

Chapter 14

The New Testament Citation of Isaiah 7:14

"Virgin-birth" is the correct and only correct designation of the birth statement contained in the Gospels of Mt. and Lk....The only statement which is sufficiently specific is "virgin-birth," inasmuch as according to the NT statement Mary was at the time of this birth *virgo intacta*. -- Louis Mathews Sweet

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the intent of Matthew (who actually cited Isaiah 7:14) and Luke when they introduce the virgin birth of Jesus (Yeshua). To do this, it is necessary to summarize the conclusions reached in Chapter 13.

- All three verses, Isaiah 7:14-16, refer directly and exclusively to the Messiah.
- The critical points in Isaiah 7:14 are as follows:
 - Isaiah in verse 14 sees the sign with all of its parts in a vision from the Lord, and he sees the events of the vision as present.
 - Isaiah sees "a pregnant maiden," a pregnant עִלְמָה, a young unmarried girl who has never married. This pregnant girl is a virgin, and Isaiah is seeing a miracle of the Lord.
 - The sign itself, the pregnant עִלְמָה and the birth of her son, Immanuel, will occur at some point after the Lord removes Rezin and Pekah.
 - According to Isaiah 8:8, Judah is said to be owned by Immanuel.
 - No birth of a boy named Immanuel is recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures or in the extant literature of the intertestamental period.
 - No miracle consisting of a virgin giving birth to a child is recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures or the intertestamental literature.
 - That brings the virgin, her pregnancy, and the birth of Immanuel to the New Testament era.
 - As the "child"/"son" in Isaiah 9 and the "shoot from the stem of Jesse" in Isaiah 11 refer to the Messiah, so Immanuel in Isaiah 7 is also the Messiah.
 - The virgin mother of the Messiah is not identified in the Tanakh (Old Testament), and there is no evidence that Isaiah himself knew who the mother would be.

- The critical points in Isaiah 7:15-16 are as follows:
 - Immanuel/Messiah was not born and was not physically present during the time of Ahaz.
 - Verses 15 and 16 can be interpreted in terms of a hypothetical text as if the Messiah were born then to serve as a measure of current events.
 - Verses 15 and 16 can also be interpreted in terms of a symbol of the infant Messiah in the situation existing in Isaiah's own day.

The Word *παρθένος* in the New Testament

There are fifteen occurrences of *παρθένος*, a feminine noun, in the New Testament:

Matthew	1:23; 25:1, 7, 11
Luke	1:27 (twice)
Acts	21:9
1 Corinthians	7:25, 28, 34, 36, 37, 38
2 Corinthians	11:2
Revelation	14:4

There is a related word used in one passage, Luke 2:36. The word is *παρθενία*, also a feminine noun.

παρθένος was long assumed by commentators to have a well-known, fixed meaning, namely, *virgo intacta*.¹ However, in Chapter 10 it was noted that a number of scholars, Jewish and Christian, now agree that *παρθένος* in earlier Greek did not originally or exclusively mean *virgo intacta* but was actually somewhat ambiguous. But over time that changed. Gerhard Delling states,

The word [*παρθένος*] then went through an obvious process of narrowing down...and *παρθένος* came to be used for the "virgin."²

By the time the New Testament was written *παρθένος* had the strict meaning of *virgo intacta*. Gordon Wenham writes,

The LXX usually translates Heb. *betûlâ* by Gk. *parthénos*, and twice (including Isa. 7:14, quoted by Mt. 1:23) it uses this term to translate Hebrew *‘almâ*. Like *betûlâ*, Gk. *parthénos* originally meant a 'girl of marriageable age,' but in later Greek it came to denote a chaste girl, i.e., a virgin. It has this latter sense throughout the NT.³

The Two Genealogies

Both Mathew and Luke provided a genealogy of Jesus. There are several issues that should be discussed

1 For the details of this material see Chapter 10, section "The Meaning and Use of *παρθένος*," and the summary of Chapter 10 in Chapter 13.
 2 Gerhard Delling, "*παρθένος*," *TDNT*, V:827; brackets added.
 3 Gordon J. Wenham, "Virgin," *ISBE*, IV:990.

before examining the sections of Matthew and Luke that address the virgin birth of Jesus.

D. A. Carson makes the point that the relationship between Matthew's genealogy and Luke's genealogy, especially the sections from David to Joseph, raises difficult questions.

There are basic differences between the two: Mathew begins with Abraham and moves forward; Luke begins with Jesus and moves backward to Adam. Mathew traces the line through Jeconiah [Jehoiachin], Shealtier, and Zerubbabel; Luke through Neri, Shealtier, and Zerubbabel. More important, Luke (3:31 traces the line through David's son Nathan (cf. 2 Sam. 5:14), and Matthew through the kingly line of Solomon.⁴

Some argue that Matthew gives Joseph's genealogy while Luke gives Mary's.⁵ This would mean that Joseph was a descendant of David through Solomon, and Mary a descendant of David through Nathan.⁶ The alternative of that view would have both genealogies apply to Joseph. Several views to explain how two different genealogies can describe the same man have been suggested, but Carson believes that the view of J. Gresham Machen is an "elegant solution."⁷

The explanation of Machen's view is easier to follow with the use of a table that compares two entries of David and three entries of Joseph.

Luke's Genealogy (Reverse Order As Worded by Luke)	Luke's Genealogy (If Worded As Matthew)	Matthew's Genealogy
[Nathan] the son of David	David the father of Nathan	David the father of Solomon
[Mattatha] the son of Nathan	Nathan the father of Mattatha	Solomon the father of Rehoboam
.....
[Matthat] the son of Levi	Levi the father of Matthat	Eleazar the father of Matthan
[Heil] the son of Matthat	Matthat the father of Heli	Matthan the father of Jacob
[Joseph] the son of Heli	Heli the father of Joseph	Jacob the father of Joseph

Machen focuses attention on Matthat and Matthan. They appear at the same place in both genealogies. Are they the same man or two different men? Much depends on whether Levirate marriage is involved.⁸

According to Machen, two options are possible.

4 D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, vol. VIII in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), VIII:63-64; brackets added. See Matt. 1:6-7.

5 It is suggested that the use of Joseph's name in Luke 3:23 instead of Mary's name was to avoid mentioning a woman, who could not have a legal right to the throne.

6 Arno C. Gaebelin, *The Gospel of Matthew: An Exposition* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1961; original publication date, 1910), p. 19, is an example: "The genealogy in Matthew proves that Joseph is a descendant of David through the house of *Solomon*. The one in the Gospel of Luke proves that Mary, the virgin, is likewise a descendant of David, but not through the house of *Solomon*; she is connected with David through the house of *Nathan*"; italics original.

7 Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:65. For this "elegant solution," see J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930), pp. 207-9.

8 The word "levirate" is taken from the Latin word *levir*, meaning "husband's brother." Levirate marriage is described in Deut. 25:5-10. If a married man dies having no male son, his brother was expected to marry the deceased brother's wife. Any son born from this marriage would then be considered the dead brother's heir, which would then continue his family line. See the full explanation in Robert K. Bower and Gary L. Knapp, "Marriage: Marry," *ISBE*, III:263.

Option One: Matthat and Matthan Are the Same Man

If Matthat and Matthan *are* the same man, then two events must occur, each with a Levirate marriage.⁹

(1) There must be a Levirate marriage involving two brothers, Levi and Eleazar. Either one could be the brother who died with the other marrying the widow. Either way Matthat/Matthan would be the resultant birth from the dead brother's wife.

(2) According to Machen, Matthat/Matthan had two sons, Heli and Jacob, therefore brothers. However, one of them died, namely Jacob, without a son. Thus another Levirate marriage takes place. Jacob's brother, Heli, married Jacob's wife, and she then gave birth to a son, namely Joseph. Thus Luke, to continue his line from David through Nathan, used Heli, Joseph's *natural* (Levirate) father, in his genealogy, while Matthew, to continue his line from David through Solomon, used Jacob, Joseph's *legal* father, in his genealogy.

The line of Jacob then, not Heli, continued through Joseph. Thus Joseph, the legal son of Jacob, is also the legal descendant of David through the kingly line beginning with Solomon.

Option Two: Matthat and Matthan Are Not the Same Man

If Matthat and Matthan are *not* the same man, then there is no need to invoke Levirate marriage. Levi is the father of Matthat, and Eleazar is the father of Matthan. In turn, Matthat is the father of Heli, and Matthan is the father of Jacob. As in option one above, Heli and Jacob are two separate men, but contrary to option one, they are not brothers. However, they were perhaps closely related or very good friends. Then if Heli was an only son and died having no heir, what could take place?

At this point, Carson fills in somewhat of a gap in Machen's explanation.¹⁰ Suppose Matthat also sired a girl in addition to Heli, and Jacob--Matthan's son--married her. Through Heli's sister, Jacob sires Joseph. Joseph, then, would be both the natural son and legal son of Jacob, whose line goes back to David through Solomon. Joseph, in a sense, could be considered an heir of Heli, but that only. Thus Luke, to continue his line from David through Nathan, considered Joseph as simply an heir of Heli in his genealogy.

As in option one, the line of Jacob then, not Heli, continued through Joseph. Thus according to option two, Joseph, both the legal son and natural son of Jacob, is also the legal descendant of David through the kingly line beginning with Solomon.

Conclusion

In my opinion, option one is the more likely scenario: through Levirate marriage, Joseph is the natural son of Heli (Luke's genealogy), but the legal son of Jacob (Matthew's genealogy). It is this legal status that places Joseph in the kingly line of David through Solomon, as was Jacob. In turn that allows Matthew in verse 16 to call Jesus the Messiah, as will be addressed in the next section, "The Beginning and End of Matthew's Genealogy."

Before concluding this section, it should be noted that there are other portions of the two genealogies that

9 Levirate marriage is described in Deut. 25:5-10. When dealing with this section of Matthew and Luke's genealogies, the question arises as to whether Levirate marriage was still practiced during the time of Levi and Eleazar and following. Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 208, suggests the following: "The question which the Sadducees addressed to Jesus about this matter [of Levirate marriage] shows that the custom was not forgotten, whether or not it was frequently practised, in the time of Jesus." The text to which Machen refers is Luke 20:27-33.

10 Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:65.

present questions and problems. Machen, however, concludes his discussion of these genealogies as follows:

We are not endeavoring to discuss the intricate question of the genealogies with even the slightest approach to completeness. But enough, we think, has been said to show that the differences between the two genealogies are not irreconcilable. Reconciliation might conceivably be effected in a number of different ways. But on the whole we are inclined to think that the true key to a solution of the problem (however the solution may run in detail) is to be found in the fact that Matthew, in an intentionally incomplete way, gives a list of incumbents (actual or potential) of the kingly Davidic throne, while Luke traces the descent of Joseph, back through Nathan to David. Thus the genealogies cannot properly be used to exhibit contradiction between the Matthæan and the Lukan accounts of the birth and infancy of our Lord. Here, as in the other features of the two accounts, there is complete independence, but no contradiction.¹¹

The Beginning and End of Matthew's Genealogy

There are several significant points in the beginning and end of Matthew's genealogy.

Matthew 1:1

Matthew's Gospel begins as follows:

Verse 1:1: Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ¹²
[The] record of [the] genealogy of Jesus Christ son of David son of Abraham

The opening two words, βίβλος γενέσεως, have generated (pun intended) several interpretations of verse 1.¹³ The view that seems best to me is that of Hendriksen, namely, that "record" or "list," not "book," is Matthew's intent in using βίβλος here, and that γενέσεως, "genealogy," refers only to the genealogy of 1:2-17.

The combination "Jesus Christ" is also of interest. "Jesus," of course, is a personal name, but is "Christ" in this verse a personal name like "Jesus," making the resulting personal name "Jesus Christ," or is it a descriptive name as in "Jesus the Christ," or using the Hebrew word, "Jesus the Messiah"? The presence or absence of the definite article, *the*, does not always answer the question. Carson offers this analysis:

In the Gospels "Christ" is relatively rare (as compared with Paul's epistles). More important it almost always appears as a *title*, strictly equivalent to "the Messiah" (see esp. 16:16). It was natural for Christians after the Resurrection to use "Christ" as a *name*...Of Matthew's approximately eighteen occurrences, all are exclusively titular except this one (1:1), probably 1:16, certainly 1:18, and possibly the variant at 16:21. The three uses of "Christ" in the prologue reflect the confessional stance from which Matthew writes; he is a committed Christian who has long since become familiar with the common way of using the word as both title and name. At the same time it is a mark of Matthew's concern for historical accuracy that Jesus is not so designated by his contemporaries.¹⁴

11 Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 209.

12 The first word, βίβλος, is feminine nominative singular, *book, record, or list*; γενέσεως is feminine genitive singular of γένεσις, here *genealogy* (AG, p. 154); Ἰησοῦ and Χριστοῦ are both masculine genitive singular; and υἱοῦ is masculine genitive singular of υἱός, a *son*.

13 Both Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:61 and William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), p. 107, cited several views; see also AG, pp. 140-41, 154.

14 Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:61-62; italics added.

Hendriksen seems to agree, but uses slightly different vocabulary: "To the personal name *Jesus* is added the official name *Christ*."¹⁵

However, I believe that 1:1, 1:16, and 1:18 are all titles, not names. This conclusion is difficult to doubt when 1:17 is clearly a title, as even Carson admits. R. T. France argues the case, successfully I believe, that 1:1, 1:16, and 1:18 are all titles.

It is likely, then, that in 1:1 as well the term *Χριστός* is used as a title, and thus is the first title applied to Jesus at the very beginning of the gospel. Moreover, the genealogy which it introduces traces the Davidic (and therefore messianic) line, and concludes triumphantly with "Jesus, who is called *Χριστός*" (1:16), and in the next verse the final point of the genealogy is given as *ὁ Χριστός*, without even the name Jesus to identify him. So when the "story" begins in 1:18 with "The origin of the *Χριστός* was like this", there can be no doubt that *Χριστός* is the title Matthew has chosen to express at the outset his understanding of the significance of Jesus.¹⁶

Nevertheless it is accepted by all that Matthew in his Gospel uses "Christ" primarily, if not exclusively, as a title, namely the Messiah.

The last part of verse 1:1 presents a critical issue: "Jesus Christ son of David son of Abraham." It was concluded in the previous section, "The Two Genealogies," that Matthew's genealogy verified that Joseph was the legal son of Jacob, placing Joseph in the kingly line of David through Solomon. It was just concluded in this subsection that "Christ" in this verse is a title, Messiah, not a name. This conclusion is confirmed in the next subsection, "Matthew 1:16."

Mathew 1:16¹⁷

When Joseph is reached in the genealogy, he is called the "husband" of Mary.

Verse 16: Ἰακώβ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας,
and Jacob begat -- Joseph the husband of Mary

ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός¹⁸
from whom was begotten Jesus the [one] called Christ

15 Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 108.

16 R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), p. 281. On the same page France mentions that there are several manuscripts in which 1:18 has only *Χριστός*, not "Ἰησοῦς Χριστός." However in note four he argues again that even if the name "Jesus" was present in 1:18 in the original manuscript, which, of course, has not survived, "*Χριστός* must be understood there as an independent title ('Jesus, the Messiah')."

17 For a textual commentary on Matt. 1:16, see, e.g., Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), pp. 2-7.

18 The verb, *ἐγέννησεν*, is 3rd person singular first aorist active indicative of *γεννάω*, *to beget*; *ἄνδρα* is masculine accusative singular of *ἄνθρωπος*, *man*; *ἧς* is a feminine genitive singular relative pronoun; *ἐγεννήθη* is 3rd person singular first aorist passive indicative of *γεννάω*; *λεγόμενος* is masculine nominative singular present passive, a participle of the verb *λέγω*, *to say*.

The Greek word, *ἄνδρα* (the accusative form of *ἀνὴρ*) used in 1:16 has the basic meaning *man*, but in the context of marriage it means *husband*.¹⁹ This is the word in the phrase "husband of Mary." William Hendriksen explains the three stages of Jewish marriage under the law. Betrothal is the first stage, and that is the stage Joseph and Mary are in at this point.

Betrothal...must not be confused with present-day engagement. It is far more serious and binding. The bridegroom and bride pledge the troth to each other in the presence of witnesses....From that moment on Joseph is called Mary's *husband* (verse 19); Mary is called Joseph's *wife* (verse 20). According to the Old Testament regulation unfaithfulness in a betrothed woman was punishable with death (Deut. 22:23, 24). Yet, though the two were now legally "espoused," it was considered proper that an interval of time elapse before husband and wife begin to live together in the same home.²⁰

After that period of time, the betrothal stage is followed by the second stage, namely, the marriage feast. The third stage, then, is living together. Sexual relations should begin only in stage three.

Note, then, that the Greek word, *ἄνδρα*, is applied to Joseph, as *husband*, during the betrothal, the first stage of marriage. However, nothing more is indicated in 1:16 regarding this marriage except that Jesus was begotten of Mary. The wording does seem to imply that Joseph was not the cause of Mary's pregnancy. This uncertainty will be made clear in verses 1:18-19.

Finally, the one who was "begotten" was "Jesus the [one] called Christ." This term in verse 16, *Χριστός*, "Christ," as in 1:1, 1:17, and 1:18, is definitely a title--namely Messiah--not a name.²¹ Thus as argued at the end of the previous subsection, "Matthew 1:1," the term "Christ" in verse 1 is that same title. That argument has now been confirmed explicitly by verse 16.

Conclusion

There is no doubt the Old Testament clearly states the Messiah will be a son of David. According to the late Chief Rabbi Dr. J. H. Hertz, Isaiah 11 is "the greatest and most famous of all the messianic prophecies."²² This text clearly states that the Messiah will be a son of David.

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him...

Then in that day
The nations will resort to the root of Jesse,
Who will stand as a signal for the peoples;
And His resting place will be glorious.
Then it will happen on that day that the Lord
Will again recover the second time with His hand
The remnant of His people, who will remain,
From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath,

19 AG, p. 65.

20 Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 130.

21 In Carson's citation under "Matthew 1:1" above (*Matthew*, VIII:61-62), he thinks that the word "Christ" here in 1:16 is "probably" not a title but a name, thus forming the name "Jesus Christ" as used in verse 1. There is no way to be dogmatic about Matthew's intent in this verse. However, Carson does add this observation, which is quite correct: "The Greek does not make it clear whether 'Christ' is titular or not, but name or title, Jesus' messiahship is affirmed" (p. 68).

22 The late Chief Rabbi Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, 2nd ed. (London: Soncino Press, 1981), p. 1023.

And from the islands of the sea.
And He will lift up a standard for the nations
And assemble the banished ones of Israel,
And will gather the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.
Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart,
And those who harass Judah will be cut off;
Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,
And Judah will not harass Ephraim.²³

The Messiah is called "the stem of Jesse" and "the root of Jesse" in this text, but it does not state from which branch of David the Messiah descends. That is actually revealed earlier during the life of David himself. Nathan the prophet brings the word of the Lord to David in 2 Samuel, another famous messianic prophecy. But in this passage it is made quite clear that the Messiah will come from the kingly line of David.

"The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took *it* away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.²⁴

Thus the legal line from which the Messiah comes will be from David through Solomon. In this passage the Lord reveals that he will establish the throne and kingdom of Solomon forever. He also states that the house of David through Solomon "shall endure before Me forever; your [David's] throne shall be established forever." This is the covenant God made with David.²⁵

Now everything comes together. In the section "The Two Genealogies" it was concluded that Matthew's genealogy verified that Joseph was the legal son of Jacob, thus placing Joseph in the kingly line of David through Solomon. Now in this subsection it was shown that 2 Samuel 7:11-17 predicted the Messiah would come from David through Solomon's line. Thus what Matthew's genealogy indicated in 1:1 and 1:16, namely that Jesus is the Christ (i.e., Messiah), has the necessary qualification: Jesus, legal son of Joseph, is in fact the legal son of David through Solomon, from whose line the Old Testament predicted the Messiah would come.

The Two New Testament Passages That Portray the Virgin Birth of Jesus

Of the fifteen occurrences of *παρθένος* (which had come to mean "virgin" by the time the New Testament was written) cited in the above section "The Word *παρθένος* in the New Testament," only three refer to the birth of Jesus: Matthew 1:23 and the two uses of *παρθένος* in Luke 1:27. Here is the full text that contains 1:27:

(26) Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,
(27) to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the

23 Isa. 11:1-2, 10-13; *NASB*. See also Isa. 9:5-6 (6-7 in Christian translations); Jer. 23:5-6; 30:8-9; 33:14-18; Hos. 3:4-5.

24 2 Sam. 7:11-17; *NASB*.

25 Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, vol. 7 in *The New American Commentary*, 41 vols, gen. ed. E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996, 7:339, notes in 2 Sam. 7:9 that "The Lord was not finished adorning his [David's] earthly dwelling place; he would make David's 'name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth'--a covenantal promise not made by the Lord to an individual since the days of Abraham (cf. 12:2)."

virgin's name was Mary. (28) And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord *is* with you." (29) But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. (30) The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. (31) And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. (32) He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; (33) and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." (34) Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin [literally, 'know no man']?" (35) The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. (36) And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. (37) For nothing will be impossible with God." (38) And Mary said, "Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.²⁶

As noted in the Lukan text above, neither use of *παρθένος* in Luke 1:27 has reference to Isaiah 7:14.

Here is the full text that contains Matthew 1:23:

(18) Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. (19) And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. (20) But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. (21) She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (22) Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: (23) "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." (24) And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife, (25) but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.²⁷

The Matthean text above is of primary interest here because it cites Isaiah 7:14. There are several points in his text that need to be addressed.

Matthew 1:18: The "Christ"²⁸

"Christ" is an anglicized version of the Greek word *χριστός* (*christos*), a masculine noun that means *anointed one*.²⁹ As already noted in the previous section, "The Beginning and End of Matthew's Genealogy," *χριστός* is applied in the New Testament to Jesus in two different ways: either as a *descriptive name* (also called a *title*), in this case, *Messiah*, or, as its use in the New Testament literature continued, a *personal name* (also called simply a *name*).³⁰ It was concluded in subsection "The Beginning and End of Matthew's Genealogy" that *χριστός* in 1:1, 1:16, 1:17, and 1:18 are all titles, not names. The equivalent title in Hebrew is *מָשִׁיחַ* (*māšîaḥ*), a masculine noun that in general means *the anointed one*.³¹ It has a number of uses in the Hebrew Scriptures, including a

26 Luke 1:26-38; NASB (brackets added).

27 Matt. 1:18-25; NASB.

28 For a textual commentary on Matt. 1:18, see, e.g., Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 7-8.

29 AG, p. 895.

30 E.g., as a descriptive name, Matt. 2:4, Luke 3:15, etc.; e.g., as a personal name, Rom. 1:4, 1 Cor. 2:2, etc. More discussion is given to these two uses of "Christ" in the subsection below, "The Message from the Angel."

31 BDB, p. 603; it is a derivative of *משח*, to smear, to anoint.

use that is usually interpreted as the Messiah.³²

The Greek *messías* is a transliteration of the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ, the Latin *messias* is derived from the Greek, and the English *messiah* is derived from the Latin. However, the Greek transliteration *messías* is used only twice in the NT,³³ while all the remaining references that refer to Jesus as the Messiah use χριστος (*christos*), in English, *Christ*.

Matthew 1:18: The Name "Jesus"

"Jesus" is an anglicized version of the Greek word, or name, Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsous*), which in turn is derived from the Hebrew proper name. There are actually three different spellings in Hebrew for this name, and there are several different men in the Old Testament (the Tanakh) who have the name. Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' successor and author of the sixth book in the Bible, is the best known.³⁴ Two of the spellings, יהושוע (y^ehōšū'a) and יהושע (y^ehōšū'a), are essentially the same and mean *Yah[weh] is salvation*.³⁵ The third and shortest spelling, יֵשׁוּעַ (yēšū'a), means *Yah[weh] saves*, and is the one from which the English spelling "Joshua" and "Jesus" are derived. However, in modern Messianic Judaism circles, this is usually spelled *Yeshua* (emphasis on the second syllable).

Matthew 1:18-19: The Marriage of Joseph and Mary and Mary's Pregnancy

The text of Matthew 1:18 begins by stating that "Mary had been betrothed to Joseph." Her pregnancy became known to Joseph during the betrothal period, the first stage of marriage. Matthew then concludes verse 18 by explaining that Mary "was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit." However, this origin of her pregnancy was not yet known by Joseph. According to Carson,

Mary's pregnancy was discovered while she was still betrothed...That Mary was "found" to be with child [1:18] does not suggest a surreptitious attempt at concealment ("found out") but only that her pregnancy became obvious.³⁶

Verse 19 gives the reason why Joseph "planned to send her away secretly": "being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her." However, there are several interpretations of this plan of Joseph among theologians.³⁷

- The first interpretation of Joseph's plan assumes that Mary had told Joseph the conception was miraculous. As a righteous man, Joseph then did not wish to divulge the miraculous conception by

32 E.g., Ps. 2:2; Dan. 9:25, 26.

33 John 1:41 and 4:25.

34 Joshua, Moses' successor, receives all three spellings in the OT, and the following example texts of the three spellings refer only to this Joshua. The three versions of this name, then, with example texts, are as follows. (1) יהושוע (y^ehōšū'a): Deut. 3:21; (2) יהושע (y^ehōšū'a): Exod. 17:9, Josh. 1:1; and (3) a later spelling, יֵשׁוּעַ (yēšū'a): Neh. 8:17.

See *BDB*, 221. Note that the NT makes reference to this Joshua, the son of Nun, using Ἰησοῦς. However, the English transliteration is "Joshua" and not "Christ" (Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8).

35 See James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1890), "Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary," pp. 48, 3091, and pp. 53, 3442.

36 Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:74; brackets added.

37 *Ibid.*, VIII:74-75.

bringing it out in the open and so planned a quiet divorce. However, this view is unlikely since in verse 20 the angel had to tell Joseph the pregnancy was supernatural.

- The second interpretation of Joseph's plan assumes that Joseph believed Mary had been unfaithful to him. Joseph then did not want to expose her to the disgrace of a public divorce and instead planned a simple, private divorce, but one that did not meet requirements set forth in the Mosaic law. However, this view is unlikely since, as a righteous man, Joseph would have known that justice under the Mosaic law would demand some formal action for this infidelity.
- The third interpretation of Joseph's plan is the one accepted by Carson, and the plan also assumes that Joseph believed Mary had been unfaithful to him. As in the second interpretation, Joseph did not want to expose her to the disgrace of a public divorce. However, Mosaic law did allow a formal, private divorce before two witnesses.³⁸ So that is what Joseph had planned. It would leave both his righteousness and his kindness intact.

Matthew 1:20-21: The Message from the Angel

In the two Gospels dealing with Mary's pregnancy, Matthew places more emphasis on Joseph while Luke places more emphasis on Mary. Specifically, Matthew records an angel's message that was conveyed to Joseph in a dream, and Luke records the angel Gabriel's message to Mary,³⁹ who was quite wide-awake.⁴⁰ However, the interest here is primarily Matthew's account since that is where Isaiah 7:14 is cited.

After Joseph had decided on a plan about what to do with Mary as recorded in verse 19, verse 20 indicates that he still was considering that plan. Hendriksen suggests that Joseph's thoughts were something like the following:

Though Joseph has decided on the action he must take, he finds it almost impossible to make the transition from resolve to deed. While he is turning these things over in his mind, he falls asleep and begins to dream. With dramatic suddenness, during this dream an angel--his name is not given (nor in 2:13, 19); contrast Luke 1:19, 26--appears, and imparts to him the information that had already been given to Mary (Luke 1:35), namely, that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit, and not in the natural way, that Mary had conceived.⁴¹

The angel's salutation is quite significant: "Joseph, son of David." This is a simple, direct way to address Joseph, and it is consistent with the conclusions already reached in the previous two sections: Joseph is the legal heir of David, in fact, of Solomon, the kingly line. The angel goes on to tell Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary for his wife, probably referring to the marriage customs of the day.⁴² He then gives Joseph the amazing explanation of Mary's pregnancy: "the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." Mary's conception was the direct action of the Holy Spirit.

The name "Jesus" was mentioned in 1:1, 1:16 and especially in 1:18. But none of those verses indicated the *significance* of giving the Child the name "Jesus." It is in verse 21 that the angel explains why "the Child" was to be named "Jesus."⁴³ The reason is that this "Child" "will save His people from their sins."

38 Carson cited Num. 5:11-31 as interpreted in the Mishnah, *Sotah* 1:1-5.

39 I have not found any scholar who suggests that the angel who appeared to Joseph in a dream was Gabriel, the angel who appeared to Mary. I would say it is unlikely.

40 Luke 1:26-30.

41 Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 131.

42 That interpretation of the angel's intent is suggested by Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:75.

43 In the clause, "and you shall call His name Jesus," the verb "you shall call" is *καλέσεις*, second person singular future active indicative of *καλέω* to call. Here it is used in the sense of *to name, to provide with a name* (AG, p. 399-400). This use is rare in the NT, except where the LXX is being cited. According to Carson, "the effect is to give the verse a strong OT nuance" (*Matthew*, VIII:75).

In the above subsection, "Matthew 1:18: The Name 'Jesus,'" it was noted that the Greek name Ἰησοῦς is derived from the Hebrew name and that "Jesus" is an anglicized version of the Greek name. It was also noted that this Hebrew name has three similar, but different, spellings. The shortest form, **יְשׁוּעַ** (*yēšū'a*), means *Yah[weh] saves*. The angel therefore states that the Child must be given this form of the Hebrew name because this Child "will save His people from their sins." Carson suggests that the angel uses this phrase, which points to Psalm 130:7-8, to explain the significance of the name "Jesus":⁴⁴

O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.
And He will redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.

Note that

- in verse 21 it is Jesus who "will save His people from their sins,"
- and that in Psalm 130:8 it is Yahweh who "will redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

Thus *verse 1:21* is the fulfillment of *Psalm 130:8*, and so, according to Gundry, the fulfillment theme is this: "*Jesus fulfilled the activities of Yahweh Himself.*"⁴⁵

Hendriksen explains this connection between Jesus and Yahweh as follows:

It is ever God, and God alone, who in and through his Son, saves his people....It takes no less than the atoning death of Jesus and the sanctifying power of his Spirit to cleanse hearts and lives.⁴⁶

Carson draws the following conclusion for verse 21:

Here it [that Jesus will save His people from their sins] focuses on what is central, viz., salvation from sins; for in the biblical perspective sin is the basic (if not always the immediate) cause of all other calamities. This verse therefore orients the reader to the fundamental purpose of Jesus' coming and the essential nature of the reign he inaugurates as King Messiah, heir of David's throne.⁴⁷

More detail related to Jesus saving his people from their sins is given in subsection "The Messiah Who Saves His People From Their Sins" of section "The Fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14" below.

Matthew 1:22-23: The Citation of Isaiah 7:14⁴⁸

Scholars have a disagreement about verse 22. Does the angel continue speaking or does Matthew begin writing again? Hendriksen accepts the second view:

The message of the angel is ended. Matthew himself now resumes his account, showing that the virgin

44 Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:76. He cites as the source of this view Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel, with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 127-28.
45 Robert H. Gundry, "Fulfil," *ISBE*, II:367. Gundry cites a number of verses exhibiting this fulfillment theme: Matt. 3:3f.; 11:5; 13:41; 24:31; etc. Another fulfillment theme is seen in verse 22.
46 Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 132.
47 Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:76; brackets added.
48 For a textual commentary on Matt. 1:22, see, e.g., Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 8.

birth of this glorious child who was to be the Savior is a fulfillment of prophecy.⁴⁹

Other commentators who take this view are John Gill, Arno Gaebelein, and Raymond E. Brown. This view is also in agreement with most of the modern English translations.⁵⁰ However, although Carson admits that most of the English versions end the message of the angel at the end of verse 21, he argues that there are good reasons to extend the message of the angel through verse 23, or at least through the word "Immanuel."⁵¹ He points out that this particular fulfillment formula occurs only three times in Matthew's gospel: 1:22, 21:4 and 26:56. However, 21:4 and 26:56 can also be interpreted in either of two ways just as 1:22 can.⁵²

The point at which the angel stops speaking to Joseph in his dream is not a critically important question that must be solved. I suggest that Hendriksen's view is a good working hypothesis.⁵³

Similar to verse 21, verses 22 and 23 represent another fulfillment theme. Here

- in verse 22 it is stated that "all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet,"
- and in Isaiah 7:14 it is stated that a child will be born called Immanuel, meaning God with us.

Thus verse 22 fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, and so, according to Gundry, the fulfillment theme is this: "*He [Jesus] was the messianic King.*"⁵⁴

France concludes his discussion of the fulfillment formula in verses 22 and 23 (he uses the phrase, "formula quotation") as follows:

The formula as a whole, then, is designed to prepare the reader for a solemn declaration of how God's previously announced purpose has reached its due conclusion in Jesus.⁵⁵

To summarize: as stated in verse 22, verses 20-21 describe the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, which is then cited in verse 23. More of this fulfillment is discussed in the next major section, "The Fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14."

Before proceeding to the next subsection, it should be noted that according to France,

It is, then, striking to discover that among the eleven formula-quotations [fulfillment formulas] of Matthew the only one to offer a text which is the same as the LXX is 1:23 (except for the alteration of 'you will call' to 'they will call'...)⁵⁶

This difference between the LXX and verse 23 is significant. As background to verse 23, recall that in verse 21 the angel tells Joseph "you shall call his name Jesus." This clause, "you shall call" or "you will call," is the

49 Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 133.

50 Revised Standard Version (RSV), New American Standard Version (NASB), New International Version (NIV), New King James Version (NKJV), English Standard Version (ESV), etc.

51 Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:76.

52 Carson argues his case at greater length in section 11.b of his "Introduction" (*Matthew*, VIII:27-29).

53 With reference as to who is speaking in verses 22 and 23, Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:77, cites Raymond E. Brown (*The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1977], p. 144, n. 31) who argues that nowhere in Scripture does an angel cite Scripture in this fashion. Carson's response is weak: "But, equally, nowhere in Scripture is there a virgin birth in this fashion."

54 Gundry, "Fulfil," II:367; brackets added. Additional verses cited are Matt. 2:6, 23; 3:17; 4:15; 21:5; 22:44; 26:64; etc. Gundry cited 1:23 as the fulfillment verse instead of 1:22. Perhaps 1:23 was a typing mistake.

55 France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher*, p. 172. France also suggests that "a few Old Testament passages supply a possible model on which such a formula [as used in the NT] might have been based." He cites 1 Kgs. 2:27 and 2 Chron. 36:21-22 = Ezra 1:1.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 173; brackets added.

English translation of the Greek word *καλέσεις* used by Matthew.⁵⁷ Now regarding verse 23, it gives a translation of the Hebrew verse Isaiah 7:14. However, Matthew's citation of Isaiah 7:14 does not translate the Hebrew word, **תִּקְרָא**, which means "and she will call."

In fact, there are three different words that have been used for that clause in Isaiah 7:14, including the original Hebrew word:

- To translate the Hebrew **תִּקְרָא**, "and she will call," would in Greek be *καὶ καλέσει*
- The LXX for Isaiah 7:14 has *καὶ καλέσεις*, "and you [singular] will call"
- Matthew has *καὶ καλέσουσιν*, "and they will call"

Who, then, will call the child's name "Immanuel"? "She," "you," or "they"?

Roman Catholic scholar Maximilian Zerwick suggests that Matthew uses the word, *καλέσουσιν*, as an *indefinite plural*. An "indefinite plural" is a third person plural verb without a subject. Zerwick points out that an indefinite plural "is used with especial frequency with verbs of telling [such as] 'they say' etc."⁵⁸ Applying this analysis to Matthew 1:23, he states,

The indefinite plural has also been seen in the OT quotation in Mt 1,23, where the OT's *καλέσει* [she will call] becomes *καλέσουσιν* [they will call].⁵⁹

The verb *καλέσουσιν*, meaning "they will call," is third person future active indicative of *καλέω*, *to call* or *I call*. *καλέσουσιν* could be used in a context that identifies the "they" in "they will call." However, in Matthew 1:23 this same verb is generally interpreted as an indefinite plural verb because there is no explicit subject to which "they" refers.

"Indefinite plural" verbs, as noted above, are third person plural verbs. They are one type of the broader aspect of Greek grammar called "impersonal verbs" that in the sentence appear to have no subject. Nigel Turner

57 See footnote 43.

58 Maximilian Zerwick, S. J., *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples*, trans. from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S. J. (Rome: 1963), p. 1; brackets added.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 3; brackets added. Zerwick, and other scholars, accepts the OT **תִּקְרָא** = *καὶ καλέσει* = "and she will call" in Isaiah 7:14. Carson (*Matthew*, VIII:80) however, suggests something different: "Matthew's quotation of Isaiah 7:14 is very close to the LXX; but he changes 'you will call' [as in the LXX] to 'they will call.' This may reflect a rendering of the original Hebrew, if 1QIsa^a [the famous Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll found in Cave 1] is pointed appropriately (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, p. 90)." By "pointed appropriately" Carson means the *appropriate* vowels and accents needed to produce "they will call" from among the vowels and accents now used throughout the current Hebrew Bible. 1QIsa^a has no pointing. Thus Carson accepts Gundry's view, which conflicts with the work of the Masoretes (A.D. 500-950), the Jewish scholars who produced the final form of the text of the Old Testament, preserving in written form the oral tradition (*masorah*) of the correct vowels and accents. Those vowels and accents give us "she will call" in Isaiah 7:14. France (*Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, p. 173) has a different view: "It is, then, striking to discover that among the eleven formula quotations of Matthew the only one to offer a text which is the same as the LXX is 1:23 (except for the alteration of 'you will call' to 'they will call', which is required to make sense when it is quoted out of context)." However, Isa. 7:14 in the LXX with "you will call" does not require "they will call" to make sense. It is quite clear that "you will call" refers to the pregnant woman just as "she will call" does. Finally, Hendriksen (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 134, n. 135) states that Matthew's quote "represents no essential departure from the original Hebrew." That is a curious statement, but he offers no additional explanation. In contrast to these three views--Carson's, France's, and Hendriksen's--Zerwick's view seems more likely. However, I suggest another possibility after presenting Moule's view.

devotes a chapter in his book to impersonal verbs, including the special case of indefinite plural verbs, which he also calls "impersonal 'they'" verbs. Despite that general name for these verbs, Turner points out that the meaning can be "one" or "they."⁶⁰ Another author, C. F. D. Moule, likewise has a chapter on impersonal verbs that includes a discussion of indefinite plural verbs. He describes indefinite plural verbs as follows:

Here we may mention also the use of the third person plural with a vague and unexpressed subject, 'they', as in our phrase 'they say', which is equivalent to a Passive, '*such-and-such a thing is said*' (cf. also English 'one', French *on*, German *man*). This usage seems to have been encouraged by the influence of Aramaic...⁶¹

Moule gives several examples, one being Matthew 5:15. An indefinite plural verb need not be a future time, and in this example the indefinite plural verb is present time:

οὐδὲ καίουσιν λύχνον ...
nor do they light a lamp ...

The verb *καίουσιν*, meaning "they light" or "they are lighting," is third person present active indicative of *καίω*, *to light* or *I light*. Here, due to *οὐδὲ* or "nor," the intent is "nor do they light." Again, as with *καλέσουσιν*, *καίουσιν* could be used in a context that identifies the "they" in "do they call." However, this verb is called an indefinite plural verb because there is no explicit subject to which "they" refers.⁶²

Returning to verse 23, it would be difficult to suggest why Matthew would use an indefinite plural verb in the citation of Isaiah 7:14. Is *καλέσουσιν* used as a indefinite plural verb here? There might be a way to interpret it as a normal verb. In verse 21 the angel tells Joseph that *he* will name Mary's son "Jesus." Also Isaiah 7:14 in the Hebrew text states that *she*, referring to Mary, will name her son "Immanuel." Since the names "Jesus" and "Immanuel" refer to the same child, perhaps Matthew thought the word "they" would more accurately describe the situation between Joseph and Mary and the child. If so, the verb *καλέσουσιν* would not be considered an indefinite plural verb. That Joseph gives the child one name and Mary gives the same child another name could simply be described by saying that "they" both are naming the child. Then *καλέσουσιν* would simply be a third person future verb. Unfortunately, this explanation of Matthew's use of *καλέσουσιν* in his citation of Isaiah 7:14 does have a problem: "they will call" is used only in connection with Isaiah 7:14 and the name "Immanuel,"

In concluding verse 23, it is important to note the overall difference between the verse in Isaiah 7:14 in the Hebrew Scriptures and as cited in verse 23. The following analysis is helpful.

The Limit of Isaiah 7:14 in the Old Testament: Chapter 13 concluded (1) that an unknown "maiden" will "bear" a "son" and will name him "Immanuel" and (2) that this "son" is the *Messiah*.⁶³

The Completion of Isaiah 7:14 in the New Testament: The "maiden" is identified as the virgin Mary, wife

60 His book is identified as follows: James Hope Moulton, gen. ed., *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), vol. 3: *Syntax*, by Nigel Turner, pp. 292-93. Hendriksen states that the meaning of *καλέσουσιν* here is "'they shall call' = 'it [his name] shall be called'" (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 133 and 134, n. 135; brackets original). However, that does not seem to be a recognized meaning of an indefinite plural verb.

61 C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), chapter V, "Impersonal Verbs," p. 28.

62 Other examples of indefinite plural verbs given by Moule are Matt. 7:16; Mark 10:13; 15:27; Luke 6:38; 6:44; 14:35; 17:23; John 15:6; 20:2; Acts 3:2; Rev. 12:6.

63 This conclusion was reached in the subsection "The Conclusions Based on the Implications of the Components of Isaiah 7:14" in the section "Combining the Components for an Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14" of Chapter 13, based on the chapters previous to Chapter 13 and the final analysis in Chapter 13 itself.

of Joseph (though the marriage had yet not been consummated), the legal heir of David through Solomon, and the Messiah called "Immanuel" is named "Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

As noted in the subsection "Matthew 1:20-21: The Message from the Angel," more detail related to Jesus saving his people from their sins is given in the subsection "The Messiah Who Saves His People From Their Sins" of section "The Fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14" below.

Matthew 1:24-25: Joseph's Response

According to verse 24, when Joseph awoke from his sleep he obeyed the angel and took Mary for his wife. This probably indicates that he completed the second and third stages of marriage. However, though now allowed after stage three of the marriage, according to verse 25 Joseph had no sexual union with his new wife until after the birth of Jesus.

An additional point is worthy of note. Carson points out that the "until" in verse 25 argues against the Roman Catholic view of perpetual virginity for Mary.

The "until" clause most naturally means that Mary and Joseph enjoyed normal conjugal relations after Jesus' birth (cf. further on 12:46; 13:55). Contrary to McHugh (p. 204), the imperfect *eginōsken* ("did not know [her]") does not hint at continued celibacy after Jesus' birth but stresses the faithfulness of the celibacy till Jesus' birth.⁶⁴

The Fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14

The fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, and the details of that fulfillment, must be based on the meaning of the Hebrew text and the details supplied by Matthew's texts, 1:1, 1:16, and 1:18-25. Much of this analysis, and the conclusions drawn from it, has been done in the two preceding sections "The Beginning and End of Matthew's Genealogy" and "The Two New Testament Passages That Portray the Virgin Birth of Jesus." However, it still remains to analyze (1) the name "Immanuel" and its meaning and (2) how the Messiah is able to save his people from their sins.

The Name Immanuel and The Significance of "God with Us"

It was concluded in the subsection "Matthew 1:22-23: The Citation of Isaiah 7:14" that verse 22 verifies the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 in the events described regarding Joseph and Mary, followed by its citation in verse 23. France, Hendriksen, and Carson all give important comments on verse 23.

France

France points out the nature and result of Matthew's translation of the transliterated name "Immanuel." He writes,

Of course it is true that 'Immanuel' as an Old Testament name need mean no more than 'God is with us', and need no more suggest the divinity of the one so called than the many other 'El-' and 'Yahweh-'

64 Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:81; brackets original. Carson's reference is John McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), p. 204. Additional arguments against Mary's perpetual virginity can be found in Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, pp. 144-45.

names of the Old Testament. But Matthew's translation does not opt for this 'weaker' meaning; *μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός* translates the component parts of the Hebrew name literally and in sequence, and at least leaves open the startling idea that this baby is himself God, present among men.⁶⁵

Thus after pointing out the stronger meaning of *μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός*, France opens the door to the "idea that this baby is himself God."

Hendriksen

Hendriksen first makes a similar point about Immanuel being himself God but expands on it:

Matthew, then, has every right to appeal to Isa. 7:14, and to state that Mary's pregnancy by the power of the Holy Spirit, and without assistance from Joseph, was in fulfillment of this prediction. That the name of this son would be Emmanuel had also been included in the ancient prophecy and had been reaffirmed in substance in Isa. 9:6: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...and his name shall be called...the Mighty God." There is very little difference in meaning between "to [or: for] us...the Mighty God" and "with us God," which is the literal meaning of Emmanuel.⁶⁶

Hendriksen here restates that Mary's pregnancy and subsequent son is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. The virgin Mary is the *עַלְמָה* ('*almah*) of Isaiah 7:14, and she will call her son Immanuel. But Hendriksen continues. As argued in Chapter 13 of this book, Immanuel is the son predicted in Isaiah 9:6 (Hebrew, 9:5) who is given another name: the "Mighty God." Chapter 7 of this book, entitled "Isaiah 9:5-6," offers a rather lengthy study of Isaiah 9:5-6. It concludes that all four names apply to the "child," also called "son," and that this child was the Messiah of Israel. Chapter 7 also concludes that all four names, including "Mighty God," are given to this child. However, Chapter 7 goes no further. This chapter does: Jesus is "Immanuel" and also "Mighty God."

Chapter 13 of this book, entitled "The Interpretation of the Immanuel Prophecy," is another lengthy chapter. It concludes that Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 and the child/son of Isaiah 9:5-6 are one and the same child, namely the Messiah of Israel. But if the Messiah has the title "Mighty God," then he himself is God.

Carson

Carson argues for a strong interpretation of the name "Immanuel" and its meaning, including a reference to the name, or more accurately the title, "Mighty God" in Isaiah 9:5, as well as the interpretation of the name "Jesus" and its meaning.

Most scholars...suppose that this name in Isaiah reflects a hope that God would make himself present with his people ("Immanuel" derives from ' *immānû 'ēl*, "God with us"); and they apply the name to Jesus in a similar way, to mean that God is with us, and for us, because of Jesus. But if Immanuel in Isaiah is a messianic figure whose titles include "Mighty God," there is reason to think that "Immanuel" refers to Jesus himself, that he is "God with us." Mathew's use of the preposition "with" at the the end of 1:23 favors this...Though "Immanuel" is not a name in the sense that "Jesus" is Messiah's name (1:21), in the OT Solomon was named "Jedidiah" ("Beloved of Yahweh," 2 Sam. 12:25), even though he apparently was not called that. Similarly, Immanuel is a "name" in the sense of title or description.

No greater blessing can be conceived than for God to dwell with his people (Isa 60:18-20; Ezek 48:35;

65 France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, p. 312; italics original.

66 Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, pp. 140-41; brackets original.

Rev. 21:23). Jesus is the one called "God with us": the designation evokes John 1:14, 18.⁶⁷ As if that were not enough, Jesus promises just before his ascension to be with us to the end of the age (28:20; cf. also 18:20), when he will return to share his messianic banquet with his people (25:10).

If "Immanuel" is rightly interpreted in this sense, then the question must be raised whether [the name] "Jesus" (1:21) should receive the same treatment. Does [the name] "Jesus" ([which means] "Yahweh saves") mean Mary's Son merely brings Yahweh's salvation, or is he himself in some sense the Yahweh who saves? If "Immanuel" entails the higher christology, it is not implausible that Matthew sees the same in [the name] "Jesus." The least we can say is that Matthew does not hesitate to apply OT passages descriptive of Yahweh directly to Jesus (cf. on 3:3).⁶⁸

Carson in his first paragraph points out that Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 is the Messiah and that, as the Messiah, he is given the title "Mighty God" in Isaiah 9:5. From this he concludes that Immanuel is Jesus and that he, Jesus, is "God with us."

Carson goes on in his second paragraph to point out that John 1:14 and 18 verify Jesus is "God with us" and that he will be with us to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20) when he returns to share his banquet with his people (25:10).

In Carson's third paragraph, he argues that if the title "Immanuel" was interpreted correctly in his first two paragraphs, then the name "Jesus" should be similarly interpreted. The comparison is as follows:

If the title "Immanuel" (which means "God with us") was properly interpreted to mean that Jesus is God with us

Then the name "Jesus" (which means "Yahweh saves") is properly interpreted to mean that Jesus is the Yahweh who saves

That Jesus is the Yahweh who saves is discussed in the next subsection, "The Messiah Who Saves His People From Their Sins."

Carson concludes his analysis by pointing out that Matthew does not hesitate "to apply OT passages descriptive of Yahweh directly to Jesus (cf. on 3:3)."⁶⁹

The conclusion of this subsection, "The Name Immanuel and The Significance of 'God with Us,'" is that according to Matthew 1:20-23 Jesus is the "Immanuel" of Isaiah 7:14 and that as such he himself is "God with Us."⁷⁰

Mary

In view of the above three scholars who argued that the title Immanuel, or as translated, *God with Us*, refers to Jesus in the full sense that he is God, was this known to Mary during her pregnancy and at the birth? Or as this question was raised in Chapter 12, section "עִמָּנוּ אֵל," does the mother in naming the child "Immanuel" simply intend to express that "God is with us" during these trying times, or does she name the child Immanuel because

67 John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:18: "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*." Both verses are taken from the *NASB*.

68 Carson, *Matthew*, VIII:80; brackets added.

69 Carson's note, "(cf. on 3:3)," refers to his comments on Matt. 3:3 where Matthew cites Isa. 40:3: "For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, 'THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, "MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!"'" (*NASB*).

70 Other verses state that Jesus is God without referring to the meaning of the title Immanuel (e.g., John 1:1 and 20:28). However, the doctrine of the Trinity is beyond the scope of this book.

she believes this child is really God incarnate--"God with Us"? Several points seem clearly to favor the second option.

First, in Matthew 1:18-25, whether or not the angel continues speaking in verses 22 and 23, it seems clear from verse 24 that Joseph knew the contents of verses 22 and 23 when he woke up. There would then be little doubt that he would tell Mary everything in that dream. In the next subsection, "The Messiah Who Saves His People From Their Sins," it is concluded that only God can save his people from sin. Surely Joseph and Mary would know that. Thus when Mary gives her new born baby the name "Immanuel," translated "God with us," she would believe that it implies its strict sense that this baby is indeed God who is now with them.

Second, according to Luke 1:26-38 the angel Gabriel told Mary that the son she will bear "will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." Here the baby will be called "the Son of the Most High," he will reign forever, and his kingdom will have no end. There is little doubt that this describes deity.

Third, Gabriel continues and tells Mary that her "holy Child shall be called the Son of God." This title is used many times in the four gospels, and it was considered equality with God to claim that title. John records an event where Jews were ready to stone Jesus because he made himself "out to be God," when Jesus had actually said that he was the "Son of God."⁷¹ Mary too would believe that her child whom she called Immanuel, or God with Us, was himself God.

The Messiah Who Saves His People From Their Sins

Who Can Save

Before identifying "his people," there is the question of who can save. Hendriksen answers this question:

The marked and prevailing emphasis which, already in the Old Testament, is placed upon the fact that God is sovereign and that he alone can save is evident from such passages as Gen. 49:18; II Kings 19:15-19; II Chron. 14:11; 20:5-12; Ps. 3:8; 25:5; 37:39; 62:1; 81:1; Isa. 12:2; Jer. 3:23; Lam. 3:26; Dan. 4:35; Mic. 7:7; Hab. 3:18; Zech. 4:6; and a host of other passages equally clear and precious.⁷²

So it is only God who can save. But verse 21 states that Jesus "will save his people from their sins." In the subsection, "Matthew 1:20-21: The Message from the Angel," Carson was cited and pointed out that verse 21 states the fundamental purpose that Jesus came. That purpose, according to verse 21, is that Jesus "will save His people from their sins."

Is There a Contradiction?

How can these two facts be reconciled--only God can save and Jesus came to save?

The answer was also noted in the subsection "Matthew 1:20-21: The Message from the Angel," this time by citing Hendriksen, that it is God, and God alone, *in and through his Son* who saves people. Jesus is the Son of God, and as such it is he who saves people. This is accomplished by the atoning death of Jesus.

J. Oliver Buswell in his systematic theology offers a similar explanation:

The most common and most important use of these words ["saviour," "salvation," and "save"] has to do

71 John 10:24-39 (NASB).

72 Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, pp. 132-33.

with salvation from sin and its consequences, the salvation coming from God the Father through Jesus Christ who is called the Saviour pre-eminently. His function as such is stated in Matthew 1:21, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus...for He will save His people from their sin."⁷³

Thus there is no contradiction. God saves through his Son Jesus.

What Does "Save" Mean?

Hendriksen goes on to describe what "saved" means.

To be saved means *a.* to be emancipated from the greatest evil: the guilt, pollution, power, and punishment of sin; and *b.* to be placed in possession of the greatest good. Although in the present passage [verse 21] the negative alone is expressed, namely, to save--*from sin*, the positive is immediately implied. One cannot be saved *from* something without being saved *for* something: true happiness, the peace of God that transcends all understanding, freedom, joy unspeakable and full of glory, answered prayers, effective witness bearing, assurance of salvation, etc....The promise of the angel to Joseph, then, is this, that this Child must be called Jesus--meaning, in brief, Savior--because in the fullest and most glorious sense he will save his people from their sins.⁷⁴

Who Are "His People"?

Hendriksen raises this question and offers an answer: "Whom will he save? Not everybody but 'his people' (cf. John 3:16), 'his sheep' (John 10:11)."⁷⁵ Jesus saves somebody, but who are "his sheep," or as verse 21 called them, "his people"? In their commentary on verse 21, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown provide the answer:

...the lost sheep of the house of Israel, in the first instance; for they were the only people He then had. But, on the breaking down of the middle wall of partition. the saved people embraced the "redeemed unto God by His blood out of every kindred and people and tongue and nation."

Summary

The summary of this section can be described as follows.

- Only God can save and God the Father does that through his Son Jesus.
- This salvation is from sin.
- Those who are saved by Jesus are "his people," first from the house of Israel and then from all nations.

France offers an excellent description of this summary.

Jesus' mission is 'to save his people from their sins' (1:21), and the theme of God's undeserved forgiveness recurs throughout the gospel, until it is focused in the important inclusion in Matthew's version of the words at the last supper of the phrase 'for the forgiveness of sins' (26:28).⁷⁶

Again,

73 James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*. 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), II:81-82; brackets added. Buswell follows this citation with a number of additional verses that further exemplify the saviourhood of Jesus: Luke 19:10; Acts 5:30-31; Rom. 5:9-10; Phil. 3:20; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 2:13-14; and Heb. 7:25.

74 Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 133; italics original and brackets added.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

76 France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, p. 269.

As Son of God, he is obedient to his Father, and in this way he not only provides a model for the obedient service required of his disciples, but also makes his whole life an offering of obedience, which culminates in his self-giving on the cross as a ransom for many. Example and atonement are woven together in a total mission to 'save his people from their sins' (1:21).⁷⁷

Conclusion

This book was written primarily to study every aspect of Isaiah 7:14 in order to arrive at its meaning based solely on the Old Testament (the Tanakh) with no reference to the New Testament. That took thirteen chapters. Chapter 13 first gave a summary of the previous twelve chapters. It then presented a lengthy analysis of the major conservative views of Isaiah 7:14, including Jewish views. Finally, Chapter 13 terminated with the arguments and conclusion for the final view taken by this author.

This chapter, Chapter 14, was somewhat of an amendment. Its purpose was to analyze the New Testament interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:18-25 where Isaiah 7:14 was said to be fulfilled. It was found consistent with the interpretation reached in the Old Testament. However, the New Testament interpretation went further than the Old Testament. By this I mean that the unidentified "maiden" in Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled by Mary (1:18, 20), and the unidentified "Immanuel" was fulfilled by Jesus (1:21). The pregnant "maiden" (a עֲלֻמָּה) in Isaiah 7:14 was a young unmarried girl who had never been married, and Mary (a παρθένος) in Matthew 1:21 and 23 was a pregnant virgin who had not completed her marriage with Joseph and did not engage in sexual relations with him before the birth of Jesus (1:18-19, 24-25).

In addition to those details just listed that connected Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:18-25, there was additional material in Matthew 1:18-25. That text predicts that Jesus "will save His people from their sins," and this subject was briefly developed in this chapter. However, in doing that, reference is made to the Trinity. Further study of that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this book.

77 Ibid., p. 302.