the word '*almah*, they translated it using the Greek word *parthenos* which can only mean "virgin." The translators, working two centuries before the birth of Christ, understood that this was a prediction of the virgin birth of the Messiah. Matthew 1:23 also uses the word *parthenos* when it says, "the virgin will be with child." This is proof that the inspired New Testament interprets Isaiah's prophecy as an actual virgin who would conceive, and that the child would not have a human father.

The PURPOSE of the Virgin Birth

There is much more to the Christmas story than a baby laying in a manger. Who was this baby? Why did He come to earth? Why was it necessary for Jesus to be born of a virgin? A supernatural person required a supernatural birth. Here are some reasons for the supernatural conception needed to take place.

Reason #1: To prepare a body so He could be sacrificed for the sins of the world.

When Jesus left heaven to come to earth, God the Father prepared a body for Him in the womb of Mary. Heb. 10:5 says, "Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me." This is a conversation between the Word (Jesus) and God (the Father) as He is coming into the world. He says that the Old Testament animal sacrifices were not sufficient, so God prepared a body for Jesus to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world. This body was carried inside the womb of the virgin Mary when she was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:30-35, Matt. 1:20-25).

Reason #2: To have pure blood to cleanse people from their sins.

The blood that flows in an unborn babies arteries and veins is not derived from the mother but is produced through the male sperm. The mother contributes no blood at all. It is only after the male element has entered the ovum that blood can develop. Since Jesus had no human father, God created the pure blood in His veins with the ability to cleanse us from all sin.

Hebrews 9:22 says, "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." God made from one blood all the nations of the earth (Acts 17:26 NKJV). Because sinful humanity has a poisoned bloodstream, the virgin birth was necessary to provide Him with pure blood. When Jesus died on the cross, He entered the holy place in Heaven with His own blood to obtain eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). It is only through His blood that we are cleansed of all sin (1 John 1:9).

Reason #3: To produce the Second Adam.

The New Testament refers to Jesus as the second Adam in Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Cor. 15:22, 45-47. The first Adam came from earth. The last Adam came from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). The first Adam brought sin into the world. The second Adam, Jesus, brought righteousness into the world (Rom. 5:18-19). The sin nature is passed down from generation to generation, but through the virgin birth, the sin nature was circumvented and allowed the Son of God to be born in the same innocence that Adam was created.

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