

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 7:1-16, IMMANUEL

The book of Isaiah now begins to present details concerning the history of the nation during the time that Isaiah was ministering in Judah interspersed with prophetic revelation and other Scriptures presenting theological truths, the Kingdom and the Messiah being of particular note. As we move forward through the book, we have to be conscious of the context in order to understand what is being revealed in each particular pericope.

There is some question about the timing of the events described here. Aram and Israel first attacked Judah while Jotham was king (2 Kings 15:37), but it is widely assumed that Ahaz was co-regent with his father for a few years which means their rule overlapped. In this attack, Judah suffered serious damage and people were taken captive along with a great deal of spoil. There is some question about whether Isaiah's prophecy was given before or after the timing of Isaiah 7:1, predicting the second battle in this war, but I think there is no question it was before. 2 Kings 16:5 suggests an imminent second attack on Judah by Israel and Syria while Ahaz was king and that is the subject of Isaiah's prophecy. This caused Ahaz, quite unwisely and contrary to God's commands, to seek an alliance with Assyria for protection.

This chapter begins with a plan for Israel, allied with Aram (Syria), to force Ahaz to join them in an alliance opposed to Assyria. At that time, Assyria was attacking other nations in the area and Aram and Israel were worried, with just cause, that they were going to suffer the same fate. Therefore, they wanted Judah to join them in an alliance opposing Assyria. The Assyrian army was active in Philistia to the south of Judah and Tyre to the north. If Ahaz refused to join them, they planned to subjugate Judah by means of military force and install their own king to replace him. The subsequent warfare is known as the Syro-Ephraimite War (734-732 B.C.), and the Davidic king at that time was Ahaz.

Ahaz was one of Judah's wicked kings (735-715 B.C.) following his father Jotham and grandfather Uzziah, who are both considered to be faithful kings of Judah. He even sacrificed one of his sons in the fire which would have been either to Molech or Chemosh. The Scriptures picture him in spiritual alignment with the kings of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) rather than with the kings of Judah, which is not a favorable picture because all of Israel's kings were unfaithful. He was responsible for reintroducing pagan worship practices in Judah on a widespread basis.

2 Kings 16:1-4 <sup>1</sup>In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. <sup>2</sup>Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David *had done*. <sup>3</sup>But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the sons of Israel. <sup>4</sup>He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

Isaiah 7:1 introduced the second phase of the Syro-Ephraimite war.

Isaiah 7:1 <sup>1</sup>Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it (cf. 2 Kings 16:5).

One of the reasons God allowed this war to take place was due to the sin of Ahaz for being a pagan, unfaithful king and for leading the Israelites into paganism. It resulted in a lot of damage done to Judah even though Jerusalem was not conquered by Rezin and Pekah during that war.

2 Chronicles 28:5–9 <sup>5</sup>Wherefore, the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Aram; and they defeated him and carried away from him a great number of captives and brought *them* to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who inflicted him with heavy casualties. <sup>6</sup>For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah 120,000 in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. <sup>7</sup>And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son and Azrikam the ruler of the house and Elkanah the second to the king. <sup>8</sup>The sons of Israel carried away captive of their brethren 200,000 women, sons and daughters; and they took also a great deal of spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. <sup>9</sup>But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded; and he went out to meet the army which came to Samaria and said to them, "Behold, because the LORD, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, He has delivered them into your hand, and you have slain them in a rage *which* has even reached heaven (cf. 2 Kings 16:5).

The prophet Oded told the men of Israel that, even though they had been God's instrument of judgment on Judah, they would themselves incur God's judgment for taking their fellow Jews captive as slaves. Shamed, they took care of the Judean captives and released them back into Judah (see 2 Chron. 28:1-15 for the complete account).

When this war began to take shape, Ahaz and the citizens of Judah were terribly afraid. This fear was not unjustified. Ahaz had reason to fear because he would be dethroned, but even worse, and beyond the comprehension of the unfaithful king, the Davidic throne would have prematurely ceased to exist apart from God's plan for the Davidic dynasty. The people had reason to fear because they knew the fate of conquered people in that time and, as noted in 2 Chronicles 28:6, 8, that fate already befell some of them even short of the total capitulation of Judah and Jerusalem. The faithless, evil Baal worship of Israel would have been imposed on Judah, who, while themselves unfaithful, at least at times had faithful kings that brought them back to Yahweh. Israel never had a faithful king over the course of the Northern Kingdom's existence.

Isaiah 7:2 <sup>2</sup>When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.

Whatever happened after the first attack and the release of the prisoners of war, Aram decided to stay in Israel, here called Ephraim which, as the primary tribe, is used to represent the whole nation. This situation caused a great deal of fear in Judah. They obviously knew they were not out of harm's way concerning this military alliance between Israel and Aram. This state of fear set up Isaiah's assignment from God to go to Ahaz and reveal to him the Word of the Lord.

Isaiah 7:3 <sup>3</sup>Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub [שְׁאָר־יָשׁוּב], at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's [כְּבֵס] field,

This was obviously a divine appointment. Isaiah had no idea Ahaz was going to be in that particular place at that time, but God knew, and He sent the prophet to meet the king at that place when the king was going to be present. Isaiah was sent to console the frightened king with a message of reassurance and to provide him with direction for his response to the danger facing him. Whether or not he was going to listen was a separate issue.

There is no agreement on exactly where this pool was located, but it served as a laundry where the fullers laundered clothing. Fuller, כְּבֵס, means to tread, the common method of laundering clothing, to wash, and to launder; it refers to cleaning with a cleansing agent. This is probably the same place where the Assyrian Rabshakeh stood to challenge the Israelites in Jerusalem to surrender (Is. 36:2). Ahaz was likely surveying the area for defensive purposes in preparation for the siege he knew was coming. No city can hold out for long against a siege if there is no drinking water available to the people under siege. That was the impetus for the later construction of Hezekiah's tunnel (2 Kings 20:20).

The Davidic Covenant was also at stake here; it was not in God's timing for the Davidic dynasty to enter into hiatus at that time. Israel's kings were not of the house of David; therefore, if and when they assumed the throne in Judah, the Davidic dynasty would have ended. It would end at some point in the future, but it would happen at the end of Zedekiah's reign in 586 B.C. when Babylon conquered Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36:11-21).

Shear-jashub, [שְׁאָר־יָשׁוּב], means a "remnant shall return." This name represents a warning as well as reassurance. The warning was that judgment was going to fall that included exile from the land. The reassurance was that a remnant of Jews would return to the land. That didn't happen at that time; Judah was not conquered and Ahaz died as the king of Judah. We know that there is always a faithful remnant of believing Jews. After the Babylonian captivity a number of Jews returned to the land, but not all were the remnant because not all were believers. The prophecy represented by this name will not be completely fulfilled until the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom (Mt. 24:31).

Matthew 24:31 <sup>31</sup>"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

The concept of the remnant contained in this boy's name is a reminder of the remnant earlier identified in Isaiah 6:13.

Through Isaiah, the Lord gave Ahaz four commands. These commands involved trusting in God for salvation (in the form of deliverance from harm) rather than trusting in an evil entity like Assyria for protection.

Isaiah 7:4 <sup>4</sup>and say to him, 'Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands [עֲשֵׂן אֹדֶן], on account of the fierce anger [חֲרֵי אֶרֶץ] of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.

The four commands are to take care, be calm, have no fear, and do not be fainthearted. God was telling this king to do what Israel was always supposed to do, be unafraid and trust in their God. He was not to take matters into his own hands by making an alliance with a pagan nation. The problem was the Israelites as a nation never completely trusted in their God and nearly always placed their faith in something other than Yahweh. That started early in their history, and this king was going to prove to be no exception to their unfaithful, doubting hearts. There were individual exceptions to that lack of trust, of course, Moses, King David, and the prophets being examples of faithful, trusting servants of God, but as a nation, they placed their trust in other people and nations rather than in Yahweh.

Deuteronomy 1:29–33 <sup>29</sup>"Then I said to you, 'Do not be shocked, nor fear them. <sup>30</sup>'The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, <sup>31</sup>and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place.' <sup>32</sup>"But for all this, you did not trust the LORD your God, <sup>33</sup>who goes before you on *your* way, to seek out a place for you to encamp, in fire by night and cloud by day, to show you the way in which you should go.

Later in Isaiah, the prophet revealed that one day Israel, as a nation, would trust in the Lord, but that day will not come until the Lord establishes the Messianic Kingdom.

Isaiah 12:2 <sup>2</sup>"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust [בְּיְהוָה] and not be afraid; For the LORD GOD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation."

Isaiah 26:4 <sup>4</sup>"Trust [בְּיְהוָה] in the LORD forever, For in GOD the LORD, we *have* an everlasting Rock.

Trust, בְּיְהוָה, means to trust or to be confident; it refers to having strong confidence or reliance upon someone or something. This is a concept Israel has never been able to fully embrace—but they will. In terms of the Scripture in question, Ahaz will fail to trust the Lord as well.

Isaiah counseled the king to trust in the Lord without making any rash or hasty decisions based on fear or pressure from his advisors and the frightened citizens of Judah. He could make better decisions if he remained calm. If he trusted in God, his fear would subside and he would not lose heart before the battle even began.

Part of the problem here was that the Israelites had forgotten, even rejected, Yahweh and the Scriptures. Ahaz was one of the particularly wicked kings of Judah, and he lacked the knowledge that would have bolstered his confidence in the face of this danger. He wanted to rely on himself and on his pagan gods, but knowledge, wisdom, and instruction originate in the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7), and Ahaz had no fear of the Lord.

Rezin and Pekah were sarcastically called “smoldering firebrands,” עֵשֶׂן אֵוֶד, meaning barely burning sticks that were about to burn out. Their strength was spent; there was nothing to fear from them. This metaphor represents pieces of wood that had once been on fire, but are now simply charred and smoldering pieces of wood almost completely burned up.

These kings were exceedingly angry, described as fierce anger, חֲרִי אָף, because Judah refused to join their military alliance. Their intent was to remove Ahaz from the throne, install their own puppet king, and force the citizens of Judah into their armies.

By referring to Pekah not by name but as the “son of Remaliah,” Isaiah is showing him no respect indicating that he was an insignificant king in the sight of God.

The plan was for Aram and Ephraim to conquer Judah and install a puppet king who would be allied with them and do their bidding.

Isaiah 7:5–6 <sup>5</sup>Because Aram, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil [יֹעֵץ רָעָה] against you, saying, <sup>6</sup>“Let us go up against Judah and terrorize [קִוֵּץ] it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls and set up the son of Tabeel [טַבְּאֵל] as king in the midst of it,”

Planned evil, יֹעֵץ רָעָה, means these kings deliberately plotted to do something bad, evil, wicked, and no good to Judah and her king; the words refer to an event resulting in calamity producing a great loss and misfortune. They were intent on imposing their will on Judah and Jerusalem without regard for the devastating consequences to the people of Judah.

Terrorize, קִוֵּץ, means to tear apart, referring to attacking a place which is then conceived of as tearing it apart. Most Bibles use the word “terrorize” or some variation that means the same thing, but the Lexham Bible translates this as “to tear apart” which is the literal translation, although the argument may be made that tearing a nation apart is akin to terrorizing it. Isaiah 7:6 <sup>6</sup>Let us go up against Judah and let us tear her apart ... (LEB). In English, to terrorize a nation is to create and maintain a state of extreme fear and distress without necessarily conquering it although that might be the end game. It relates to a series of seemingly random, yet connected to a group, violent attacks taking on various forms, but in this case, the desired result was to tear the nation apart so that it could be quickly and easily conquered. Given the fact that Aram and Ephraim wanted Judah to join them in a military alliance for protection from Assyria, one has to wonder how tearing Judah apart was going to advance the security

concerns of those two nations. Nevertheless, that was the plan. This is reminiscent of the saying that came out of Viet Nam: "We had to destroy the village in order to save it!"

By referring to the prospective puppet king as the son of Tabeel, טַבְּעָל, without mentioning his name is a sign of disrespect. This man's name and his origins and relationship with Aram and/or Ephraim remain unknown; those things are never revealed in the Scriptures. Some extrabiblical sources indicate that the Tabeel family was a prominent family in Gilead, Judah [see Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible*, vol. IV: *Isaiah-Daniel*, 37, n. 103, citing Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, 370]. If true, the *ṭāb·'āl* family must have supported Judah joining the Aram/Israel alliance as protection from the encroachment of Assyria.

Through Isaiah, God responded to this plot and He made it clear to Ahaz that he had nothing to fear. In fact, Ephraim itself was destined for destruction. It wasn't that Ahaz, from a strictly human viewpoint, had nothing to fear because he did have reasonable cause for concern, but what he also had was the Creator God of Israel who was not going to allow the nation to be destroyed at that time.

Isaiah 7:7-9 <sup>7</sup>thus says the Lord GOD [אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה]: "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass. <sup>8</sup>"For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin (now within another 65 years [שְׁשִׁים וָחֲמִשָּׁה] Ephraim will be shattered, so *that it is* no longer a people), <sup>9</sup>and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not believe, you surely shall not last.'""

God is absolutely emphatic: "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass." The LORD God, אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה, emphasizes the sovereignty and omnipotence of God who alone controls the destiny of nations and world history, and who is entirely capable of stopping these "smoking firebrands" and thereby preserving Judah and Jerusalem. For the time being, Aram and Ephraim and their leaders would continue as they were without the annexation of Judah, although both would be conquered by Assyria in a few years.

When God said Ephraim would cease to exist in 65 years, He meant it. Here is the timeline:

734 B.C. Isaiah met Ahaz (Is. 7:3).

732 B.C. Damascus was captured and Rezin killed (2 Kings 16:9)

722 B.C. Samaria was captured and many people taken into captivity [by Assyria] (2 Kings 17:4-6)

669 B. C. Esar-haddon destroyed the Northern Kingdom, Israel, as a nation and took the ten tribes into exile. He then resettled Israel with other people from various parts of the Assyrian empire who became the people we know as Samaritans when they cohabitated with the few Jews left (2 Kings 17:22-24).

[Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 147-148]

This is precisely 65 years; however, other sources claim the exact date of Israel's destruction is unknown [H. G. Anderson, s.v. "Assyria," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 1, 1:378]. The inspired text records 65 years [שְׁשִׁים וָחֲמִשָּׁה,

literally sixty and five] which we have every reason to believe is an accurate rendering of the prophecy making Buksbazen's calculations correct. Young also presented a plausible and corresponding timeline that confirms exactly 65 years [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 1, 1:275-276].

If Ahaz and the other leaders of Judah would only believe, they would last as a nation. God did bless them by preventing their destruction at the hands of Aram and Ephraim and, later, by Assyria. But Ahaz, along with much of the leadership, was an unbeliever, and Judah would eventually be destroyed by Babylon as God's judgment on her unbelief just as the Northern Kingdom was destroyed.

Yahweh then attempted to move Ahaz from his position of unbelief to one of belief.

Isaiah 7:10–11 <sup>10</sup>Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup>“Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make *it* deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”

The connection between Yahweh and the prophet is noteworthy. The Lord spoke to the king through the prophet, but the relationship between them is such that it can be said that the Lord was speaking directly to the king. The prophet's words were God's words. Compare this to verse 13 where Isaiah is again speaking to Ahaz, but it is still the revelation of God being spoken.

In terms of application, beware those who proudly call themselves prophets (and apostles) today. God has spoken through His Word, He is speaking through His Word today, and He is no longer speaking directly to people through intermediaries called prophets (and apostles) who have received a direct word from God. Those who claim to be receiving new revelation directly from God are deceiving people. As the Word of God is taught to people by those who are gifted and trained to teach, God is speaking to people through the Word of God. Today, some people call those who proclaim the Word of God prophets in the sense they are faithful truth-tellers concerning the Word of God, but “teacher” is a better identifying term to use.

The use of the word “again” in verse 10 suggests there is the possibility of a break between the revelation in verses 1-9 and 10-16.

Ahaz, the unbelieving king, was offered a sign by God, probably in an attempt to bring him to faith. This was a command because “ask” is in the imperative form; it was not a request. God was going to show this faithless king His power. Whatever the king asked, God was going to demonstrate to the king that He, God, had the power to do it. Signs are meant to authenticate the message and the messenger. Yahweh provided the message, Isaiah preached the message, and God was going to confirm it by means of a sign. The sign would show the king that God would do whatever He said He would do, because it was in His power to do it. Even this unbelieving, rebellious king would have had to acknowledge the power and the ability of God, but whether he accepted it or not in terms of belief is another issue. A rebellious soul is stubborn, however, and the king did not want to be exposed to the power of God. He wanted to do things his way, which, subsequent events would prove, was the wrong way. He approached his

leadership duties from a human perspective instead of from the perspective of the God of Israel.

As deep as Sheol or as high as heaven is a way of saying that anything Ahaz could possibly have asked for was not beyond the capabilities of the Creator God of the universe to accomplish.

Yahweh was, and still is, the God of Israel, of the Davidic kings, and of the unconditional covenants made with Israel whether they accepted Him or not. He was the God of the unbelieving Ahaz whether he accepted the Lord or not. If Ahaz had requested a sign from God, it would have exhibited a sense of acknowledgement of the attributes of God, which he, as an unbeliever, did not acknowledge. God, knowing that, commanded Ahaz to ask for a sign, any sign because nothing is too difficult for God to do.

Ahaz rebelliously refused to ask God for a sign.

Isaiah 7:12 <sup>12</sup>But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test [נִסֶּה] the LORD!"

Test, נִסֶּה, means to test, to try, to prove; it has the sense of putting to the test in order to ascertain the nature of something including imperfections, faults, or other qualities [good or bad].

Ahaz, masquerading as a pious Israelite, refused to ask for a sign saying he did not want to put the Lord to the test. The king wanted to appear as a man of great faith when he actually had no faith. Remember, God wasn't asking; God was commanding, but the king refused. Ahaz was determined to make an alliance with Assyria for protection and he didn't want God interfering in what he thought was his business. He thought he had all the answers and was therefore self-sufficient. He didn't realize his need.

It was, in fact prohibited to put God to the test; Israel had a history of doing that.

Deuteronomy 6:16 <sup>16</sup>"You shall not put the LORD your God to the test [נִסֶּה], as you tested *Him* at Massah.

The problem for Ahaz in this situation was, while it was prohibited to test God on one's own authority, it was not prohibited to obey a command from God on His authority, which, in this case, was to specify a sign for God to perform in his sight. Not to ask for a sign was, in this specific situation, disobedience. The king was not seriously concerned about the prohibition on testing God; he didn't want anything to do with God. He used his refusal to test God as an excuse to go his own way.

Because Ahaz refused to specify a sign, the Lord would give him a sign.

Isaiah 7:13–14 <sup>13</sup>Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? <sup>14</sup>"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, ♀ [the] virgin



[הַעֲלֵמָה] will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel [עִמָּנוּ אֵל].

The Lord resumed speaking through the prophet who challenged not just Ahaz for trying the patience of God, but he challenged the entire royal line, of which Ahaz was only the current representative, for trying the patience of God. This was a reference to the entire Davidic dynasty which had proven over the years to be unfaithful more often than it had been faithful. The words involved here are plural referring to the Davidic dynasty in total and not simply to Ahaz. At that point in history, the Davidic throne was in jeopardy of being lost under the reign of Ahaz, but it was not God's intention that the line should end at that point in history.

The context here deals with a sign which is to the house of David and not to Ahaz alone. The sign was going to be a virgin birth which was a reference to the Messiah who would be the culmination of the Davidic dynasty and therefore the preservation of King David's line in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. At some point, the Davidic line of kings was going to end and only God was going to be able to restore it. Restoration would begin to take place with the birth of Immanuel.

This is an amplification of the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 concerning the seed of the woman. It is only by means of the virgin birth that the seed of the woman can properly be understood.

Genesis 3:15 <sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

Confirmation that this prophecy was fulfilled in Mary and her son Jesus is found in Matthew. This is extremely important in terms of understanding Isaiah's prophecy.

Matthew 1:22–23 <sup>22</sup>Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>"BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN [παρθένης] SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

In the New Testament, the Jewish authors used the Old Testament in four ways. The reference to Isaiah 7:14 by Matthew is an example of a literal Old Testament prophecy being literally fulfilled in the New Testament. "This is a quotation of Isaiah 7:14. The context of Isaiah 7:14 is predicting that when the Messiah is born, He will be born of a virgin. That is the *literal* meaning of Isaiah 7:14. In the New Testament, there is a *literal* fulfillment of the *literal* prophecy, and so the passage is quoted by the New Testament" [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology*, 146]. In Rabbinic hermeneutics, which the New Testament authors would have known, this is referred to as "*Pshat*, meaning 'simple'" [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of the Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, vol. 1, 1:13].

There is much controversy over whether the Hebrew word עֲלֵמָה means "virgin" or "young woman." Among the Bible translations I routinely examine, the word is translated

“young woman” in only three of them: the TANAKH, the RSV, and the NET Bible. The TANAKH, being a Jewish publication, is obviously invested in denying the virgin birth of Jesus; therefore, it is not surprising they use “young woman.” The word is never used to refer to a married woman. It is only in modern times that this word has been understood as meaning something other than a virgin.

Rashi (1040-1105) was a rabbi of the Middle Ages who was vehemently opposed to any interpretation of the Old Testament that even suggested Christianity. Nevertheless, he interpreted this verse as a reference to the Messiah and a virgin birth. “Behold the almah shall conceive and bare a son and shall call his name Immanuel. This means that our Creator shall be with us. And this is the sign: the one who will conceive is a girl, who never in her life has had intercourse with any man. Upon this one shall the Holy Spirit have power” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 150, quoting Rashi, Mikraoth Gedoloth on Isaiah 7:14]. Rashi's interpretation of Isaiah is correct, but he would never admit that it applied to Mary and Jesus. In Hebrew, בְּתוּלָה is a word translated virgin, but it was also used, in some circumstances, to refer to a married woman which explains the use of עַלְמָה instead. In modern Hebrew, if not earlier, בְּתוּלָה is considered to be a synonym for עַלְמָה [Efros, Kaufman, and Silk, Tel-Aviv, *English-Hebrew Dictionary*].

Virgin, עַלְמָה, means a maiden, a young woman, a girl, or a virgin. It refers to a young woman in a state of virginity, a marriageable girl, or a young woman. The word is not a technical term for virginity, but refers to a young woman whose personal characteristics include virginity. The word is not used to identify a young woman who is not a virgin. Whenever the word is used in the Old Testament, it refers to a virgin, one who is not sexually active, or it is used in an indeterminate sense, that is, in a context that does not involve the sexual experience of the young woman in question.

The Septuagint translates this word by use of the Greek word παρθένος which refers to a virgin or to a maiden who has not known a man.

Furthermore, this word was used in conjunction with the definite article, that is, a specific virgin was the subject and not just any virgin. That virgin was specifically identified by Matthew as Mary (Mt. 1:18-25). The use of the indefinite article “a” by the NASB is not a faithful rendering of the text; the definite article, “the,” is the correct rendering which is in the TANAKH, Septuagint, NKJV, HCSB, ESV, and the LEB. The literal rendering of the text reads, הַעַלְמָה, the virgin.

Immanuel, עִמָּנוּ אֵל, literally reads “with us, God” which is obviously a fitting name for the God-man who dwelt among men.

The reason for God's command to Isaiah to take his son with him when he sought out the king was revealed. There is some disagreement about whether verse 15 refers to the Messiah or to Shear-jashub.

Isaiah 7:15 <sup>15</sup>“He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.

Those who believe it refers to Messiah understand verses 7:20-22 to refer to a period of oppression which coincides with the Roman occupation of Israel at the time of Messiah's birth indicating an application to the Messiah [Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* 156]. This is the most common explanation. I'm not convinced this can possibly refer to the time of the Messiah's birth, because the context of verses 20-22 refers to the Assyrian invasion of Judah when Hezekiah was king. Agriculture was not decimated in Israel during the time of the Lord's birth. There had been a long period of subjugation to first Greece and then Rome, but the land was not devastated at the time of the Lord's birth. Food other than curds and honey was available for consumption. Some of his disciples were fishermen, and there were sheep and cattle readily available for Temple sacrifice and for food. Vegetables, grains, and viticulture were all being produced according to normal operating procedures. There was, however, a great deal of agricultural devastation during the Assyrian invasion as will be noted in Isaiah 7:20. In those days, destroying the agricultural capabilities of the land was part of the standard operating procedure for invading armies. Scorched earth policies have been used for millennia in warfare including Sherman's excursion into Georgia during the Civil War. At the very least, invading armies appropriated every bit of food available to feed themselves during the invasion.

Other theologians believe this verse refers to Shear-jashub [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of the Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*, vol. 1, 1:393]. Given the context, this seems to be the more reasonable conclusion although it is the minority point of view. The following verse serves to confirm that assertion.

Isaiah 7:16 <sup>16</sup>“For before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

Shear-jashub must have been a very young boy at the time, but before the time that boy could make moral distinctions of his own volition, the kings of Israel and Aram would be removed from power and no longer be a threat to Judah. Assyria was still a threat for the future, but those two nations are identified here as posing the immediate threat.