

THE VIRGIN

What I want to do at this time is to take a careful look at that prophecy and go to our text in Luke 1:26-38 and view the prophecy from the standpoint of Mary and then go to Matthew 1:18-25 and view the prophecy from the standpoint of Joseph.

Isaiah 7:14 reads as follows: **“Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.”** [all Scripture references are from the CSB (**Christian Standard Bible**) unless otherwise noted.] The word *sign*, while not always referring to a miracle, does so in this text as Ahaz the king is told to ask for a sign **“Ask for a sign from the LORD your God – it can be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven” (Isaiah 7:11)**. Ahaz refuses, so Isaiah said that the Lord Himself would give him a sign.

The difficulty with this prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 lies with the Revised Standard Version’s translation of the Hebrew word *almah* as **young woman**. The King James Version, the American Standard Version, The New American Standard Bible, The English Standard Version, the Modern Literal Version and the New International version all translate *almah* as *virgin*.

In addition to Isaiah 7:14, the Hebrew word *almah* is used in Genesis 24:43, Exodus 2:8, Psalms 68:25, Proverbs 30:19, and Song of Solomon 1:3 and 6:8. H. C. Leupold concluded that it **“cannot be denied that such a one is to be classified as a virgin”** (156). In his work *“The Virgin Birth of Christ”*, J. Gresham Machen indicated **“there is no place among the seven occurrences of *almah* in the Old Testament where the word is used of a woman who was not a virgin”** (288).

Who is the virgin mentioned here in Isaiah 7:14? In his commentary on Isaiah, Wayne Jackson lists the following possibilities:

Some have suggested she was the wife of Ahaz. But this is not possible since Abi, his wife (2 Kings 18:2), was already the mother of Hezekiah at this time. Others have opined that Isaiah's wife is in view; yet the prophet's wife had already given birth to a son (7:3), hence was not a virgin. The idea that the "**virgin**" was a personification of the house of Israel is a ridiculous attempt to escape the obvious import of the passage, The **double-fulfillment** theory, advocated by many, declares that the primary reference is to a girl of Isaiah's day (then a virgin, but later to marry, conceive, and bear a son), who serves as a *type* of the virgin Mary. Matthew, in the New Testament account (1:22), thus sees the virgin birth of Christ as a "**typological fulfillment**" of that unidentified Old Testament maiden. (21)

Even though some within the Lord's church hold to a double fulfillment view of this prophecy, I believe the evidence mitigates against such a view. Quoting Wayne Jackson again:

"First, if Matthew correctly applied Isaiah 7:14, then unquestionably a virgin birth was in the prophetic scope. It was a virgin who was to conceive; not a virgin who would become a non-virgin and then, by sexual intercourse, conceive. This would suggest that if Isaiah alluded to a girl of his own time, then history testified to two virgin births. If, on the other hand, Isaiah referred to a girl who was a virgin at the time of his prophecy, but would later marry and normally conceive a child, an antitypical interpretation regarding Mary could be made similarly, and the virgin birth of Christ denied."
(21)

Oswald T. Allis stated that **"if the birth of Immanuel in Isaiah's time was a perfectly natural one, this analogy would clearly favor the rejection of the virgin birth of Jesus"** (13).

Using Isaiah 7:14, Matthew writes, ***“Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated ‘God is with us’”*** (1:22-23). Matthew uses the Greek word ***Parthenos***, unquestionably denoting a virgin. He also uses an expression found ten times in his gospel, ***“that it might be fulfilled,”*** an expression found nowhere else in the New Testament. What we have here in Matthew is an inspired interpretation of an Old Testament prophecy. In the use of the Immanuel, we have set forth the dual nature of Christ. He is ***“God with us,”*** or the God-man of prophecy. Notice also that in Matthew 1:16, Matthew says, ***“And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”*** Matthew is careful to avoid the notion that Joseph was the biological father of Jesus. He does not say that Joseph ***“begat”*** Jesus as in the other cases in his genealogy (v. 16).

When Joseph found out that Mary his betrothed wife, was with child, he assumed that she had been guilty of sexual relations with another man and was about to put her away or divorce he secretly. But the angel informed Joseph saying, ***“... don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit”*** (Matthew 1:20). ***God is goo, I love you all. In Jesus name, amen and amen.***
Kevin J.