

Dec 3, 2016

Isaiah 7:14

*Baby Jesus Foretold:
The God-Man Foretold*

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Website: In Isaiah 7:14, the prophet Isaiah tells King Ahaz to trust in God even as he is surrounded by enemies that want to destroy Judah and his kingdom. Isaiah tells King Aha to ask God for a sign, but Ahaz refuses. Instead, Isaiah gives him a different sign, the sign of the Messiah, of long-term hope. The sign of the Messiah comes in two parts, a miraculous virgin birth, and in his name, Immanuel, which means “God with us.” The question for King Ahaz and for us today is whether or not we will believe the sign, if we will have faith. In Matthew 1:23, we read that Jesus has fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy. Jesus was born of a virgin and conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is the Messiah! Jesus is God with us, Immanuel. This makes all the difference. Listen to learn more.

You can listen to [Pastor Timothy Keller’s](#) illustration about [Dorothy Sayers here](#), which Pastor Jonathan used as his closing illustration.

Introduction: (S1)

1. The Holidays are a big time for new movie releases.
2. The day after Thanksgiving, my in-laws and I went to see the movie *Arrival*.
3. *Arrival* is not a Christmas movie; instead it's about the "arrival" of aliens to earth.
4. It doesn't ask the question... What's the quickest way to blow up the aliens?
5. Instead, it asks... How would we respond as a world? How would we respond as individuals?
6. Christmas asks a similar question... How will you respond to the arrival of God to earth?
7. The Christmas story is that the God out there came to earth to live among us as a person.
8. Do you feel God's arrival is about as likely as an alien invasion or does something in you believe?

(Today we're looking at an OT verse that promises God will come to earth.)

1. (S2) In approximately 732 BC, Syria (Aram) and Israel (Ephraim) form an alliance against Assyria.
 1. Assyria is the super power known for its weaponry and savagery (skinned captives alive).
 2. (S3) They need Judah's help against Assyria, but their king, Ahaz, refuses to partner with them.
 3. So they attack Judah and (S4) Isaiah goes to king Ahaz to tell him to trust God and he'll be okay.
 4. Isaiah urges Ahaz to **ask God for a sign** of God's deliverance but Ahaz refuses.
 5. In his heart, Ahaz doesn't trust God; instead, he's actually called on Assyria to help (idolatry).
 6. (S5) So Isaiah gives him a sign anyways, not of short-term deliverance, but of long-term hope.
 7. He prophesies a child will be born, not Isaiah's child, not Ahaz's son Hezekiah, or later Josiah.
 8. He tells him the Messiah is coming who will be the king Ahaz never was.

(S6) **Isaiah 7:14** Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (NIV®)

(Isaiah is prophesying about the birth of the Messiah—God's only chosen king.)

(God promises the Messiah—the "anointed one"—will deliver his people from captivity.)

(Here Isaiah gives one sign of this promise in two parts: virgin birth + name, Immanuel.)

(Just like God called Ahaz to believe, he's calling us to believe in this sign today.)

I. (S7) **Virgin Birth.** We believe in the miraculous virgin birth. (Isaiah 7:14a)

- A. Isaiah promises a virgin will give birth to the Messiah.
 1. Since Ahaz refuses to choose a sign, God chooses a sign no human would think of, a virgin birth.
- B. We believe this promise comes true when the virgin Mary gives birth to Jesus. (Matt 1:20-23)
 1. 700+ years later, a young unmarried woman, Mary, is betrothed to a man named Joseph.
 2. But before they are married, she starts showing, she is pregnant.
 3. He doesn't want to shame her, so he decides to divorce her quietly (betrothal = legal contract).

(S8) **Matthew 1:20–23** ²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). (NIV®)

(As Christians, we believe in the miraculous virgin birth which Isaiah prophesied.)
(Some argue Matthew reads Mary's virginity into the NT from a faulty reading of Isaiah.)

4. **(S9) Objection:** The word “virgin” in Hebrew (almah) really means “young woman.”
 - a) The Hebrew word for virgin (bethulah) is not used here.
 - b) Instead, the word for “young woman” or “maiden” (almah) is used here.
 - c) So in the NT, when Matthew quotes the “virgin birth” from Isaiah he does so incorrectly.
 - d) Therefore, we do not need to believe that Jesus’ birth was special or miraculous.
5. **(S10-pause) Answer #1:** Almah is used of young unmarried women who are virgins until proven otherwise.¹—It does not mean virgin but implies virginity. (R. Dick Wilson, linguist)
6. **(S11) Answer #2:** A normal birth does not count as a supernatural sign—God does impossible.
7. **(S12) Answer #3:** The Jewish translation of the Old Testament into Greek, written at least 200 BC, translates this word as “virgin.”—the pre-Christian translation of Hebrew to Greek.

C. Why does the virgin birth matter?

1. The new building we’re worshipping in tonight is less than 15 years old.
2. **(S13)** In 2001, Westford Bible Church’s roof to their quaint white NE church collapsed.
3. **(S14)** Heavy snowfall uncovered structural flaws (southern architects + Bernie).
4. Saying Jesus isn’t born from a virgin inflicts structural flaws in our faith that leads to its collapse.
5. The virgin birth tells us Mary was Jesus’ biological mother but Joseph wasn’t his father, God is.
6. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit so he’s a man but also God incarnate (in the flesh!).
7. Without the virgin birth, Jesus just is a good man who can’t forgive sins or give us eternal life.

(If you read the historic church creeds they link the virgin birth with Christ’s divinity.)

(S15) (The **Apostles’ Creed**, from 1st-2nd century, “I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary...”

(S16) (The **Nicene Creed**, from 325 AD, says “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ... he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.”)

(From 1990, the song **Creed** by Christian Rock band Petra in Beyond Belief, "I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ His only son, I believe in the virgin birth.")

(The virgin birth is the first half of the Messianic sign which points to the second half, Immanuel.)

II. **(S17) Immanuel (God With Us).** We believe in a baby who is both God and man (Isaiah 7:14b, 9:6-7)

A. Isaiah prophesies the Messiah will be a king who is both God and man.

1. He will be “Immanuel” which means “God with us.”
2. Two chapters later he prophesies again about the Messianic child.

(S18) Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (NIV®)

¹ Quoting R. Dick Wilsom. Josh McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 393.

3. Isaiah calls the Messiah a child who is the “Mighty God”!
4. In Isaiah 10:21-23, Isaiah calls “Yahweh” the “Mighty God” (Yahweh = God’s OT name).
5. My friends sent me a **XMas postcard** with pics of their new baby boy and Isaiah 9:6 on the back.
6. In Isaiah we get a black and white snapshot of the child, but in Matthew we get a full color pic.

B. We believe this promise comes true with Jesus, who is both God and man. (Matt 1:20-23)

1. Jesus is 100% God and 100% human, fully God, fully man.
2. Matthew also claims Jesus is God with us, he is the incarnation.

(S19) Matthew 1:20b–23 ...“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). (NIV®)

3. The angel points out his name because it’s special; Jesus means “Yahweh is salvation.”
4. Jesus is the “Mighty God”, Yahweh, who has come to save his people from their sins.
5. Did you know the name “Christ” is the Greek translation of “Messiah” or “anointed one”?
6. Jesus is the Messiah king who is both a man and the Mighty God who has come to save us.

C. **(S20-23)** Through Jesus, God steps into the **Big Story**, and ultimately, our stories.

1. **Creation:** In the Garden of Eden, the first humans had a perfect relationship with God.
2. **Fall:** The first humans, Adam and Eve, decided to live their way (ate from forbidden tree).
(So does God leave us to perish? Or does he create a rescue plan?)
(God sends his one and only Son who he’s known and loved forever to save us.)
(Jesus is the only one who can represent God and his justice because he is God.)
(He is also the only one who can represent people because he’s a human being too.)
3. **Redemption:** Jesus is the God who came to pay the penalty for our sins against him.
4. **New Creation:** One day God will fully deliver us into a restored and renewed creation.

(S24) (Big Idea: God entered into our story through the virgin birth of baby Jesus.)
(God cares about us enough to come into our lives and change our stories.)

D. God can change our lives and stories because he can relate to us.

1. In the alien movie I saw, the aliens are really big octopouses called “heptapods” (seven limbs).
2. These aliens can’t speak English and they don’t look like the scientists studying them.
3. They can’t go for a walk, they can’t eat at a table, they can’t smile, cry, or laugh.
4. But our God knows what it feels like to be us, to eat at a table, to smile, to cry, to laugh.
5. Whatever you’re feeling this Christmas, great joy, or sadness, Jesus understands.
6. Through Jesus, our God knows what it’s like to die, he can even relate to us in this.
7. John Wesley’s (founder of Methodism) last words were, “The best of all is, God is with us.”
8. Jesus isn’t just a spiritual guru or charismatic leader, he’s knows us for who we really are.

(God entered into our story through the virgin birth of baby Jesus.)

E. God calls us to believe in Immanuel, God with us, do you believe?

1. King Ahaz didn't believe and it was his loss (Isaiah 7:9); the Assyrians attacked Judah.
2. Believing changed the direction of Joseph's whole life (divorce to marriage to fatherhood).
3. I grew up in CO but Jesus changed the direction of my life, he brought me 2K miles here.
4. How might God entering into your story change the direction of your life this Christmas?
5. Maybe it'll save your marriage, or change your calling, or give you joy this season.

(God entered into our story through the virgin birth of baby Jesus.)

Conclusion:

1. I want to close with an **illustration by Timothy Keller**, the Pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian in NYC.²
2. Dorothy Sayers was a famous British crime novelist who loved to write mystery stories.
3. Her "novels and short stories [are] set between the First and Second World Wars" (1930s)³
4. Her most famous star was an English aristocrat and amateur detective named Lord Peter Wimsey.
5. Lord Peter Wimsey is an eccentric character who can solve crimes but not his own hurts.
6. About half way through her novels, Sayers introduces a new character named Harriet Vane.
7. Harriet Vane is a writer of mystery novels and one of the first women to graduate from Oxford.
8. Peter and Harriet fall in love, they eventually marry, she helps him heal, and they live a happy life.⁴
9. Just like Harriet, Sayers was one of the first women to graduate from Oxford and she wrote mysteries.
10. Sayers looked at Lord Peter Wimsey, and saw that he needed someone to love him, to help him.
11. Who did she put in there? Who was that woman? She wrote herself into the story!
12. She looked into the world she had created and fell in love with the chief character, Peter Wimsey.
13. God looks into this world he has created and he loves us, he loves you, he loves me.
14. We can fix lots of problems but we can't fix ourselves, so God has come to heal us.
15. **God entered into our story through the virgin birth of baby Jesus.**

Micah 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." (NIV®)

1 Kings 8:57 May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. (NIV®)

² Illustration is adapted from various online sources. Listen to Timothy Keller here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iq2YCU3tONY> (accessed 12.1.2016).

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_L._Sayers (accessed 12.1.2016)

⁴ <http://www.scofield.org/2-uncategorised/55-the-story> (accessed 12.1.2016)