

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 6, Virgin Birth, Isaiah's Son (Isa. 7-8) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 6, Virgin Birth, Isaiah's Son (Isa. 7-8), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Vannoy's lecture analyzes Isaiah 7-8, focusing on the prophecies surrounding the births of two children. The first prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 concerns a child born to a virgin ('almah), which has been interpreted as both a contemporary sign and a messianic prophecy related to Christ. Dr. Vannoy explores the meaning of 'almah', contrasting it with 'bethulah' and analyzing its translation in the Septuagint and New Testament. The second prophecy concerns Isaiah's son, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, whose birth serves as a short-term confirmation of the impending destruction of Syria and Israel. The lecture also examines Ahaz's alliance with Assyria and its devastating consequences for Judah, as well as words of exhortation to the Israelites.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 6 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Major Prophets.



Vannoy_MP_Session06.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 6, Virgin Birth, Isaiah's Son (Isa. 7-8)

Here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Robert Vannoy's lecture on Isaiah 7-8:

Briefing Document: Isaiah 7-8 - Virgin Birth and Isaiah's Son

Main Themes:

- **Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 and the "Virgin Birth":** The lecture focuses significantly on the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, specifically the word *'almah* (translated as "virgin" or "young woman"), and its implications for understanding the prophecy. Vannoy explores various interpretations, including those that apply it to the contemporary situation, those that apply it solely to Christ, and those that propose a dual fulfillment. He emphasizes the complexities surrounding the term *'almah*.
- **The Syro-Ephraimitic War and Ahaz's Unfaithfulness:** The historical context of the Syro-Ephraimitic war is central to understanding Isaiah's message. King Ahaz's decision to seek an alliance with Assyria instead of trusting in God is a key element. Isaiah's prophecies serve as both a rebuke to Ahaz and a message of comfort to the faithful remnant.
- **Short-Term vs. Long-Term Prophecy:** Vannoy highlights the interplay between short-term prophecies (related to events during Isaiah's time) and long-term prophecies (with Messianic implications). The fulfillment of the short-term prophecies serves to validate the long-term ones.
- **Isaiah's Son as a Sign (Isaiah 8):** The birth of Isaiah's son, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, is presented as another sign, distinct from the sign of Immanuel in Isaiah 7. This child's name and the timing of events related to him serve as a confirmation of the impending destruction of Syria and the Northern Kingdom.
- **Consequences of Ahaz's Alliance with Assyria:** Isaiah prophesies that Ahaz's reliance on Assyria will ultimately lead to devastation for Judah. Assyria, the "razor hired from beyond the River," will turn against Judah, causing widespread destruction.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Multiple Interpretations of Isaiah 7:14:** Some interpreters apply verses 13-16 to the contemporary Syro-Ephraimitic war and assume that the birth in verse 14 is the child born to either Ahaz or Isaiah.
- Others apply the entire passage to the birth of Christ, based on Matthew's citation.
- A third view suggests a multiple or dual fulfillment, applicable to both Isaiah's contemporary child and Christ.
- **The Meaning of 'Almah:** While *bethulah* is the more common Hebrew word for "virgin," Vannoy cites E.J. Young's argument that '*almah* was deliberately chosen by Isaiah to signify an unmarried woman.
- Young: "Only '*almah* makes clear that the mother was unmarried."
- The use of '*almah* in Genesis 24:43 (referring to Rebekah) demonstrates that it can refer to a virgin.
- Dr. MacRae defined '*almah* as "unmarried, or a young woman of an marriageable age...and one of whose characteristic is that she be a virgin."
- **The Septuagint Translation:** The Septuagint translates '*almah* as *parthenos*, a Greek word typically translated as "virgin."
- However, *parthenos*, like *bethulah*, can also be ambiguous.
- Matthew 1:18 and 1:23 clarifies that *parthenos* in that context does indicate virginity due to the circumstances surrounding Mary's pregnancy.
- **Isaiah's Son (Isaiah 8) as a Short-Term Prophecy:** The birth of Isaiah's son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz serves as a short-term sign, confirming the long-term prophecy of Immanuel's birth.
- The timing of the fulfillment related to Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz is quicker than the timeframe implied in Isaiah 7. "Before the boy knows how to say 'My father' or 'My Mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria."
- This prophecy was fulfilled by the fall of Damascus two years later (732 B.C.).
- **Ahaz's Alliance and its Consequences:** Isaiah 7:17-25 describes the negative consequences of Ahaz's alliance with Assyria.

- Isaiah: "The Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the River--the king of Assyria--to shave your head and the hair of your legs, and to take off your beards also." (7:20) This symbolizes the devastation Assyria will inflict on Judah.
- The Assyrian threat materializes during the reign of Hezekiah (Ahaz's son), as described in Isaiah 36-39.
- **The Significance of the "Waters of Shiloah" (Isaiah 8:5-8):** The people's rejection of the "gently flowing waters of Shiloah" (symbolizing trust in God) and their rejoicing in Rezin and the son of Remaliah (their enemies) leads to the Lord bringing the "mighty floodwaters of the River--the king of Assyria" upon them.
- However, because Judah is "Immanuel's land," Assyria's destruction will be limited. "Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel!"

Quotes:

- "Hear now, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?" (Isaiah 7:13)
- "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings." (Isaiah 7:16)
- "Only 'almah makes clear that the mother was unmarried." (E.J. Young)
- "Before the boy knows how to say 'My father' or 'My Mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria." (Isaiah 8:4)
- "Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel!" (Isaiah 8:8)
- "The Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the River--the king of Assyria--to shave your head and the hair of your legs, and to take off your beards also." (Isaiah 7:20)

Implications:

The lecture emphasizes the importance of careful interpretation of scripture, considering the historical context, linguistic nuances, and the overall message of the prophet. It also underlines the consequences of unfaithfulness and the ultimate sovereignty of God, even in the face of impending judgment. The virgin birth debate and dual nature of the prophecies remain areas of theological complexity.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 6, Virgin Birth, Isaiah's Son (Isa. 7-8)

Isaiah 7-8: Virgin Birth, Isaiah's Son, and the Syro-Ephraimitic War: A Study Guide

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the three general interpretations of Isaiah 7:13-16, and what are the challenges associated with each?
2. Why does Vannoy suggest that Isaiah's choice of the word 'almah (young woman/virgin) was deliberate and significant?
3. How does Genesis 24 clarify the meaning of 'almah?
4. How does the context of Matthew 1:18-25 help clarify the meaning of "parthenos"?
5. According to Bullock, what is the relationship between the long-range and short-range prophecies in Isaiah 7?
6. Why does Vannoy argue that the child in Isaiah 8 is different from the child in Isaiah 7?
7. Explain how the birth of Isaiah's son serves as a confirmation of the long-range prophecy in Isaiah 7.
8. According to Vannoy, what is the significance of the location in Isaiah 36:2, where Rabshakeh stands?
9. What is the symbolic meaning of the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, and to whom does it apply?
10. What does it mean when Isaiah writes of the people refusing the waters of Shiloah?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The three interpretations are: (1) applying the passage solely to the Syro-Ephraimitic war, (2) applying it solely to the birth of Christ, and (3) advocating a dual fulfillment. The first two fail to account for specifics within the passage while the multiple fulfillment raises the issue of multiple sense.

2. Isaiah deliberately used the term 'almah because it unequivocally signifies an unmarried woman, which would indicate an unusual birth. If the mother were a good woman, then the birth is out of the ordinary, pointing toward a potential sign.
3. Genesis 24 uses 'almah alongside other terms like na'arah (damsel) and bethulah (virgin) to describe Rebekah. The text clarifies that she was a virgin because she was unmarried (she "had not known any man").
4. The context in Matthew clarifies that parthenos (virgin) indicates virginity by emphasizing that Mary was found with child *before* she and Joseph "came together," underscoring the virgin birth narrative.
5. Bullock suggests Isaiah supports a long-range prediction with a short-range predication that is able to be observed by his contemporaries. The long-range prophecies have a long time to be fulfilled, and the short-term prophecy is more immediate.
6. Vannoy argues they are different because the child in Isaiah 8 is clearly Isaiah's son, not born of a virgin, and is given the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, not Immanuel. The time of fulfillment is also shorter in Isaiah 8.
7. The birth of Isaiah's son, with the prophetic name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz and the shorter timeframe for fulfillment, serves as a confirmation. As the short-term prophecy comes to pass, it lends credibility to the long-range prophecy about the virgin birth.
8. The location is significant because it was the same spot where Isaiah had confronted Ahaz and warned him to trust in the Lord. The messenger of Assyria calling for Hezekiah's submission in the same location underscores the consequences of Ahaz's lack of faith.
9. The name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz means "quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil," symbolizing that doom is coming to the kingdoms of Israel and Syria. Eventually it applied to Judah as well, as destruction came at the hands of the Assyrians.
10. The people are refusing to trust in God and are instead trusting in Rezin and the son of Remaliah (Assyria). Because they refuse to trust the Lord, the Lord is going to bring a mighty river on them that will inundate the land, and that mighty river is Assyria.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the complexities of interpreting Isaiah 7:14, focusing on the various translations and understandings of the word "almah." How has this verse been used historically and theologically?
2. Analyze the relationship between Isaiah 7 and Isaiah 8 in the context of the Syro-Ephraimitic War. How do these chapters function together to convey Isaiah's message to Ahaz and the people of Judah?
3. Explore the concept of short-term and long-term prophecies in Isaiah 7-8. How does the fulfillment of the short-term prophecies impact the interpretation and belief in the long-term prophecies, particularly the prophecy of Immanuel?
4. Examine the consequences of Ahaz's alliance with Assyria, as depicted in Isaiah 7 and 8. How does Isaiah use symbolic language and imagery to convey the devastating effects of this decision on Judah?
5. Discuss the role of Immanuel in Isaiah 7-8. How is Immanuel both a sign of judgment and a source of hope for the people of Judah, and how does this relate to the broader message of the book of Isaiah?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **'Almah:** A Hebrew word traditionally translated as "young woman," but debated to mean specifically "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14.
- **Bethulah:** The common Hebrew word for "virgin," but sometimes refers to a betrothed or married woman.
- **Parthenos:** The Greek word used in the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 7:14 for "almah," often translated as "virgin," but with some ambiguity.
- **Syro-Ephraimitic War:** A conflict in the 8th century BC involving a coalition of Syria (Aram) and the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) against the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
- **Immanuel:** A Hebrew name meaning "God is with us," used in Isaiah 7:14 as a sign of God's presence and deliverance.
- **Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz:** A symbolic name given to Isaiah's son in Isaiah 8, meaning "quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil," signifying impending doom for Syria and Israel.
- **Waters of Shiloah:** A metaphor for God's gentle and reliable provision and protection, contrasted with the destructive "floodwaters" of Assyria.
- **Septuagint (LXX):** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
- **Multiple Fulfillment (Dual Fulfillment):** The interpretation that a prophecy has both a near-term and a long-term fulfillment.
- **Rabshakeh:** An Assyrian official sent by Sennacherib to Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah, as described in Isaiah 36.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 6, Virgin Birth, Isaiah's Son (Isa. 7-8), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About Isaiah 7-8

- **What are the different interpretations of Isaiah 7:14 ("a virgin shall conceive")?**
- Interpretations vary: some apply it solely to Isaiah's time, with the child being born to Ahaz or Isaiah; others apply it solely to the birth of Christ based on Matthew's citation. A third view sees a dual fulfillment, relating to both a contemporary child and Christ. The problem with the first interpretation is that it seems to rebuke Ahaz while also comforting God's people. The problem with the second interpretation is that it appears to directly refer to a contemporary event, when it says "before the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings." The third interpretation is a middle ground that has its own interpretive issues.
- **What is the significance of the Hebrew word 'almah in Isaiah 7:14?**
- 'Almah, often translated as "virgin," technically means "young woman." However, unlike the common Hebrew word for virgin, *bethulah*, *'almah* seems to specifically denote an unmarried woman of marriageable age and whose characteristic is that she is a virgin. In the context of Isaiah 7:14, some scholars argue that *'almah* was deliberately chosen to indicate an unmarried woman, making virginity a key element. Young suggests *'almah* stresses the unmarried state.
- **How does the Septuagint translation of 'almah as *parthenos* impact the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14?**
- The Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, translates *'almah* as *parthenos*, which generally means "virgin." This has been used to support the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ. However, like *bethulah*, *parthenos* can also be ambiguous, sometimes referring to an unmarried woman without necessarily implying virginity. The context is the deciding factor, and the context of Matthew 1:23 makes it clear that *parthenos* indicates virginity.

- **What is the immediate historical context of Isaiah 7-8, and how does it relate to the Syro-Ephraimitic War?**
- Isaiah 7-8 is set against the backdrop of the Syro-Ephraimitic War, when Syria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) allied against Judah. King Ahaz of Judah considered allying with Assyria for protection. Isaiah prophesied against this alliance, warning of the consequences of not trusting in the Lord.
- **How do the prophecies in Isaiah 7-8 address both short-term and long-term events?**
- Isaiah 7-8 contains both short-term and long-term prophecies. The short-term prophecies, such as the fall of Damascus and Samaria, served as immediate signs to confirm the authenticity of the long-term prophecies. For example, the quick fulfillment of the prophecy in chapter 8 regarding Isaiah's son serves as a pledge or earnest of the virgin's son who is talked about in chapter 7.
- **How does Isaiah's son, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (Isaiah 8), relate to the child in Isaiah 7:14?**
- Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, whose name means "quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil," is different from the child mentioned in Isaiah 7:14. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz is clearly Isaiah's son, not born of a virgin. His birth and the impending doom associated with his name served as a short-term confirmation of the long-term prophecy of Immanuel's birth. Also, the timing of the threat passing is different.
- **What are the consequences of Ahaz's alliance with Assyria, as prophesied by Isaiah?**
- Isaiah prophesied that Ahaz's alliance with Assyria would ultimately bring devastation upon Judah. While Assyria would initially protect Judah from Syria and Ephraim, it would later become a "razor hired from beyond the River" (Isaiah 7:20) to shave Judah, causing widespread destruction and agricultural decline. This is eventuated in Isaiah 36-39.
- **What is the significance of the "waters of Shiloah" mentioned in Isaiah 8:6?**
- The "waters of Shiloah" symbolize the gentle provision and protection of the Lord. The people's rejection of these waters and their rejoicing in Rezin and the son of Remaliah (the enemies of Judah) signified their rejection of God's trust and their reliance on human alliances, leading to the coming "mighty floodwaters of the River" (Assyria) as judgment.