

The Church of the Servant King

Prophecy Series

(Proph14A_Prophecy in the Prophets_The Virgin Birth_Isa 7:14)

Introduction

Our prophecy series to date has consisted of 22 lessons. In these lessons, we have examined a variety of topics relating to messianic and eschatological prophecies recorded in Scripture. With one exception, the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34, all of these prophecies were given during a period of human history ranging from the Garden of Eden and the Fall to King David in approximately 1000 B.C. The one exception, the New Covenant, was one of the three amplifications of the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant was recorded by the prophet Jeremiah in the early 6th Century B.C. A brief overview of the messianic and eschatological prophecies that we have studied to date includes:

- ❑ Reasons for the study of prophecy
- ❑ The pre-historic backdrop for a study of prophecy
- ❑ The first messianic prophecy – Genesis 3:15
- ❑ God's covenant with Noah
- ❑ The eschatological covenants with Israel (Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, and New)
- ❑ Messianic and eschatological prophecies in the Pentateuch (Jacob's blessings in Genesis 49; Balaam's oracles; the 5 Cycles of Discipline)
- ❑ Prophecy in Job and the Psalms

In this study, we have seen the principle of progressive revelation demonstrated. Each prophecy provided more amplification and greater detail and built upon the prior prophecies. After David's prophecies in 1000 B.C., a Jew could have had an understanding of Israel's eschatological future that included the following concepts and promises:

- ❑ Israel was promised a land via God's covenant with Abraham, the borders of which were beyond any that Israel had seen in her history to date (Ge 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17 cf. Deut 30:1-10)
- ❑ A Deliverer of Israel would come to rule over Israel who would descend from David and be God's own Son (2 Sam 7:13 cf. Psa 2:7-12; 110:1). There would be something unique about this Deliverer's birth. The phrase "her Seed" in this Genesis 3:15 is a reference to the Messiah and the term "seed" is used throughout the Bible as a messianic term (e.g. Isa 6:13 cf. 11:1). This man would be the key to the restoration of man and the earth and would be the subject of many prophecies to follow which would expand upon this initial prophecy and key component of God's strategy. However, at the time that the Genesis 3:15 prophecy was given, its full scope and impact was not realized by man even though Satan, who had knowledge of pre-historic events unknown to man, would have realized its significance.
- ❑ Israel would be placed in a position of prominence among the nations during this Deliverer's reign (Num 24:18-19; Deut 30:1-10; Psa 2; 22:22-31; 87; 110).
- ❑ The reign and kingdom would be forever (2 Sam 7:13, 16)
- ❑ The Deliverer would suffer and die in order to redeem man and propitiate the Father (Ge 3:15 cf. Job 19:25-27). It is interesting to note that Job believed that in the end God would stand upon the earth and Job would be vindicated among the righteous. Not only would people read of his righteousness, but they would hear it from God Himself. It is indeed remarkable that Job, living in a time prior to written Scripture, had a firm belief consistent with later revelation regarding the fact that the Redeemer (Ge 3:15) would stand upon the earth. See also Job 23:10-11. Job also manifests an early belief in the resurrection.

Some of the things that a Jew could not have understood about the Deliverer or His Kingdom prior to 1000 B.C. would include:

- ❑ The fact that His reign on earth would be limited to 1000 years (Re 20:6)
- ❑ The timing of His coming – prophecy later given to the prophet Daniel (Dan 9:24-27)
- ❑ The city in which He would be born (Mic 5:2)
- ❑ Exactly how He would die and at whose hands
- ❑ The fact that He would come as a baby born of a virgin

The Chronological Order of Subsequent Prophecies

As we approach this study of messianic and eschatological prophecies in the Hebrew prophets, it will be important to obtain an overview of the chronology of the books of the Old Testament that we will examine in part. As we examine prophecies from each prophet, we will review in greater detail the historical context and setting of that particular book. However, for now, here is a brief overview of the chronology in which the Hebrew writers wrote. The order within a particular century does not necessarily imply that that is the order in which the books were written in that century. In some cases, we don't necessarily know for sure and there is debate as to the exact dates of a prophet's ministry. In some cases, the ministries of some of the prophets overlapped. We'll develop a more exact chronology as the series progresses and discuss in greater detail the issues of dates. Nevertheless, here is one chronology.¹

<u>Century/Time Frame</u>	<u>Book</u>
9 th to 8 th Century B.C.	Obadiah Joel Jonah Amos Hosea
8 th to 7 th Century B.C.	Isaiah Micah Nahum Zephaniah
7 th to 6 th Century B.C.	Jeremiah Habakkuk
6 th Century B.C.	Ezekiel Daniel Haggai Zechariah
5 th Century B.C.	Ezra * Malachi Nehemiah *

* These are historical versus prophetic books for the most part.

The Virgin Birth of the Messiah From an 8th to 7th Century Prophet

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

¹ For this overview, I used a chronology contained in the appendix to Charles Ryrie's, *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, 1978), 1985. Other chronologies may reflect a different order.

Setting – Isaiah lived and prophesied to the Israelites of the eighth century and to Judah. Similar to Micah, Isaiah prophesied that judgment would soon fall upon Israel and eventually Judah for their failure to adhere to the Mosaic Covenant. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was already under pressure from the Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser III (745 to 727 B.C.). In 722 B.C., Sargon II conquered the Northern Kingdom, but due to troubles on other fronts, never conquered Jerusalem. In chapters 1-39, Isaiah is delivering his message of condemnation to the eighth-century Israelites.

During the latter half of the 8th Century B.C., Judah was headed in the same spiritual direction as its northern counterpart, Israel. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, suffered the effects of the 5th cycle of discipline (Lev 26) in 722-721 B.C.² King Ahaz manifest his lack of trust in the Lord and had begun to look to Assyria for assistance and deliverance. Isaiah had told him that the Northern Kingdom would fall at the hands of the Assyrians (8:3-4). Hezekiah, Ahaz's God-fearing son, instituted spiritual reforms but also sought the help of the Egyptians. Egypt fell before Sennacherib of Assyria, and only by God's intervention was Judah saved from the same fate (37:36-37).

In Isaiah chapters 7 through 12, Isaiah utters a series of prophecies that are related specifically to the Syro-Ephraimite wars in which Judah was being invaded by a coalition of the Syrians and the Ephraimites, a name that referred to their Jewish brothers in Israel. The king of Judah at the time was Ahaz (ca. 731 B.C.).

The Damascus-Samaritan (Syria and Ephraim) alliance led by Rezin and Pekah was formed to confront an anticipated conquest by Assyria. This alliance was a threat to Judah, Philistia, and Edom because they didn't join. This Syro-Ephraimite confederation laid siege to Jerusalem and carried off prisoners & booty (2 Chron. 28:5; 2 Kings 16:5). Ahaz appealed to Assyria (2 Kings 16:7-9) for protection and was forced to pay tribute with gold from the Temple.

Hezekiah was co-regent with Ahaz beginning in ca. 729 B.C. Hezekiah severed ties with Assyria and pledged loyalty to Yahweh alone. Judah experienced no retribution from Sargon. Hezekiah led the nation in spiritual revival which included: 1) reopening the temple (1 Chron. 29:3); 2) observation of passover re-established (2 Chron. 30:1-9); 3) intercession (2 Chron. 30:18-19); and 4) removed pagan symbols (2 Kings 18:3-4; 2 Chron. 31:1). Judah's repentance resulted in a stay of judgment until the Babylonian siege and captivity in 586 B.C.

The Prophecy – The question that surrounds Isaiah 7:14 is how such a prophecy could have been a sign to King Ahaz that Israel (sometimes referred to as Samaria or Ephraim) and Syria (sometimes referred to as Damascus) would be destroyed. Ahaz is so arrogant that he refuses to comply and ask for a sign as directed by the Lord.

Isaiah then turns from King Ahaz and addresses the "house of David" or Judah. Isaiah says that the sign will be a virgin will conceive and bear a son by the name Immanuel.

How could this be a sign to Ahaz if it is a prophecy regarding the virgin birth of Christ some 700 plus years later? Does "virgin" really mean "virgin?"

The Hebrew word translated "virgin" in this passage means a young woman of marriageable age or it can mean a virgin. Facts that support the translation of this word as a virgin include:

- ❑ In the Hebrew, the word "virgin" is accompanied by the article, thus "the virgin." (DISTANT)
- ❑ The 2nd Century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible translates the Hebrew word with the Greek word *parthenos* which means a virgin. (DISTANT)
- ❑ Many have identified Isaiah's wife as the prophetess in 8:3 to be "the virgin." (IMMEDIATE)

² For a more in-depth discussion of the subject of the cycles of discipline as they pertain to Israel and Judah, see the lesson in this series – "*Proph12_The 5 Cycles of Discipline_Lev26.*"

- ❑ Isaiah 8:1, 3, & 4 which describes the relationship between Isaiah's son's name and the historical events surrounding Ahaz seems to bear a direct relationship to the prophecy relating to a virgin in 7:14-17. (IMMEDIATE)
- ❑ Isaiah's son's name was Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz and means "speed the spoil, hasten the booty." The prophecy in 7:15 that he would eat curds and honey (verses bread and wine from cultivated lands) represented the simple diet of Judah after the Assyrian invasion. There was no cultivated land and the diet was associated with hard times. (IMMEDIATE)
- ❑ Isaiah called his children "signs" in 8:18. (IMMEDIATE)
- ❑ This description doesn't match the description of the same child in 9:6 Who is called Wonderful, Counselor, and Prince of Peace. (DISTANT)

This is a case of dual fulfillment in Scripture which is very common in the Old Testament. The prophecy would have one level of fulfillment in the immediate future, and a final fulfillment many years later. In this case, the immediate fulfillment was **a** fulfillment and not **the** ultimate fulfillment. Isaiah's son was a sign to Ahaz in that he symbolized judgment upon Israel and Syria. The ultimate fulfillment is found in Jesus Who was born of a virgin and Who is to ultimately deliver Judah (as well as all Israel) from all enemies and establish His reign of peace at His Second Advent.

Application – Just as this prophecy finds historical fulfillment in the virgin birth of Christ, we can take comfort knowing that Jesus is the ultimate victor at the 2nd Advent no matter how much evil we see today. Why should it be a sensational prophecy for a man to be born of a woman unless it was miraculous, i.e. the woman was actually a virgin?

Related Passages –

Matthew 1:22-23

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Luke 1:31-32

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.