

A Virgin Will Be With Child

Isaiah 7.10-17; Matthew 1.18-25

Perhaps the most famous prophecy of Christmas is that ‘a virgin will give birth’ (Isa. 7.14). But this sign was given in a time of war and uncertainty: It pointed to both hope and judgment. It’s great fulfillment 725 years later proved God was indeed with us, and calls us to trust in Him.

One prophecy, two fulfillments: How prophecy works...

- Isaiah, Ahaz, and the virgin who bore a son (Isaiah 7.1-17)

The sign of the birth: God will do what He will do

The response to God’s sign: Will you trust God or not?

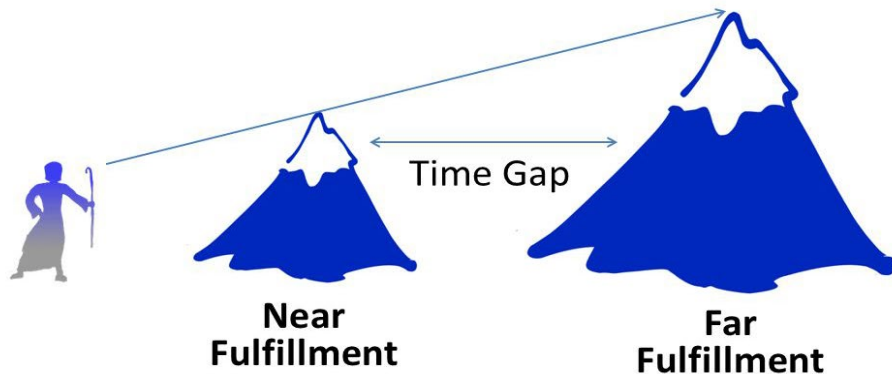
Whatever you trust in place of God will devour you.

- Joseph, an angel, and the virgin who bore a son (Matt. 1.18-25)

The sign of the birth: God will do what He will do

The response to God’s sign: Will you trust God or not?

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1. Isaiah’s famous prophecy of a virgin giving birth to a child occurs in a historical context (see Isaiah 7.1-2, and read all about this ‘rogue’s gallery’ of characters – Ahaz, Rezin, and Pekah – in 2 Kings 15 and 16). This is the time of the divided kingdom, with Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. What is the crisis facing Judah? Who are the Arameans? The geopolitical ‘superpower’ in the world at this time is the Assyrians. How do they factor in this drama?
2. Isaiah’s ministry began at his vision of the heavenly temple in Isa. 6, in 740 BC. In Isa. 7.1-2, it is about 15 years later. God sends Isaiah to deliver a message to King Ahaz of Judah (7.3-9). Is the message good or bad? Why is Ahaz warned at the end of v9? What does God offer Ahaz in vv10-11? How does Ahaz respond in v12? How does God respond to this (vv13-17)?
3. While Matthew 1.23 identifies the birth of Jesus as fulfillment of the “virgin will be with child” in Isa. 7.14, there was also a fulfillment in Isaiah’s day. In this case, a young woman would get married and give birth to a son, and name him Immanuel. The key is that before the boy was a certain age, the countries that threatened Judah would be forsaken (v16). Isaiah prophesied this in 725 BC: When were the kingdoms of Israel and Aram taken captive by the Assyrians? Why does Isaiah add that Judah will also suffer a similar fate (v17)?
4. The enigmatic language of Isaiah’s prophecy in 725 BC gains its ultimate fulfillment in Matt. 1.18-25. As Isaiah called Ahaz and the Jews to trust in God over seven centuries before, a literal virgin now offers another opportunity for God’s people to trust in Him. The son born in Isaiah’s day could bear the name “Immanuel,” but the Son born in Matthew fully embodied it – He *was* literally “God with us”! If the rejection of God’s sign (and trusting Assyria rather than God; cf. 2 Kings 16.7-9) resulted in judgment for Judah, how much more will rejecting God’s virgin-born Son, and trusting in ourselves rather than in God, result in judgment for us today?