[F-2] Does Isaiah 7:14 refer to a virgin? -- Yes!!!

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Concerning the use of the Hebrew word "alma" {העלמה} - literally 'the virgin'

First let me say that I believe that Jesus truly was born of a virgin and truly God. If He wasn't, then He was not 'without sin' and He could not be our Savior. I strongly disagree that the Hebrew word 'alma {עלמה} does not specifically mean virgin. Modern 'pop' theology has too long quoted misled, unscholarly men without taking the time to actually examine the Biblical text. **I am quoting the following quote verbatim from the <u>Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible</u>, copyright 1991 by AMG International, Inc, and edited by Spiros Zodhrates** which gives probably the most concise arguments I have seen related to this issue. Please note section (1) concerning the Hebrew. At the end of the quote, I am including the verses cited in King James Version, my own King James Paraphrase, and the Hebrew [with an inter-linear translation to assist those who know some Hebrew to examine the text for themselves]. I have also added the Hebrew and Greek words referenced in the quote in { }.

"Is. 7:14 The famous prophecy of Christ's virgin birth is contained in this verse. The events of chapter seven occurred about 734 B.C. Isaiah was sent to King Ahaz with areassuring word (Is. 7:4-9), but Isaiah's word also challenged him to exercise faith in God during this crisis (cf Hezekiah's response in Is. 36-38). The Lord generously offered to grant a sign to Ahaz to bolster his faith (Is. 7:11) However in this crisis, Ahaz was not trusting in God, but in his alliance with Assyria (2 Kgs. 16:7-9). His reply, "I will not ask ..." was pure hypocrisy (v. 14) Few passages have provoked such controversy as this verse, even among those who hold to a conservative viewpoint. Recent studies have a uniform tendency to downplay the miraculous aspects, and rationalize that this verse is a prophecy that some young woman would shortly bear a child in the normal way, and the brief time of his youth would see the downfall of those countries now threatening Judah and King Ahaz. It is believed that these approaches do not do justice to the text, and some reasons are summarized below.

(1) The meaning of the Hebrew word {העלמה} 'almah (5959 [Strong's Concordance number]). It has become commonplace to suggest that 'almah {עלמה} does not mean virgin, and that in fact, had Isaiah meant "virgin," he

would have used the Hebrew word bethula {בְּתוּלָה} (1330). **The facts of the language are otherwise.** {emphasis added} 'Almah {עַלְמָה} is the clearest word Isaiah could have chosen to convey the idea of virginity. There is no appearance of 'almah {עַלְמָה} in the OT where the meaning "virgin" cannot be used. Bethulah {בְּתוּלָה}, on the other hand often needs qualification to clarify whether or not "virgin" is intended (e.g., Gen. 24:16, where Rebekah is described as a "virgin" [bethulah] {בְּתוּלָה}, "neither had any man known her." Note that

'almah, {עַלְמָה}which occurs later in the same context [Gen. 24:43], needs no such qualification. The qualification is doubtless needed because bethulah {בְּתוּלָה}, unlike 'almah {עַלְמָה}, can sometimes refer to a married woman [Deut. 22:23-24; Joel 1:8].)

It is evident that 'almah {עַלְמָה} ought indeed be translated "virgin" on the basis of Hebrew usage. But this is not the extent of the argument. The Greeks, who translated the OT into their language hundreds of years before Christ, had no question; they translated Isaiah 7:14 in the Septuagint, with the Greek word parthenos {ή παρθένος}, the word for "virgin." Finally, the Holy Spirit affirmed this as the meaning when He guided Matthew to use parthenos {παρθένος} when quoting Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23.

(2) The meaning of the word {אוֹת} 'oth (224), "sign." Those who suggest that the birth mentioned in Isaiah 7:14 would be a normal birth contradict the significance of 'oth. This word never refers to ordinary events, but always to special or distinctive actions or things. With reference to God, it is commonly translated as, or understood to refer to, "miracle." This is particularly true of its uses in Isaiah, which, aside from this context, are concentrated with reference to God's miraculous sign of the sundial (chaps. 37;38), and with God's miraculous millennial dealings with Israel (chaps. 55;56). Therefore, the "sign" would need to be something extraordinary, not merely the normal birth of a male child who would live to see the downfall of Syria. It certainly would not be the defeat of Syria and Israel by Assyria! That was the very thing Ahaz was scheming to do without God's involvement!

(3) The specific reference of the prophecy. One must note that after Ahaz refuses a sign, God does not address him again. Verse fourteen is addressed to the whole "house of David." This immediately takes us beyond a rigid focus on the current scene. Moreover, the language of the announcement "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth ..." is reminiscent of pagan phraseology used to announce the birth of "gods." It is not suggested that Isaiah is likening Christ's birth to that of some pagan idol, merely that the idol-worshiping Ahaz would recognize the significance of the prophecy. Note also that both 'virgin' in verse

fourteen and "child" in verse sixteen have the definite article. It is agreed that these articles of general reference, and that "a virgin" is the proper translation in verse fourteen. But note what happens if we translate "a child" in verse sixteen. The prophetic verse makes excellent sense on its own as a statement about the length of the crisis, with no reference to verse fourteen. One must also observe that the Hebrew word {בֵּן} ben (1121), which means "son," is used in verse fourteen, while a completely different Hebrew word, {הַנַּעַר} "na'ar" (5288), meaning "young man," appears in verse sixteen.

(4) The child born. The name is "Immanuel," or "God with us." He cannot be just any child for in Isaiah 8:8 (and probably 8:10), "Immanuel" is presented as the true owner of the land (cf. the implications of Lev. 25:23), and the one who will vanquish Assyria. Further, the "son" to be born is mentioned again in Isaiah 9:6 and 11:1-5, and is clearly seen there to be a divine Person, No child of normal parentage could be so understood; certainly not the child of Isaiah or Ahaz, as some commentators have suggested.

 (5) The nature of messianic prophecy. Throughout the OT, passages of messianic importance are presented without chronological separation or distinction. Peter explicitly states that the prophets were ignorant regarding when the messianic prophecies would be fulfilled (I Peter 1:10-12). It was indeed this prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 itself which was to be a sign. Its mysterious reference to a virgin birth would remain (as it did) to challenge students of God's word until the proper time came for it to be fulfilled."

Scriptural References

Is. 7:14
(14) Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.   KJV
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(14) Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; Look, a {the} virgin[a] will conceive, and give birth to a Son, and will call His Name Immanuel[b] .   KJP

-- [note: Hebrew is read from right to left]

(14) שמו	יקראת	בן	וילדת	הרה	הָעַלְמָה	הנה	אות	לכם	הוא	אדני	יתן	לכן
His Name	she will call	a son	and bear	will conceive	the virgin	Behold	a sign	to you	Himself	the Lord	shall give	therefore

עמנו אל:
Immanuel

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Gen. 24:16

(16) And the damsel *was* very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.   KJV

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(16) And the damsel *was* very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her
 {sexually}: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.   KJP

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כדה	ותמלא	העינה	ותרד	ידעה	לא	ואיש	בתולה	מאד	מראה	טבת	והנער
her pitcher	and filled	to the well	and she went down	knowing	not	and a man	a young woman	very	of form	was good	and the girl

ותעל:
and came up

[[Note: that the Hebrew word 'bethulah' {בתולה} which could mean merely a young woman here is qualified with the phrase "not knowing a man"]]
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Gen. 24:43

(43) Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw *water*, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;   KJV

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(43) Look, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin comes forth to draw *water*, and I say to her, I urge you give me a little water from your pitcher to drink;   KJP

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אליה	ואמרתי	לשאב	היצאת	העלמה	והיה	המים	על־עין	נצב	אנכי	הנה
to her	and I say	to draw	comes forth who	the virgin	and behold	the water	at the well water	stand forth	I	Behold

השקיני־נא	מעט־מים	מכדך:
please let me drink	water a little	from your pitcher

 [[Note: here the word 'almah' {עלמה} indisputably refers to a virgin and needs no qualification as 'bethulah' {בתולה} in the previous scripture.   See note below on Joel 1:8]]

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[F-2] Does Isaiah 7:14 refer to a virgin? -- Yes!!!- Page 4

Deut. 22:23

(23) If a damsel *that is* a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her;

(24) Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, *being* in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. KJV

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(23) If a young girl *who is* a virgin {young woman}c is engaged to a husband, and a man finds her in the city, and lies with her;

(24) Then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them with stones so that they die; the young woman, because she did not cry out, *being* in the city; and the man, because he has humbled his neighbor's wife: so you shall put away evil from among you.   KJP

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ושכב	בעיר	איש	ומצאה	לאיש	מארשה	בתולה	נער	יהיה	כי
and lies	in the city	a man	and finds her	to a husband	espoused to	a young woman	a young girl	who is	if

עמה:
with her

ומתו	באבנים	אתם	וסקלתם	ההוא	העיר	אל־שער	את־שניהם	והוצאתם
so that they die	with stones stone them	them	and you shall	that	the city	to the gate	them both	you then shall bring out

את־הנער
the girl

רעהו	את־אשת	אשר־ענה	על־דבר	ואת־האיש	בעיר	על־דבר אשר לא־צעקה	
his neighbor's	the wife	he violated	because	and the man	in the city	she did not cry out	because

מקרבך:	הרע	ובערת
from among	the evil you	and you shall cut off

[[Note 'bethulah' { בתולה } here refers to a young woman because she is espoused to a husband.]]

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Joel 1:8

(8) Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.   KJV

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(8) Cry loudly like a virgin {young woman} clothed with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.   KJP

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of her youth	over the husband	girded with sackcloth	like a young woman	wail
נעוריה:	על־בעל	חגרת־שק	כבתולה	אלי

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[[Note the Hebrew word 'bethulah' { בתולה } here indisputably refers to a married woman not a virgin!]]

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Isaiah 7:14 [Septuagint]

διὰ τοῦτο δώσει κύριος αὐτὸς ὑμῖν σημεῖον· ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ   ἕξει   καὶ τέξεται

through this He shall give the Lord Himself   to you   a sign   behold the virgin   in the womb shall conceive and   bear

υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ   ὄνομα   αὐτοῦ   Εμμανουηλ·

a son   and   call   the   name   of Him   Immanuel

See Isaiah 62:4

Note: The group of men who made changes in the Hebrew and Greek texts in the late 1800's rejected the deity of Jesus. See New Age Versions and Hazardous Materials by Dr. G.A. Riplinger. See also: Look What's Missing by David Daniels and Appendix I: Examples of Missing Words and Verses of Scripture in Modern Translations.

One further note: Matthew was a tax collector. As such he had to be proficient in both the Hebrew and Greek languages as well as having a thorough knowledge of both systems of weights and measures and how they related to each other.   There are passages which suggest that Matthew may have actually originally written his gospel in Hebrew and then translated it into Greek. Certainly the genealogy of Joseph was in all probability in Hebrew and although it is primarily a list of names, still required translating into Greek.

To say that Isaiah 7:14 does not refer specifically to a virgin accuses Matthew {Mat. 1:23} of not being led by the Holy Spirit and suggests that his gospel is not inspired by God and that Matthew himself was ignorant of his own native language and also the New Testament Greek language his gospel was written in. If Matthew was wrong, we have to throw out the entire Bible as being inspired by God and there is no longer any basis of salvation. -- I believe that Matthew knew exactly what he was saying and that he was led by the Holy Spirit and ALL scripture is inspired by God and without error in any form.