

Beauties of the Truth

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The Virgin Birth

The central feature of our Heavenly Father's plan is "the Ransom for all" (the corresponding price), a life for a life, the life of the perfect man Jesus for the life of the perfect man Adam. All God's works are perfect, and Father Adam was no exception. He was created perfect, in the character of his Creator.

Back in the far reaches of time, long before the world was, God foresaw that sin would contaminate mankind, and provisions were built into His plan to overcome it in the fullness of time. He planned for Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, to redeem us. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot... foreordained before the foundation of the world, but... manifest in these last times for you". (**1 Peter 1:18-20**) "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". (**John 1:29**)

In order to redeem Adam, and through him all of us, it was vital that the Redeemer be perfect, as Adam, to be a corresponding price. The lamb was to be without blemish or spot. The Scriptures confirm that this was so of our Lord. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin". (**Hebrews 4:15**) "He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin". (**1 John 3:5**) "For such an high priest... is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens". (**Hebrews 7:26**)

These texts leave no doubt as to our Lord's perfection. He was not contaminated by the fallen race, therefore he could be no part of Adam's posterity. Yet Jesus was born of a woman, Mary, a member of Adam's family. Mary was no doubt a very special woman, possessing exceptional virtues and qualities. Let us look at the words of the angel to Mary.

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel... said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end". (**Luke 1:26-33**)

Mary was indeed highly favored. We can readily appreciate that God would choose the very best among the young women of Israel to be given the privilege of bearing His only Begotten Son, and Mary received that honor. Nevertheless the Apostle Paul tells us in **Romans 3:10** that there is none righteous, no, not one. And

in **Romans 5:12**, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

HOW IS IT SO?

Though Mary would have been as perfect as it was possible for a member of the fallen race to be, the fact remains that as a daughter of Adam she could not be perfect in an absolute sense. So that poses the question: "how can something imperfect produce something that is perfect?" **Job 14:4** asks, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."

Yet the Scriptures plainly state that Jesus was sinless and perfect. He had to be so, otherwise he could not have been man's Redeemer. We fully accept God's inspired word on the subject, and even if we could not prove how it was accomplished, it would not alter our faith in the matter. But we all have inquiring minds, we like to get to the bottom of things. Some years back there was a science program on television presented by Professor Julius Summer Miller entitled "why is it so?" That is the question we are asking today, or you could say "how is it so?"

Others in the past have endeavored to answer the question. Our Roman Catholic friends answer it with the doctrine of the immaculate conception. They say Mary was the exception to the rule and was in fact immaculate and perfect and could therefore produce a perfect offspring. We must reject this theory as being unscriptural.

Another writer at the end of the last century said that Jesus could be perfect because hereditary traits were only transmitted by the father; the mother nourished the baby in the womb, but did not transmit her inherited weaknesses to it. This seemed a satisfactory and reasonable answer at the time, as it was in line with medical thinking of that day.

But medical science later discovered that hereditary patterns are transmitted equally by both the father and mother. "Some once considered the role of the female like that of the field and the male like that of the seed, new bodies are formed by the united operation of the seed and the field. In reality both parents transmit the hereditary pattern equally, and on the average children resemble their mothers as much as they do their fathers" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1974, Vol. 8, page 801, "Heredity"). We have all observed this ourselves. Children as often resemble and have characteristics of their mother as of their father.

It was originally thought that hereditary patterns were in some way transmitted by the blood of the child, hence the term "blood relation" or "blood line." We refer to an aboriginal as a "half blood" or "full blood;" we hear of someone referred to as a "blue blood" or someone is said to have "bad blood in their veins." These terms probably came from the understanding that traits are transmitted by the blood.

The Bible tells us that the life is in the blood. Medical science also tells us that the quality of our life is determined by the quality of our blood. Poor quality, impure blood means inferior health, a pure blood stream means superior health. As the Bible says, the life is indeed dependent upon the blood.

But as far as heredity is concerned, this is transmitted by the parents to the children via the genes. Each parent transmits 50% of their genes to the child. This is a very interesting point to think about. A family might have 12 or more children, the children would receive 50% of each parent's genes, yet each child would be different. It seems this is because each receive a different set, or different combination, of genes. There is an exception where two children receive the same genes, that is in the case of identical twins. There are over 5 billion people on planet earth today and nearly all are different. We can now see how this is accomplished, by the mixing of the father's genes with the genes of the mother, producing a new being, different from either the father or the mother.

How wonderful are the works of our Heavenly Father, manifest in His human creation. What a dull colorless world it would be if everyone was alike. Surely we can see the hand of an all-wise creator in this remarkable process of the mixing of genes.

As Christians we understand that we are not unalterably stamped in a certain mold at birth by our genes, but rather our genes are responsible only in part for our personality, our character and being. Our upbringing, environment and life's experiences, and how we react to them, also play a very big part. This is especially true of those that our Heavenly Father is calling to be footstep followers of His dear son. Their life's experiences are tailor-made as it were, designed to produce change where required. They undergo chiseling and polishing that their characters might be conformed to that of their Master.

Thus our question regarding Jesus' perfection, "how is it so?" is a legitimate one, and one we have never heard an answer to. But we believe there is a simple and satisfactory answer.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Some seem to find it difficult to accept the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, even among those who claim to be Christians. At the time of our Lord's first advent a virgin birth would be an amazing thing to understand, but less so now. In this day of artificial insemination and test-tube babies, even man possesses the ability to procure a virgin birth. Why should any doubt that Almighty God could do so? Isaiah predicted: "The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel". (**Isaiah 7:14**) Matthew records the fulfillment.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us". (**Matthew 1:18-23**)



The Perfect Child

Jesus was the seed or child of Abraham, Judah and David. When we think of a person being the son or descendant of someone, we think of them as being the literal fleshly descendant of that person. Then in order to fulfill the Scriptures does it mean that Jesus was the literal descendant of these three patriarchs? Definitely not. If he was, he could not have been man's redeemer. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him". (**Psalms 49:7**) If Jesus had literal fleshly ancestors he would fall in this same category, as a descendant of Adam. But he was not descended from Adam. He was the Logos, the Son of God.

In God's sight the members of the Church are all children, or seed, or Abraham. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise". (**Galatians 3:29**) It is quite immaterial whether we are literally of Abraham or not. If we are Christ's, God grafts us in no matter what our lineage. The Jews gloried that Abraham was their father, but John the Baptist put them straight on this point.

"Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for... God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham". (**Matthew 3:9**)

This indicates that to be children of Abraham in God's sight one does not have to be a literal descendant. Perhaps John is foreshadowing the fact that others were to be selected from the Gentiles to be Abraham's seed. Jesus himself was the primary seed of Abraham (and Isaac and Jacob) in a different way, as Joseph's foster son, just as an adopted baby takes the name and relations of his foster parents. As the Son of God, Jesus could not have Abraham or anyone else as a literal fleshly ancestor.

LINEAGE IN MATTHEW AND LUKE

Matthew 1:1-16 gives us the lineage from Abraham right down to Christ. It links in Judah and David who are of the same line, showing Jesus was the descendant of these through his foster father Joseph. **Luke 3:23-38** gives another lineage of Christ right back to Adam. The puzzling part is that the line from David to Christ is different from the Matthew account. In the Matthew account Christ is of the line of David through his son Solomon. In the Luke account he comes through the line of Nathan, David's other son. In Matthew Joseph is begotten by Jacob; in Luke he is listed as the son of Heli.

Nowhere do the Scriptures explain this matter. Two explanations have been put forward by commentators. One is that Heli is Mary's father, therefore Joseph's father-in-law. Brother Russell supports this view and it seems to be the correct understanding. Young's Concordance suggests Heli is Mary's father and brother to Jacob, Joseph's actual father.

It seems plain that Jacob was the real father of Joseph. As Matthew says, "Jacob begat Joseph." This puts the matter beyond doubt, whereas the Luke account simply says he was the "son" of Heli. As we have seen this does not necessarily mean a son by literal descent. We might ask, -if Luke's account gives Mary's lineage, why do the Scriptures present it as Joseph's? We are not told the reason but it could be that lineage is never taken in the Bible from the female side.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Let us return to our earlier question: "how is Jesus sinless and perfect having a human mother?" We have said Jesus is not descended literally from anyone on earth, that Abraham, Judah and David are not his blood relations. But we have seen that 50% of the genes come from the mother. In view of this would not Jesus indeed be a blood relation of these patriarchs through Mary?

There is a very simple explanation. We suggest that as Joseph was his foster father, so Mary was his foster mother. Mary was certainly his mother in the sense that she bore him, but not in the full sense, not a blood relation. Is it possible today for a woman to bear a son that is not her own and bears no relationship to her? Yes; it is.

To understand that Jesus was not related to his mother, look at the procedure man has adopted to procure a test tube baby. As the name suggests, the sperm from the father and an egg from the mother are combined in a test tube, and after two or three days when the tiny life has started to grow the embryo is implanted in the mother's womb. If things go well, in due time a baby results. In this case the father and mother are the true parents.

But the embryo could be implanted in an unrelated woman, in which case the baby born to the woman would not be related either to herself or her husband. If the woman who bore the child had hereditary weaknesses or defective genes, it would not matter in the least, since none of her hereditary patterns would be passed onto the child. All she provided were the nutrients from her bloodstream to nurture the tiny babe in her womb for nine months. None of her genes would have passed to the child.

In a similar way Jesus could be born of a woman, a member of the fallen race, and yet still be sinless and perfect. In this case the child born to Mary had but one true parent, his Heavenly Father. So he possessed no imperfections or weaknesses.

Others who have written on the subject in the past, though not saying so directly, seem to suppose that Mary's baby started just as all other babies by the male sperm uniting with an egg from Mary, the only difference being that God through His holy Spirit provided the sperm. We are suggesting that God implanted an embryo in Mary's womb, a tiny complete life in itself, that did not involve an egg from Mary. Thus the child inherited none of Mary's weaknesses or blemishes.

Bear in mind that God was not producing a new life, but as the scripture says, He was making the Logos into flesh. One day we hope to receive a change to the spirit nature. With Jesus it was the reverse. He received a change from the spirit to the flesh.

With a normal baby, and normal processes, a child receives 50% of the father's genes and 50% of the mother's, producing an entirely new life, different from either parent. It seems certain God would not have used this procedure, as the resulting baby would be a new being, rather than the Logos made flesh.

We suggest the life properties of the Logos were condensed into a tiny embryo. The resulting child was the Logos made flesh, not tainted with any sinful human traits. Of course it is not a matter we can prove from the Scriptures. It is a case we can reason out, and this seems to be the only reasonable and logical explanation.

How grateful we are that the Heavenly Father's onlybegotten son was made flesh to redeem us and the whole world. May that day come quickly when all mankind will know of the wonderful provision that has been made for them.

- Greig Tosh, Australia

Maher-Shalal-Hashbaz

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us". (**Matthew 1:21-23**)

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel". (**Isaiah 7:14**)

One of the most intriguing problems in prophecies of the nativity is the harmonization of these two verses. There is no doubt that Matthew is applying the prophecy of Isaiah to the birth of Jesus and in support of the concept of a virgin birth. There is also little doubt that Isaiah is applying the prophecy in his own day, and that the birth is not a virgin birth in the usual perception of that expression.

THE SETTING OF ISAIAH'S PROPHECY

The section of Isaiah's prophecy in which our text is found is one of the longer sections of the book, covering all of chapters 7 through 12.

Amaze is king of Judah. He is one of the more wicked of Judah's kings and it is remarkable that such an outstanding prophecy would be given to him. As a punishment for the iniquities of Israel during the reign of Ahaz, God permitted a confederacy of the northern kingdom of Israel, under King Pekah, and his Syrian ally, Rezin, to attack and score a great victory against Judah. Fearful of these allied forces, King Ahaz desired to make a defensive pact with the great eastern power Assyria, under Tiglath-Pileser.

It is in this scenario that Isaiah and his son, ShearJashub, seek a meeting with the king outside the walls of Jerusalem. The prophet urges the wicked king to seek a sign of the Lord. The king, in pretended humility, states that he will not tempt the Lord in such a way. Isaiah's response is harsh, "Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?". (**Isaiah 7:13**) Then he proceeds to give the sign of a virgin conceiving and bearing a son.

This sign, in the context of Isaiah, cannot be directly referring to some such far-off event as the birth of Jesus, since the prophet continues in verse 16, "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE SIGN

The sign given Ahaz in chapter 7 is fulfilled in chapter 8. "Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalalhashbaz. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria". (**Isaiah 8:1-4**)

Thus the fulfillment of the sign is the birth of Isaiah's second son, Maher-shalal-hashbaz. The similarity of verse 4 in chapter 8 with verse 16 in chapter 7 supports this interpretation. Evidently Isaiah had two wives, the mother of his first son Shear-Jashub, and the prophetess who bore the second child.

VIRGIN OR YOUNG MAIDEN

It is here where the conflict arises. Is it proper to say that Isaiah's second child was a result of a virgin birth? Certainly not in the sense that Jesus was the product of a miraculous conception by the holy Spirit in the womb of Mary! However, neither can we endorse the thought put forth by many commentators that the Hebrew *alma* simply means "young maiden" while the Greek *Parthenos* translated "virgin" in **Matthew 1:23**, means a true virgin. If such were so, Matthew would be greatly altering the meaning of the Isaiah passage to force it to fit the birth of Jesus.

The Wycliffe Commentary notes: "The word for virgin here is carefully chosen. Etymologically [*alma*] does not necessarily signify a (*virgo intacta*) (an untouched maiden). **In actual usage in the Hebrew Scriptures, however, it refers only to a maiden chaste and unmarried** (so far as the context shows). This well fits the prospective mother alluded to in this situation. Judging from **Isaiah 8:1-4**, the typical mother was the prophetess who became Isaiah's wife within a short time after this prophecy was spoken. Therefore she was a virgin at the time this promise was given. She serves as a type of the Virgin Mary, who remained a virgin even after her miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit" (emphasis added).

Thus the prophetess to whom Isaiah went was a virgin at the time of conception, i.e, Maher-shalalhashbaz was the result of the first sexual relationship between her and Isaiah. This precludes the prophetess being the first wife of Isaiah, since his other son, Shear-Jashub, was already on the scene. In the case of Mary, she was a virgin when she conceived, and remained one until the birth of the child.

The key thought of Wycliffe is that the entire incident in Isaiah is symbolic. This is confirmed in **Isaiah 8:18**, "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts." Pastor Russell, in an article titled "Bible Reading," comments as follows: "It was not uncommon for Jehovah to deal in this very way - causing a typical fulfillment of a prophecy to transpire, and thus attract attention for a time away from the actual fulfillment. In this case of typical fulfillment... the prophet represented Jehovah, the prophetess represented the Virgin Mary, and their child represented Jesus" (R436).

WHY NAMED EMMANUEL

Another oddity in both Isaiah and Matthew is that the name given the child appears different from the one predicted. The prophesied name is Immanuel, "God with us;" but Isaiah's son was named Mahershalal-hashbaz, "swift to the destruction;" Mary's son was also not named Immanuel, but Jesus.

In the case of Jesus, the problem seems simple to solve. Contrary to public opinion, Jesus does not mean "Savior;" but "Jehovah saves;" It is a compound name, adding the prefix "Je;" designating Jehovah, to the proper name Oshea, meaning savior. This is shown in **Numbers 13:16** where we read that Moses changed the name of the spy Oshea to Jehoshua, or as we know it, Joshua.

However the connection between Immanuel and the name Maher-shalal-hashbaz is not so apparent. At first reading, the name of Isaiah's son means destruction rather than salvation. However the destruction referenced is that of the alliance of Israel and Syria. This destruction did mean salvation - to the two-tribe kingdom of Judah.

Notice **Isaiah 8:8-10**: "And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel. Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us."

Not only is the name Immanuel mentioned in verse 8, but the last phrase of this passage, "for God is with us" is, in the Hebrew, Immanuel. In both cases God would be with them, and that to save. In the Old Testament, through the defeat of the antagonistic alliance; in the New Testament, through the ransom sacrifice, and thus the defeat of Satan, the ultimate enemy of the entire human race.

THE BIG PICTURE

Expanding from our theme text to the complete prophecy of **Isaiah 7** through 12, we find that it is a broad scope picture of the entire salvation process. The prophecy can be broken into three sections.

(1) Chapters 7 and 8 were largely fulfilled in the prophet's day, though they are typical of a large fulfillment later.

(2) Chapters 9 and 10 find their fulfillment in the first advent and the following Gospel age.

(3) Chapters 11 and 12 will be fulfilled in the future in Christ's Messianic kingdom.

The focal point of the first section is the desolation to be wrought, first upon Israel by the Assyrians, and then upon Judah. This desolation is depicted graphically in **Isaiah 7:20-22**. The Living Bible paraphrase captures the sense of the passage well.

"In that day the Lord will take this `razor' - these Assyrians you have hired to save you - and use it on you to shave off everything you have: your land, your crops, your people. When they finally stop plundering, the whole nation will be a pastureland; whole flocks and herds will be destroyed, and a farmer will be fortunate to have a cow and two sheep left. But the abundant pastureland will yield plenty of milk, and everyone left will live on curds and wild honey:'

The latter part of this passage is not depicting an era of plenty, but a desolation so complete that there would be so few inhabitants left that only these would have an abundance from the land.

Even when a remnant returned under the edict of Cyrus, it was but a token amount of the Jewish world population. Never did they regain full independence, though there was a measure of autonomy following the Maccabean revolt.

THE TURNING POINT

The ninth chapter opens with a distinct turn of events. "Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair shall not go on forever. Though soon the land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be under God's contempt and judgment, yet in the future these very lands, Galilee and Northern Transjordan, where lies the road to the sea, will be filled with glory."

This prophecy is quoted in **Matthew 4:15,16** and applied to the first advent. For the first time in about 600 years, the faithful in Israel could progress from the darkness and despair of their dispersion to the great light of the message of Jesus Christ.

This turning point is further elucidated in the familiar words of **Isaiah 9:6,7**: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it,

and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

In the opening sentence of his article on "The Throne of David" (R452), Pastor Russell rightly concludes: "This prophecy seems to be a continuation of that in **Isaiah 7:14**:" In other words, the child of the virgin birth pictured by Maher-shalal-hashbaz would fulfill a rulership role that child never achieved. The antitypical child, Jesus, would carry four titles:

(1) Wonderful Counsellor - The **wisdom** of his counsel would fulfill all that was predicted of Jesus when he is personified as wisdom in **Proverbs 7** to 9.

(2) The Mighty God - His **power** would be unmatched, for he would assume "all power in heaven and in earth". (**Matthew 28:18**)

(3) The Everlasting Father - **In love**, he would provide the guidance and leadership that only come from a caring father figure.

(4) The Prince of Peace - A title indicating that his kingdom would be based on perfect justice, protecting the rights of every man by instructing them in the ways of righteousness.

Truly, as Jesus himself said, "He that seeth me hath seen the Father". (**John 14:9**) His life mirrors that of his heavenly Father, Jehovah, in being a complete representation of the four cardinal attributes of wisdom, power, love and justice.

A SECOND DISPERSION

Although Israel had not achieved autonomy, there was a large portion of Jewry in their ancient homeland. Now once again, because they did not accept their Messiah, their house was to be "left desolate". (**Matthew 23:37,38**) This is the message of **Isaiah 9:8**, correctly translated in the New American Standard, "The Lord sends a message against Jacob, and it falls on Israel:"

The execution of this sentence is predicted in the prophecy under consideration. "The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind... shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts. Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honorable, he is the head... the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail... the leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led... are destroyed". (**Isaiah 9:12-16**)

This diaspora was to last nearly 2000 years, until their double was fulfilled in 1878. Then there would be a great return to the land. But those who would eventually inherit that land would be but a remnant of those who went out. Inheritance would demand faith of this remnant. Of them the prophet wrote in **Isaiah 10:20-22**: "In that day... the remnant of Israel... shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return:"

THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM

In the final two chapters of this prophecy we find descriptions of Christ's Messianic kingdom. **Isaiah 11:1-5** describes the return of Christ and the object of his second advent. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear

of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked... Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness... of his reins."

As in **Isaiah 9:6**, we see Christ presented in four figures. These also closely compare to the aspects of the operation of the holy Spirit on Bezaleel, the chief builder of Israel's tabernacle. (**Exodus 31:2,3**)

BEZALEEL	CHRIST	ATTRIBUTES
Wisdom	Wisdom and Understanding	Wisdom
Understanding	Counsel and Might	Power
Knowledge	Knowledge	The basis of Justice
Workmanship	Fear (Reverence of the Lord)	Love in action

In a thought-provoking article on Reprint page **R4093**, M. E. Reimer also compares these attributes to the holy anointing oil used in the tabernacle.

KINGDOM BLESSINGS

In these last chapters we find one of the bestknown promises of the kingdom: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed... and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den."

Whether this applies to literal animals or to those of wolf-like and lamb-like dispositions is immaterial, since the point of the passage is to show that Christ's kingdom will eventually produce a domain of peace and tranquility. Though probably the "child" is a metaphor for those who possess childlikeness, it is worth noting that the one who will, in truth, lead them is that child of the virgin of chapter seven and the child of chapter nine who is called Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

Nor will this kingdom be a limited one. It will be for those of all nations, races and peoples. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious". (**Isaiah 11:10**)

This kingdom will usher in the "highway of holiness". (**Isaiah 35:8-10**) The beginnings of this highway are described in these closing chapters. "The LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea... he shall shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria... as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of... Egypt". (**Isaiah 11:15-18**)

The grand finale of that kingdom is found in the closing words of the prophecy. "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee". (**Isaiah 12:2-6**)

THE GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

Another lesson in the study of these chapters in Isaiah is their geographic setting, described in **Isaiah 7:3**. "Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and ShearJashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field:"

This location is southwest of the city of Jerusalem, just outside the city walls. Two pools have been uncovered by archaeologists at this location, connected with a stone gutter, or conduit. Gravity caused the water to flow rapidly through the conduit connecting the two pools. This flowing water made an ideal spot for the fullers (or "dyers of cloth") to rinse their dyed garments. Since red was the predominant color, the water was frequently colored red by the rinsed dye.

Connecting this setting with the prophetic name Maher-shalalhashbaz ("hastening to the spoil") recalls another prophecy of Isaiah. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in throe apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come". (**Isaiah 63:1-4**)

But this symbol of stained garments is not used only of destruction. It is also used by the same prophet to depict salvation. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool". (**Isaiah 1:18**) In this picture of the work of the fuller we see the redemptive work of Christ which is shown in the Matthew quotation at the head of this article.

In both senses, then, the setting Isaiah chose for the giving of the prophecy becomes a picture of the words he speaks - truly a sign from God.

SHEAR-JASHUB

Not only was the name Maher-shalal-hashbaz symbolic, the same is true of Isaiah's other son, Shear-Jashub. **Isaiah 8:18** states that Isaiah's "children;" plural, would be "for signs and wonders in Israel." The name Shear-Jashub means "a remnant shall return" and appears twice in the middle of this prophecy. We do not notice it since the words are translated into their English meaning.

"The remnant shall return (Hebrew, *shear jashub*), even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return (Hebrew, *shear jashub*): the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness". (**Isaiah 10:21,22**)

Thus in Isaiah's oldest son we see a promise of blessing to the faithful remnant of Israel, and in the name of his youngest, a promise of ultimate deliverance from their enemies.

How beautiful it is to note the care by which a loving heavenly Father has outlined over and over again the fact that salvation is sure and promised, and that good, not evil, will ultimately triumph.

- Carl Hagensick

INDEX OF ARTICLES, 1995 TO 1999

1995

Memorial Supper, When Observed?
Contrasting the Two Gardens
The Burden of Dumah
Weights and Years
Holy Anointing Oil

This Thing is From Me
Angel or Eagle?
The Philosophy of Atonement
The Parousia

Cloak, Books and Parchments
The Three Signs
Where Does the Year Really Begin?
The Parable of the Vineyard Laborers

Five Smooth Stones
Seven Kings and Eight Princes
The Sea of Glass
Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass

1996

The Memorial Supper
The Right Hand
Dating the Crucifixion
Jeremiah's Purchase

Nine Men in the Life of Bathsheba
So Many Beasts, Heads and Horns!
Rocks in the Wilderness

Wall, Bars and Gates
Ye Shall Find a Colt Tied
Our Lord's Resurrection Appearances
The Dew and the Lion

Haggai and the Second Temple
Consecration vs. Pharaoh's Objections
The Builder's Temple-Tower
The Song of Solomon and Revelation
Treasures in Heaven
Four Passovers
Venerable Tradition

1997

Turning Point Why Rachel? Why Ramah?
A Subtle Hint of the Resurrection
The Resurrection
Historic Confirmation of Bible Student Chronology

Samson
The Trial of Jesus Christ
Growth of the Righteous

Horses Ready for Battle
Dan and Benjamin
Common Root for All the Branches

Following the Star Two Genealogies of Christ
Where Will All Nations be Gathered?

1998

The Setting... of Ezekiel's Temple
Trials
Jephthah's Daughter
Matriarch Prophecies
The Empty Tomb
The Trial of Faith

The Deluge and the Epic of Gilgamesh
Daniel and the Lions
Samson, a Type of Socialism

The Trinity... Mystery or Confusion?
The Great Debate

Views of the Early Church Fathers
Elisha's Typical Experiences (Part 1)

1999

Understanding the Bible
1 Thessalonians 4:14-17
The Breastplate and New Jerusalem
Wisdom of the Seven Churches
Elisha's Typical Experiences (Part 2)
On the Addition Question in Numbers 3

Under His Wings
Anointing, Seal and Witness of the Spirit
Every Eye shall See Him...

Balaam's Fourth Prophecy
Let This Cup Pass From Me
Jacob at the Ford Jabbok
Foxes

The Virgin Birth
Maher-Shalal-Hashbaz