

THE CHILD BORN TO A VIRGIN

As noted earlier, the child born to a virgin is understood as being typical of Christ. We should not think of this as a prophecy directly referring to Mary and the birth of her son Jesus, however. Christian and Jewish commentators have speculated as to who this prophecy refers to in its immediate context.⁵⁴ Let us analyse what this is.

First, we have the prophecy of the sixty-five years. Israel was broken when Hoshea was taken captive in 723 BC, nineteen years after the prophecy is given. There still remains forty-six years. In 677 BC, Manasseh was taken captive by Esarhaddon, sixty-five years after the giving of the prophecy. One of the conditions of the prophecy is that the land that thou [Ahaz] abhorrest would be forsaken of both her kings. Some see in this a reference to the land of northern Israel and Syria and their respective kings. However, these are not one land. Further, why would he *abhor the land*? The only land that could be referred to is the land of Israel. Its abhorrence is revealed in the fact that the kings of Judah and Israel have created a situation where it is difficult for the people to allow the land to rest. This is an obvious reference to the sabbatical rest of the land in Leviticus 25 and the first chastisement for its neglect, the breaking of the pride of power found in Leviticus 26, which came upon both the northern and southern kingdoms.

But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And **if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments**, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And **if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power**; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: (Leviticus 26:14-19)

Second, that God makes their “heaven as iron” and their ‘earth as brass” is an obvious reference to affliction. This child that is born shall experience affliction. Here the imagery is the eating of butter and honey. Commentators are divided as to the meaning of this phrase. Some believe it to be the food of plenty; the other of famine. When does the child know to choose the good and refuse the evil? Is this referring to the age of accountability or an experience in his life that leads to a conversion? The child does not learn this until after the land is forsaken of both her kings.

To consider this, let us examine the consequence further. The power that does this is Assyria. “The LORD shall bring upon thee [Ahaz], and upon thy people [Judah], and upon thy father's house [some future king of Judah], days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah [the diving of the kingdom]; even the king of Assyria.” Assyria does come against Judah in the time of Ahaz. The effects are far reaching. The people will also be affected. That his father’s house is also affected must mean that a future king is affected, since Ahaz has already been mentioned. Ahaz’ son Hezekiah is then going to experience Assyrian domination, this includes Ahaz’ grandson Manasseh, since he also experienced Assyrian domination. In fact, Assyrian domination of Judah continued off and on, until Assyria fell in 609 BC.

We believe that the child goes through a conversion experience as a result of his affliction. This connects the eating of the butter and honey to an Assyrian captivity of the king (the future child to be born to the house of David) himself.

Third, the child is born to a virgin. Though this is applied to the virgin birth of Christ, this is not necessarily, as applied to the immediate context, referring to a miraculous birth. Many read the virgin birth as the sign. However, the sign is the conversion of the child after the land is forsaken of both her kings. Could any of Ahaz' descendants be considered to have been born to a virgin in the time frame allotted? Manasseh's mother was Hephzibah.⁵⁶ Isaiah later speaks of Zion as being renamed Hephzibah.

Thou [Zion] shalt no more be termed **Forsaken**; neither shall thy land any more be termed **Desolate**: but **thou shalt be called Hephzibah** [delight], and thy land Beulah [married]: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For **as a young man marrieth a virgin**, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. (Isaiah 62:4-5)

Manasseh's mother is associated with the land, which is understood as being a virgin. We believe that the child that is born to a virgin is none other than Manasseh. He becomes a type of Christ, in his conversion experience. The land that is forsaken of both her kings is the land of Israel. The first king, Hoshea, is taken captive by Shalmaneser in 723 BC. The second, Manasseh, is taken captive by Esarhaddon in 677 BC. Thus the sixty-five year prophecy is fully completed with Manasseh's capture and conversion.

Further, we must draw our attention to the fact that the division we see in these two sticks (Judah and Ephraim) that is manifest in this civil war, leads to the captivity of both houses. For these to be joined once again, the events must be reversed. This is what we mean by a mirror. We will see this more clearly, as we move on.