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JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**An Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 Based on the Birth Motif**

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Doctor of Philosophy

Bible Exposition

by  
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An Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 Based on the Birth Motif

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## **Abstract**

Isaiah 7:14 is a well-known verse but is interpreted differently by scholars. The verse can be understood based on the Christological emphasis or can be read based on the historical-contextual emphasis. The dualistic reading is also divided into the embedded Christological meaning and the non-embedded Christological meaning. This research provides a more concrete explanation model to read the multi-layered implications of Isaiah 7:14, which is the birth motif approach. The birth motif is a longitudinal theme with a redemptive-historical stance. From Genesis 3:15 to Adamic-Abrahamic descendants, the Scripture has formed a certain motif of birth that has theological implications by repeating the same theme. This research observed repeated patterns and themes related to birth throughout the Old Testament and brought out the results that the birth motif contains implications related to the singular-divine Savior who brings the ultimate salvation, multiple-human agents who are called for salvific works in each era, reversal, and victory. Based on the birth motif approach, Isaiah 7:14 symbolically and dualistically represents the impending appearance of the human agent and the ultimate coming of the Savior. Isaiah 7:15–16 and Matthew 1:23 are evident biblical clues and connections to support these two implications. Specifically, this research concludes that Hezekiah is the human agent that Isaiah 7:14–16 implies. Consequently, the birth motif can embrace both the historical-contextual implications and the embedded Christological reading.

## Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Statement of Problem .....	1
Major Hebrew Terms in Isaiah 7:14 as the Interpretive Issue .....	2
אֹת .....	2
עֲלֵמָה .....	4
הָרָה .....	5
יִלְדָת .....	6
עֲמָנוּ אֵל .....	6
Suggested Interpretations of Isaiah 7:14 .....	7
Historical Approach to Isaiah 7:14 .....	8
Christological Approach to Isaiah 7:14 .....	9
Dual-Meaning Approach to Isaiah 7:14 .....	10
Thesis Statement .....	12
Research Methodology and Premise .....	13
The Redemptive-Historical Approach.....	13
Premise: Genesis 3:15 as the Original Gospel and the Compressive Salvation History..	15
The Birth Motif Approach.....	16
Summary of Chapters 2–6.....	18
<b>Chapter 2. Interpretation History of Isaiah 7:14.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Interpreters in the Early and Medieval Church (100s–1200s) .....	19
Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165).....	20
Irenaeus (ca. 130–203) .....	23
Origen (ca. 185–254).....	25
Eusebius (ca. 260–339).....	27

Jerome (ca. 347–419/420) .....	30
Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 378–444).....	32
Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274).....	35
Interpreters in the Reformation Era (1500s) .....	38
Martin Luther (1483–1546).....	39
John Calvin (1509–1564) .....	41
Interpreters in the Post-Reformation Era (1600s–1700s).....	44
Abraham Calov (1612–1686) .....	44
Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669) .....	45
Augustin Calmet (1672–1757) .....	47
Challenges to Traditional Interpretation and Ensuing Reactions (1800s).....	49
Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842).....	49
Ferdinand Hitzig (1807–1875) .....	51
Joseph Addison Alexander (1809–1860) .....	52
Franz Julius Delitzsch (1813–1890).....	53
Interpreters From the 1900s Onward .....	55
Postmodern Interpretation of Walter Brueggemann.....	55
Messianic Interpretation of John Watts and Brevard Childs.....	57
Near and Distant Fulfillment of Walter Kaiser .....	59
Christological Interpretation of Edward J. Young.....	60
Summary of Chapter 2 .....	61
<b>Chapter 3. The Duality of the Birth Motif and the Adamic Descendants .....</b>	<b>63</b>
The Duality of בָּרָא in Genesis 3:15 .....	64
The Birth Motif in Genesis 3:15.....	64
Interpretations of Genesis 3:15.....	65
The Duality of בָּרָא as the Essence of the Birth Motif.....	70

The Interwoven Relationship between God and the Human Agents.....	73
Conclusion.....	78
The Adamic Descendants.....	79
Abel.....	80
Noah.....	86
<b>Chapter 4. The Abrahamic Descendants.....</b>	<b>105</b>
Genesis 11 as the Background of Abraham’s Calling.....	105
Abraham.....	108
The Revelation of the Woman’s Descendant and Descendants.....	109
The Revelation through the Prophetic Life of Abraham.....	118
Isaac.....	121
The Birth Announcements of Ishmael and Isaac.....	122
The Sacrifice of Isaac.....	125
Jacob.....	128
The Birth Narrative and the Oracle of Esau and Jacob.....	129
The Prophecy for the Twelve Tribes.....	131
Joseph.....	134
The Birth Narrative of Joseph.....	135
The Prophetic Life of Joseph and the Achievement of God’s Redemptive Plan.....	137
Moses.....	140
The Birth Narrative of Moses.....	141
Deliverance and Revelation.....	143
Samson.....	152
The Birth Announcement of Samson.....	153
Samson as Israel’s Epitomization and God’s Special Design.....	155
Samuel.....	159
The Birth Narrative of Samuel.....	160

Israel’s Repentance and Defeating the Philistines.....	163
Conclusion of Chapters 3–4 .....	165
<b>Chapter 5. An Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14.....</b>	<b>169</b>
Exegesis of Isaiah 7:1–13.....	169
Isaiah 7:1.....	173
Isaiah 7:2.....	177
Isaiah 7:3.....	180
Isaiah 7:4.....	185
Isaiah 7:5–6.....	188
Isaiah 7:7–9.....	189
Isaiah 7:10–13.....	191
Isaiah 7:14 .....	196
Five Hebrew Terms .....	197
Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 .....	215
Birth Motif in Isaiah 7:14 .....	227
The Link between Isaiah 7:14 and 7:15–16.....	233
Hezekiah as the Human Agent .....	235
<b>Chapter 6. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>237</b>
An Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 Based on the Birth Motif .....	237
Isaiah 7:14 Utilizes the Birth Symbolically and Dualistically. ....	237
Isaiah 7:14 Announces the Appearance of Hezekiah and the Coming of Christ. ....	238
The Reason for Dualistic View: The Unity of the Savior and the Human Agents.....	240
Contributions of This Research.....	240
Limitations of This Research .....	241
Recommendations For Further Study .....	241
Bibliography.....	242



## Chapter 1. Introduction

The first chapter deals with the statement of the problem, major Hebrew terms as the interpretive issues, the suggested interpretations of Isaiah 7:14, the thesis statement, the research methodology, the premise, and the summary of the rest of the chapters. The problem for this dissertation is the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, and this research has the purpose of suggesting a new approach based on the birth motif.

### Statement of Problem

The problem for the dissertation is the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. Interestingly, even though it is a well-known verse, there is no consensus among scholars in interpreting Isaiah 7:14. For example, Edward Young argues that this verse has no contemporary meaning in the times of Ahaz. He observes the hint of the incarnation of God from Isaiah 7:14, which will occur in the distant future.<sup>1</sup> However, John Watts asserts that Isaiah 7:14 should be understood in light of the Syro-Ephraimite War, which is the contemporary situation.<sup>2</sup> They provide different views, explanations, and conclusions of the same verse. These are two main streams of the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, and they show tension and conflict between the Messianic prophecy-fulfillment emphasis and the contextual consistency emphasis.

The most essential reason for the interpretive difficulty of Isaiah 7:14 is its vague description. The portrayal of this verse is brief and ambiguous, and the Hebrew terms within

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 290.

<sup>2</sup> John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, Revised Edition., vol. 24, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2005), 135.

the verse include diverse interpretive variables. Moreover, it is not easy to relate the historical context in the times of Ahaz to the description of Isaiah 7:14 because nothing is reported explicitly as the fulfillment of this prophecy in the Old Testament, even though some historical figures may be suggested as the candidate. In addition, Matthew relates it to the birth of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1:23. There is a debate among scholars when it comes to Matthew 1:23 as predictive fulfillment or typological fulfillment.<sup>3</sup> In conclusion, the lexical terms within the verse, the historical context, and the whole biblical light should be considered together in order to gain the right interpretation of Isaiah 7:14.

### Major Hebrew Terms in Isaiah 7:14 as the Interpretive Issue

Isaiah 7:14 consists of fourteen words (if considering the name עִמָּנוּ אֵל as one word), and each word has a variety of possibilities for interpretation. The final interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 is closely related to how each term is defined. The five words in Isaiah 7:14, אֹת, עֲלָמָה, הָרָה, יִלְדֵת, and עִמָּנוּ אֵל, should be particularly examined because these words are considered important variables in this interpretive work.

#### אֹת

The first Hebrew term is אֹת (“sign,” noun, common, unmarked gender, singular, absolute<sup>4</sup>), and it is a common word in the Old Testament and not a problematic term in the definition and biblical usages. Scholars do not recognize the term as a controversial issue, but

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<sup>3</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., “‘The Virgin Will Conceive’: Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18–23,” *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 232.

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all grammar information is from Logos Bible Study, “Word Info.”

the term is an important Hebrew word in this verse that should be noted because of the conflict between the usage of the term “sign” in Isaiah 7:14 and the “fulfill” in Matthew 1:23 if supposing the fulfillment in Matthew 1:23 as a predictive fulfillment. Isaiah 7:14 was a sign for the audience in the days of Ahaz, but it became a prophecy fulfilled in Matthew 1:23. In Isaiah 7:11, the Lord Himself demanded Ahaz to ask for a sign, but Ahaz refused. After the interaction between God-Isaiah and Ahaz, Isaiah finally revealed the sign of Immanuel’s birth.

When it comes to the content of the sign, Walter Brueggemann focuses on Isaiah 7:14–17, which is the virgin birth (or normal birth), the name of the son, and the function of the son as the indicator to notify the time of God,<sup>5</sup> while Gary Smith considers that the content of the sign is 7:14–15, which is the virgin birth (or normal birth), the name of the son, and the growth of the son.<sup>6</sup> These two scholars agree that the birth, the name, and the growth of the son are the content of the sign.

The interesting point is that the content of the sign was originally intended for Ahaz when considering the previous communication between God-Isaiah and Ahaz (Isa. 7:10–12), but the target audience slightly changes from Ahaz to the house of David (7:13), and finally the *לְךָ אֶלֶּם* sign in 7:14 is given to “you” (אַתָּה, second person, masculine, plural). Matthew 1:23 connects the first two contents of the sign (Isa. 7:14) to the birth of Jesus for the audience in the New Testament era. There is not any mention of the fulfillment of the contents of the sign in the Old Testament, but only Matthew testifies to its partial fulfillment in the birth of Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:22, “Now all this took place so that what was spoken by the

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 69–70.

<sup>6</sup> Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and Brandon D. Smith, Christian Standard Commentary (Holman Reference, 2021), 236.

Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled.”<sup>7</sup>), not referring to Isaiah 7:15–17. If Matthew 1:23 was the actual fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, Ahaz and his people in the house of David definitely could not see its fulfillment at that time, and the question remains: In what way would that sign matter to Ahaz in his day?

## עַלְמָה

The second Hebrew term is עַלְמָה (“virgin” or “young woman,” noun, common, feminine, singular, absolute), and it is the most controversial issue in this verse. עַלְמָה is used seven times in the Old Testament, and the English Bible (NASB 2020) translates the Hebrew term into “virgin” (Prov. 30:19; Isa. 7:14), “woman” (Gen. 24:43), “girl” (Exo. 2:8), “young woman” (Ps. 68:25; So. 1:3, 6:8). There has been a lengthy debate on this term from the early church to recent scholars. The division between the Christological interpretation and the non-Christological interpretation in Isaiah 7:14 is closely related to how to understand this Hebrew term.

Scholars who have a Christological view tend to argue that it means “virgin,” and Isaiah 7:14 is about the virgin birth of Jesus as a miraculous sign. For example, Young says that the Hebrew term עַלְמָה is not employed of a married woman, and this is the reason why it should be translated into the virgin.<sup>8</sup> However, other scholars who hold a non-Christological stance tend to assert that עַלְמָה should be translated into “young woman,” which is not related to virginity, and Isaiah 7:14 does not signify any miraculous and

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<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from NASB 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, 287.

abnormal birth. Brueggemann defines, “עַלְמָה means a woman of marriageable age,”<sup>9</sup> and he says as follows: “The Isaiah passage per se has no interest in the virginal status of the woman. It is not interested because the focus is not on the birth but on the child.”<sup>10</sup> At the core of this confrontation is the disagreement concerning the concept of עַלְמָה and its importance.

## הָרָה

The third Hebrew term is הָרָה (“pregnant,” adjective, feminine, singular, absolute), and it has not been a controversial word among scholars. This word itself has an evident meaning in this verse. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy because it may function as a crucial variable in the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. The Hebrew term הָרָה is written in the form of a verbless predicative adjective. When seeing the sentence, it is written as follows: “Behold, the virgin, pregnant, and bearing a son.” (הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלְדָת בֶּן) As the attributive usage, if הָרָה is attached to הָעַלְמָה, which is the previous noun, the combination of the “pregnant virgin” (or young woman) can be made. However, as the predicative usage, if הָרָה is attached to וְיֹלְדָת, which is the following participle, the virgin (or young woman) “will be pregnant” or “is pregnant” can be made. The normally accepted translation opts for the futuristic tense. For example, NASB 2020 and NIV translate it into “will conceive,” and ESV and NKJV render it into “shall conceive.” However, the “pregnant virgin or young woman” or “the virgin or young woman is pregnant” may also be considered a plausible interpretation when considering the Hebrew grammar. In this respect, הָרָה can be a crucial variable in determining the meaning of Isaiah 7:14.

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<sup>9</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 69–70.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

## יִלְדָּה

The fourth Hebrew term is יִלְדָּה (ילד, “bear,” verb, qal, participle, unmarked person, feminine, singular, absolute), and it is grammatically consistent with the virgin or young woman, which is feminine and singular. The English translation of this word should be examined because the Hebrew term יִלְדָּה is a participle with the present progressive nuance. When considering the grammatical form, “is bearing” is another option and even appears to be a more suitable translation than “will (shall) bear,” which is a common translation. (NASB 2020, ESV, NIV, NKJV, etc.) If it is right, this utterance of childbirth does not have the tone of a foretelling of the futuristic situation but the tone of a vivid description of what is currently seen in a vision. This grammatical understanding may present a different direction in the discussion of Isaiah 7:14. The future tense usage of the participle is also possible, but it is limited by the imminent event or something near at hand, not indicating the far future.<sup>11</sup> This case gives an image of imminent childbirth to Isaiah 7:14. LEB translation reflects the imminent image based on this grammatical feature of יִלְדָּה: “Look! The virgin is with child, and she is about to give birth to a son.”

## עִמָּנוּ אֵל

The last Hebrew term is עִמָּנוּ אֵל (“God with us,” noun, proper, masculine, singular, absolute), and it is also important in the interpretive discussion of Isaiah 7:14. עִמָּנוּ אֵל is the combination of עִם (with) and אֲנִי (we) and אֵל (God) without the verb. Since there is no verb and specific tense, it is possible to imagine several implied verbs. First, it may be “God

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<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, 2d English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 360.

is with us.” This is the most common and pervasively accepted translation, and it means the theological principle of the ongoing divine presence. Second, “God has been with us” is also a possible translation when considering God’s grace throughout the history of Israel, which has existed since the past. Third, it can be “God will be with us.” This is a reasonable translation, and it appears to proclaim the assurance that God will help us in the crisis situation. The last plausible translation is “May God be with us.” This is a supplicatory expression that includes petition, prayer, and wish. In this respect, the meaning of Isaiah 7:14 is different to understand, depending on how the Hebrew term is defined.

In addition to the exact meaning of עֲמֵנוּ אֵל, it is important to determine how to understand the name of the child. In other words, the name can be considered either in the literal aspect or the symbolic aspect. However, the Old Testament has no evidence that shows it is literally the real name of a child. Jesus’s name was not עֲמֵנוּ אֵל, and Isaiah’s son and Hezekiah, considered candidates, were not called עֲמֵנוּ אֵל. This is a crucial point because if the interpreter accepts its symbolic usage of עֲמֵנוּ אֵל, this approach may also affect the interpretation of the different parts of Isaiah 7:14. When admitting עֲמֵנוּ אֵל as the symbolic name, it may open the possibility that other parts in the prophecy might also be considered symbolic expressions. This is not an easy problem and requires prudent determination for interpretation and sufficient explanation to support it.

#### Suggested Interpretations of Isaiah 7:14

The interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 has been a crucial issue throughout the history of the church, and many scholars have provided diverse solutions. Among the suggested interpretations of Isaiah 7:14, the historical, Christological, and dual-meaning approaches are considered the three main interpretations. The historical approach focuses on the historical

and contextual understanding of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, while the Christological approach puts emphasis on certain lexical clues that may point to the birth of Jesus Christ. In addition to these two streams, there are the third positions, which are dual-meaning views that consider two different views together. These eclectic views are divided again into two groups: those who admit the embedded Christological implication in Isaiah 7:14 and those who do not admit the embedded Christological implication in Isaiah 7:14 but consider the Christological implication in the aspect of typological fulfillment in Matthew 1:23. This section introduces these different four approaches of Isaiah 7:14.

### **Historical Approach to Isaiah 7:14**

In addition to the Hebrew terms as variables of interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, it is important to consider the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and its historical context. When it comes to the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, Wilhelm Gesenius was the first figure to seek to put emphasis on historical and political meaning, considering the Syro-Ephraimite War in the days of Ahaz.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, when considering the historical background of Isaiah 7, the actual issue was the military threat of the coalition of Aram and Israel to Jerusalem, and Ahaz was afraid of this national crisis. The prophecy of Isaiah was given to Ahaz in this context, and Isaiah 7:16 describes that the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 is related to the destruction of the two nations that Ahaz dreads. In this respect, the historical approach to Isaiah 7:14 is considered adequate and practical in contextual consistency. When following the historical approach, it tends to interpret the figures implied in Isaiah 7:14 as the historical figures at that time.

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<sup>12</sup> Wilhelm Gesenius, *Der Prophet Jesaja* (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1821), 297.



Gesenius suggested the identity of עֲלְמָה as “a wife or betrothed virgin of the prophet.”<sup>13</sup>

Ferdinand Hitzig had the same view and considered that the woman whom Isaiah pointed to was already pregnant at that time.<sup>14</sup> Gesenius and Hitzig shared the idea that there was no prediction of the virgin birth of Jesus in Isaiah 7:14.

### **Christological Approach to Isaiah 7:14**

As Gesenius argued, it is important to consider the historical context that Ahaz encountered at that time when interpreting Isaiah 7:14. Having said that, when seeing the history of interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, the purely Christological interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 has been a traditional interpretation of the church until Gesenius appeared in the nineteenth century. The most crucial evidence that supported the Christological implication in Isaiah 7:14 was the Hebrew term עֲלְמָה. When it comes to עֲלְמָה, there has been an ongoing debate among scholars regarding its definition. However, the Septuagint translates the term into παρθένος, which means virgin, and Matthew 1:23 cites the Septuagint’s translation.

Justin Martyr, in the second century, was the first figure who argued for the Christological implication in Isaiah 7:14 and עֲלְמָה as virgin. Justin trusted in the translation of עֲלְמָה into παρθένος, which the Septuagint provided, and he was sure of Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy that was fulfilled through the birth of Jesus Christ. He said as follows:

And again hear how Isaiah in express terms prophesied that He should be born of a virgin. For He spoke thus: “Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they will call His name, God with us.” For things which were unbelievable and seemed impossible with people, these God predicted through the prophetic Spirit as about to come to pass, in order that when they came to pass there would be no unbelief, but

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>14</sup> Ferdinand Hitzig, *Der Prophet Jesaja* (Heidelberg: C. F. Winter, 1833), 84–85.

faith because of their prediction.<sup>15</sup>

The Christological view of Isaiah 7:14, which includes עַלְמָה as virgin, has remained consistent for a long time from the early church to the post-reformation period without any resistance in the Christian scholarship. In addition to the Hebrew term עַלְמָה, the name of the son, עִמָּנוּ אֵל, was also recognized as crucial evidence to support the Christological interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. John Calvin found the evident Christological meaning from the name of the son. He said, “He is, therefore, called *God with us*, or *united to us*; which cannot apply to a man who is not God.”<sup>16</sup> Calvin observed the divine nature from the name עִמָּנוּ אֵל, but Irenaeus found the humane nature of Jesus from the same name, saying, “He called Him *the child*; and further by giving Him a name; for this is the custom also for one that is born.”<sup>17</sup>

### Dual-Meaning Approach to Isaiah 7:14

There are two kinds of middle positions between Christological emphasis and original context emphasis. First, there is a dual-meaning view that focuses on the dual meanings embedded in the verse itself. August Calmet initially argued that the Hebrew term עַלְמָה could be interpreted both ways, such as virgin and young woman, and he thought that the son

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<sup>15</sup> St. Justin Martyr, *St. Justin Martyr: The First and Second Apologies*, ed. Walter J. Burghardt et al., trans. Leslie William Barnard, vol. 56, Ancient Christian Writers (New York; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 46.

<sup>16</sup> John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 248.

<sup>17</sup> St. Irenæus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, ed. W. J. Sparrow Simpson and W. K. Lowther Clarke, trans. J. Armitage Robinson, Translations of Christian Literature. Series IV, Oriental Texts (London; New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; The Macmillan Co., 1920), 116–117.

might be Christ or the son of the prophet.<sup>18</sup> Joseph Alexander also tried to consider the prophecy's implication in the original context with the Christological interpretation.<sup>19</sup> Walter Kaiser argued that this prophecy simultaneously indicates both implications.<sup>20</sup> These views acknowledge the predictive elements related to the coming of Christ in Isaiah 7:14 and also focus on the contemporary implication in Isaiah 7:14 in the days of Ahaz. Even though John Calvin's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 may be categorized as the typical Christological view of Isaiah 7:14, he also suggested the contemporary implication of Isaian prophecy because the survival of Judah is related to the coming of Jesus Christ. In order to fulfill God's promise concerning the birth of the Messiah in Judah, Jerusalem should have been preserved.<sup>21</sup>

Second, there is another dual-meaning view that considers the Christological meaning of Isaiah 7:14 only in light of Matthew 1:23. This view does not admit the Christological meaning embedded in Isaiah 7:14 itself. This view basically understands that Isaiah 7:14 should be interpreted in the historical context of Isaiah 7:14. However, since Matthew 1:22–23 says that Jesus' birth is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, James Hamilton explained the fulfillment in Matthew 1:23 as typological fulfillment, not predictive fulfillment. One of the features of typological fulfillment is “historical correspondences between the details of Isaiah 7 and the time of the birth of Jesus,” and another feature is “escalation, whereby the meaning of these events is intensified by the coming of the Messiah

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<sup>18</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 258.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Addison Alexander, trans., *The Prophecies of Isaiah Translated and Explained*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1870), 172.

<sup>20</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr. et al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 301.

<sup>21</sup> Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 245–246.

and the period in salvation history that begins with his arrival.”<sup>22</sup> This argument presupposes that Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 are not in the typical relationship of prophecy and fulfillment. Matthew observed a similar historical situation between Isaiah 7 and Jesus’s birth, which are separate passages, and he intentionally connected the two contexts. Paul Wegner emphasized that Isaiah 7:14 is not a prophecy but a sign.<sup>23</sup> This view presupposes the absence of prophetic elements in Isaiah 7:14 and provides a foundation for the interpretation of Matthew 1:23 as typological fulfillment.

### Thesis Statement

Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy of a sign that employs the birth motif. The birth motif is the repetitive pattern throughout the Bible that includes diverse forms of genealogy, prophecy, narrative, and apocalyptic vision regarding the birth. This motif is predictive in nature, understandable to the audience of the Old Testament, and functions to reveal the salvation of God both in the contemporary and the ultimate aspects.

The conceptual root of the birth motif is found in Genesis 3:15, which initially implies the birth motif. *זָרַע* in Genesis 3:15 has the dual meanings of singular and plural, and the duality of *זָרַע* provides the interpretive clue for the simultaneous consideration of the singular-ultimate Savior and the multiple-middle agents. Throughout history, the births of human agents showed historical progress moving forward to the coming of the Savior since the fall, clarifying and accumulating the triumphant and reversal imagery in Genesis 3:15.

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<sup>22</sup> Hamilton Jr., “‘The Virgin Will Conceive’: Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18–23,” 241.

<sup>23</sup> Paul D. Wegner, “How Many Virgin Births are in the Bible? (Isaiah 7:14): A Prophetic Pattern Approach,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54, no. 3 (2011): 478.

When compressing the whole history from the revelation of Genesis 3:15 to the Savior, the birth motif is the salvific formula in both the current and ultimate dimensions.

This dissertation considers Isaiah 7:14 in light of the symbolic employment of the birth motif, not the actual birth announcement. Isaiah 7:14 was given in the specific context of the Syro-Ephraimite War and connected to the birth of Christ in Matthew 1:23. Based on the dual senses of the birth motif, the current and fundamental salvation, Isaiah 7:14 has the dualistic implications of salvation in that the revelation covers both contexts: the Syro-Ephraimite War and Christ, functioning to denote the message of reversal and victory.

#### Research Methodology and Premise

This dissertation employs the birth motif approach to interpret Isaiah 7:14. The birth motif approach is the interpretive model to which the redemptive-historical approach is specifically applied. In other words, the birth motif has its fundamental orientation of redemptive purpose and historical progress. Also, Genesis 3:15, as God's revelation of the woman's descendant, is the crucial verse to connect the redemptive-historical approach and the birth motif. This research has the foundational premise that Genesis 3:15 is the original gospel and *נָרַע* in Genesis 3:15 has dual implications as both singular and plural.

#### **The Redemptive-Historical Approach**

The title “redemptive-historical” (or *heilsgeschichtlich* or salvation-historical) approach itself explains its two major features. First, this approach has its emphasis on “redemption” or “salvation.” Richard B. Gaffin Jr. says that “Jesus Christ is the culmination

of the redemptive history, and the subject matter of revelation is redemption.”<sup>24</sup> In this dissertation, God’s salvation is the important view in dealing with biblical passages. Second, this approach emphasizes the “organic progress of salvific revelation through history.” Geerhardus Vos says as follows: “God has embodied the contents of revelation, not in a dogmatic system, but in a book of history, the parallel to which in dramatic interest and simple eloquence is nowhere to be found.”<sup>25</sup>

“Organic progress of salvific revelation through history” includes the concepts of “continuity” and “multiformity.”<sup>26</sup> God’s revelation, which focuses on salvation, has been consistently continued without ceasing. In this continued process, diverse carriers of revelation appeared and were used to preserve and deliver the revelation. Thus, Hebrews 1:1 says that God spoke through the prophets in many portions and in many ways before the coming of His son. The term human agent employed in this dissertation is related to multiformity. Even though diverse human agents lived different lives in different eras, they shared the role of being recipients and carriers of God’s ongoing salvific revelation. The revelations given to the human agents were “organically” interconnected and gradually accumulated as history progressed according to the divine design.<sup>27</sup>

The redemptive-historical or the salvific-historical approach cannot be properly understood without the human agent, who is God’s proxy. Thus, Gaffin says as follows: “A

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<sup>24</sup> Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “The Redemptive-Historical View,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell, Spectrum Multiview Books (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 92.

<sup>25</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

redemptive-historical orientation requires giving careful attention to this instrumental role of the human authors of the biblical documents.”<sup>28</sup> Also, Vos says as follows: “The human is but the glass through which the divine light is reflected, and all the sides and angles into which the glass has been cut serve no other purpose than to distribute to us the truth in all the riches of its prismatic colors.”<sup>29</sup> The frequently used terms related to the human agency in this dissertation, revelation-faith-preservation, are based on this salvific-historical approach. Revelation, faith, and preservation are the terms that show God’s way to progress the salvation plan. The divine providential way for salvation is firstly to “reveal” God’s will and plan, secondly to call and use the human agents who have “faith” in this plan, and lastly to “preserve” the godly line, which is bearing the salvific revelation, from which the Savior comes. In this respect, all the human agents function like a bridge between the initial salvific revelation (Gen. 3:15) and the ultimate Savior.

### **Premise: Genesis 3:15 as the Original Gospel and the Compressive Salvation History**

The beginning point of salvation history is the revelation of Genesis 3:15. This dissertation begins with the foundational recognition that God revealed how He will save His chosen people and the creation right after the fall of humankind. Genesis 3:15 includes the two fundamental facets of the coming salvation history based on the dualistic meaning of נָרַע in Genesis 3:15. First, Genesis 3:15 predicts the coming Savior. The woman’s descendant, as a singular נָרַע described in Genesis 3:15, points to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. This view may conflict with the view of *sensus plenior*, which is that the human author (or

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<sup>28</sup> Gaffin Jr., “The Redemptive-Historical View,” 96.

<sup>29</sup> Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, 14.

audience) cannot understand the deeper meaning that God intended. Instead, Adam and Eve, the initial audience of Genesis 3:15, listened to the coming Savior in a way that they could understand. Louis Berkhof says as follows: “It is utterly inconceivable that He should have provided man with a dubious revelation since this would defeat the very purpose which He sought to realize.”<sup>30</sup> In this respect, Genesis 3:15 is the gospel initially revealed and effectively delivered to the audience. Second, Genesis 3:15 compressively reveals the whole contour of salvation history. The woman’s descendants, as plural נָרַע described in Genesis 3:15, point to multiple human agents called to be involved in the salvation history. The Bible deals with God’s works in the life of the human agents as historical narratives. Genesis 3:15 says that the woman’s נָרַע will finally conquer the serpent’s side. In this respect, Genesis 3:15 includes a glimpse into the process and result of the salvation history. The woman’s נָרַע can be produced by childbirth, and thus, birth itself is the only way to the appearance of the Savior and the human agents.

### **The Birth Motif Approach**

The birth motif considers both the birth of the Savior and human agents. The birth motif is “redemptive” or “salvific” in that it moves forward to the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ, and it is “historical” in that it repeats and accumulates in the course of biblical history. Thus, the birth motif can be called a “longitudinal theme,” which “spans not only individual books but several books and even both Testaments.”<sup>31</sup> Diverse human agents are involved in

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<sup>30</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1950), 58.

<sup>31</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 69.



its thematic development, and diverse birth motif passages are organically connected in that they share common features. These show the typical features of the redemptive-historical approach. Another connection is found in the relationship between the Savior and the human agent. In God's salvation history, the human agents paved the way for the Savior, and their lives let the reader give glimpses of the Savior.

The idea of the birth motif approach that this research employs comes from the recognition that Isaiah 7:14 announces the birth of a son. No attempt has yet been found to interpret this text from the perspective of birth. This research conceptualizes the repetitive pattern of birth descriptions throughout the Bible as the birth motif, and it employs the birth motif as the clue to the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. Richard Alan Fuhr Jr. and Andreas J. Köstenberger explain the meaning of the motif as follows:

Thematic context involves the consideration of theological motif as a form of context. The theological message of the Bible is communicated through repeated themes; when a theme repeats itself and carries prominence, it is labeled a "motif." Motifs can be seen in each book of the Bible, and certain motifs transcend individual books. Some motifs in Scripture can relate to practical matters, while others are of a theological nature.<sup>32</sup>

The birth motif repeats throughout the Bible, and it forms certain literary effects and implies certain theological messages in each text. When examining a variety of birth motif passages by comparing, analyzing, and synthesizing, the common features and implications that the birth motif includes can be obtained. The results of the research on the birth motif are applied to the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, which includes the birth motif. The birth motif approach does not ignore the historical view and the Christological view. Rather, the birth motif may be a solution that may embrace the conflicting views in the consequential aspect.

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Alan Fuhr Jr. and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2016), 205.

Basically, this research includes grammatical, historical, and theological considerations in dealing with biblical passages. The birth motif approach is added to the hermeneutical triad in interpreting Isaiah 7:14. The right understanding of the birth motif in Isaiah 7:14 brings out the comprehensive interpretation that is properly connected to both the historical context of the Ahaz era and the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:23.

### Summary of Chapters 2–6

This dissertation consists of six chapters, including the first chapter of the introduction and the last chapter of the conclusion. Chapter 2 is a review of the interpretation history of Isaiah 7:14. The interpretation history introduces three different positions of Isaiah 7:14: the Christological interpretation, the non-Christological interpretation, and the third positions that try to embrace both assertions. Chapter 3 (the Adamic descendants) and Chapter 4 (the Abrahamic descendants) are about the birth motif and deal with a variety of passages that contain the birth announcements and narratives throughout the Bible, and these chapters show that the biblical description of the birth motif essentially has redemptive implications in each context. Chapter 5 is the main chapter. It deals with the exegesis of Isaiah 7:1–14, the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23, the birth motif in Isaiah 7:14, the link between Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 7:15–16, and Hezekiah as the human agent. Lastly, Chapter 6 provides the final summarized conclusion of what Isaiah 7:14 implies, contributions of this research, limitations of this research, and recommendations for further study.

## Chapter 2. Interpretation History of Isaiah 7:14

This chapter deals with the history of interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. Since the era of the early church, the Fathers of the church have recognized that Isaiah 7:14 should be Christologically read. In Christian scholarship, each scholar gradually and consistently developed a Christological understanding of Isaiah 7:14, adding their own unique insight. Consequently, the Christological interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 has become the typical understanding and church tradition during the early and medieval church.

The Reformation brought about a new change in the access and interpretation of the Scripture. However, the Christological interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 continued, and the interpreters sought a selective synthesis of the preceding scholars. A notable change was that the reformers preferred the grammatical and historical method instead of the allegorical method in interpreting Isaiah 7:14. The post-reformation scholars in the seventeenth century generally continued the tradition of the Reformation.

The nineteenth century saw a challenge to the traditional reading of Isaiah 7:14, and the non-Christological view of Isaiah 7:14 rose among Christian scholars, gaining consensus on Gesenius' lexical definition of עלמה. The interaction between these two different interpretations, including the Christological reading and the non-Christological reading, began from that time on within the Christian scholastic circle, and it finally gave rise to the third interpretation, which is the dual-meaning approach.

### Interpreters in the Early and Medieval Church (100s–1200s)

During the early and medieval period, the church gradually accumulated the interpretations of Isaiah 7:14 in the philological and historical aspects with the refinement of the Christological view. The refutation of Jews' interpretation continued, and the advocacy

for the Septuagint did not change. The unique perspective that appeared only in this period is the allegorical approach to Isaiah 7:14.

### **Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165)**

Justin Martyr's view of Isaiah 7:14 is presented in the debate with Trypho. He understood the verse in light of Christology. In this debate, the translation of עֲלֵמָה was a crucial issue, and Justin and Trypho had different views of the translation of the Hebrew term. Justin's writing, *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew*, includes the debate on the translation of the Hebrew term עֲלֵמָה in Isaiah 7:14. Justin said in the following way: "But since you and your teachers venture to affirm that in the prophecy of Isaiah, it is not said, 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive,' but, 'Behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son.'"<sup>33</sup> Justin referred to the difference between his translation and Jewish translation of עֲלֵמָה in Isaiah 7:14, and then, he showed how he differently understood the son's identity in Isaiah 7:14 from Jewish interpreters as follows: "You explain the prophecy as if [it referred] to Hezekiah, who was your king, I shall endeavor to discuss shortly this point in opposition to you, and to show that reference is made to Him who is acknowledged by us as Christ."<sup>34</sup> In addition to Justin's view of עֲלֵמָה in Isaiah 7:14, it shows how Jewish teachers translated עֲלֵמָה at that time.

Oskar Skarsaune referred to the conflict between a Christian view and a Jewish view regarding the translation of עֲלֵמָה in Justin's writing as follows: "Justin says in his *Dialogue*

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<sup>33</sup> Justin Martyr, "Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 216.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

with Trypho that the Jewish teachers assert that the true text has νεᾱνίς, young girl, not παρθένος, virgin. This corresponds to the well-known fact that the three second-century Jewish translations of Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus all read νεᾱνίς in Isa 7:14.”<sup>35</sup> When Matthew 1:23 cited Isaiah 7:14, ἡ ἄλφειά was rendered into παρθένος, not νεᾱνίς. It was the translation of the Septuagint. Unbelieving Jews did not accept this, and the different Greek translations of ἡ ἄλφειά led to the different interpretations of Isaiah 7:14. When it comes to the translation and the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, an evident division occurred between those who admitted the Septuagint and those who admitted other Greek translations in the second century.

Justin’s interlocutor, Trypho, who is a Jew, said as follows: “The Scripture has not, ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,’ but, ‘Behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son,’ and so on, as you quoted. But the whole prophecy refers to Hezekiah, and it is proved that it was fulfilled in him, according to the terms of this prophecy.”<sup>36</sup> Also, Trypho expressed strong reluctance to the incarnation of Jesus because it sounded like a Greek myth, saying as follows: “If you prove from the Scriptures that He is the Christ, and that on account of having led a life conformed to the law, and perfect, He deserved the honour of being elected to be Christ, [it is well]; but do not venture to tell monstrous phenomena, lest you be convicted of talking foolishly like the Greeks.”<sup>37</sup> The conversation between Justin and Trypho shows the evident differences in their expectations of the Messiah, in addition to the translative issue.

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<sup>35</sup> Oskar Skarsaune, “Jewish and Christian Interpretations of Messianic Texts in the Book of Isaiah as Jewish/Christian Dialogue,” *Svensk exegetisk årsbok*, 77 (2012): 28.

<sup>36</sup> Justin Martyr, “Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew,” 231.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Justin Martyr said as follows: “But I am far from putting reliance in your teachers, who refuse to admit that the interpretation made by the seventy elders who were with Ptolemy [king] of the Egyptians is a correct one; and they attempt to frame another.”<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, he strongly argued that Jesus is God as follows: “They have altogether taken away many Scriptures from the translations effected by those seventy elders who were with Ptolemy, and by which this very man who was crucified is proved to have been set forth expressly as God, and man, and as being crucified, and as dying.”<sup>39</sup> It shows that the translative issue was interwoven with the view of Christ. Some Jews still held on to the translation of *ἡμεῖς* as *θεῶν* and rejected the divine status of Jesus. Christians and Jews, at least Justin and Trypho, are distinguished in that they opted for different translations and showed different views of Jesus Christ. The interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 was a crucial matter that might divide the two religious groups at that time.

In addition, Justin focused on the implication of the virgin birth as the sign as follows:

For if He also were to be begotten of sexual intercourse, like all other first-born sons, why did God say that He would give a sign which is not common to all the first-born sons? But that which is truly a sign, and which was to be made trustworthy to mankind,—namely, that the first-begotten of all creation should become incarnate by the Virgin’s womb, and be a child,—this he anticipated by the Spirit of prophecy, and predicted it, as I have repeated to you, in various ways; in order that, when the event should take place, it might be known as the operation of the power and will of the Maker of all things.<sup>40</sup>

Justin explained why virgin birth is necessary, meaningful, and important. He thinks it is important because virgin birth functions as a sign of God so that it may reveal the son of God and make people believe the son is the Messiah. If it is a natural birth, it cannot be called

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 241.

a sign with a special meaning and mark, and it is difficult to function to make them believe the son.<sup>41</sup> In conclusion, Justin Martyr suggested the meaning of Isaiah 7:14 as the prophecy of the divine birth of Jesus Christ through the virgin Mary, which is the miraculous sign of God. In this process, he accepted the translation of the Septuagint, παρθένος, and rejected the translation of the second-century Jews, νεᾶνις.

### **Irenaeus (ca. 130–203)**

Irenaeus also pointed out a different translation of the Hebrew term  $\text{הַמָּלְאָה}$  in Isaiah 7:14 from what Theodotion, Aquila, and the Ebionites suggested.

God, then, was made man, and the Lord did Himself save us, giving us the token of the Virgin. But not as some allege, among those now presuming to expound the Scripture, [thus:] “Behold, a young woman shall conceive, and bring forth a son,” as Theodotion the Ephesian has interpreted, and Aquila of Pontus,<sup>41</sup> both Jewish proselytes. The Ebionites, following these, assert that He was begotten by Joseph; thus destroying, as far as in them lies, such a marvellous dispensation of God, and setting aside the testimony of the prophets which proceeded from God.<sup>42</sup>

In order to explain that the translation of the Septuagint was not biased, Irenaeus emphasized that the Septuagint’s translation of  $\text{הַמָּלְאָה}$  into the “virgin” was done by the Jews themselves way before Jesus Christ’s birth and the Roman Empire’s establishment.<sup>43</sup> In this respect, as Justin emphasized, Irenaeus also displayed a common interest in the translational issue of  $\text{הַמָּלְאָה}$  in Isaiah 7:14, perceiving it as important, strongly advocating the authority of the Septuagint.

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<sup>41</sup> Skarsaune, “Jewish and Christian Interpretations of Messianic Texts in the Book of Isaiah as Jewish/Christian Dialogue,” 29.

<sup>42</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, “Irenæus against Heresies,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 451.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

W. J. Simpson and W. K. Clarke say that Irenaeus shared the same theological interests with Justin regarding the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14.<sup>44</sup> However, Childs observed a unique stance of Irenaeus, which is considered theological development compared to the previous discussion, saying, “When dealing with the virgin birth in Isa. 7:14–16 (*Dem.* 53), Irenaeus pursues not only the miraculous elements but also the theological implications of Christ’s being truly a man.”<sup>45</sup> Irenaeus’s view of Jesus as a human being is presented in both of his two books. He mentioned Isaiah 7:14–15 as a unit, “So he proclaimed His birth from a virgin; and that He was truly man he declared beforehand by His eating; and also because he called Him the child; and further by giving Him a name; for this is the custom also for one that is born.”<sup>46</sup> That being said, Irenaeus did not only emphasize the humanity of Jesus but sought a proper balance in understanding the humanity and divinity of Jesus in Isaiah 7:14. Irenaeus said, “We should not understand that He is a mere man only, nor, on the other hand, from the name Immanuel, should suspect Him to be God without flesh.”<sup>47</sup> Justin Martyr’s focus on the virginity of *הַלְמָה* in Isaiah 7:14 tended to lead to the emphasis on the divinity of Jesus, but Irenaeus’s spotlight on the humanity of Jesus supplemented the existing view.

In conclusion, Irenaeus had a consensus with Justin Martyr on the translational issue in Isaiah 7:14. He admitted the authority of the Septuagint and believed in the virgin birth of

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<sup>44</sup> St. Irenæus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, ed. W. J. Sparrow Simpson and W. K. Lowther Clarke, trans. J. Armitage Robinson, Translations of Christian Literature Series IV, Oriental Texts (London; New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; The Macmillan Co., 1920), 6.

<sup>45</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 51.

<sup>46</sup> St. Irenæus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 116–117.

<sup>47</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, “Irenæus against Heresies,” 452.



Jesus. Furthermore, he added emphasis on the human aspect of Jesus in the interpretive discussion of Isaiah 7:14.

### **Origen (ca. 185–254)**

As Justin Martyr and Irenaeus did, Origen also dealt with the difference between the Jewish translation and the Septuagint of the Hebrew term  $\text{עַלְמָה}$  in Isaiah 7:14. He agreed with the translation of the LXX and cited Deuteronomy 22:23.<sup>48</sup> The context of Deuteronomy 22:23 is surely about the virginity of a woman before marriage. The original Hebrew text uses  $\text{בְּתוּלָה}$  to indicate the virgin, and the Septuagint translates it into the Greek term  $\text{παρθένος}$ , which is the same translation as  $\text{עַלְמָה}$  in Isaiah 7:14. In addition, Origen asked what is more suitable as the mother of Immanuel in terms of the sign of God as follows: “What kind of sign, then, would that have been—a young woman who was not a virgin giving birth to a child? And which of the two is the more appropriate as the mother of Immanuel,—whether a woman who has had intercourse with a man, and who has conceived after the manner of women, or one who is still a pure and holy virgin?”<sup>49</sup> This counter-question is the way that Justin Martyr already used in his dialogue with Trypho.<sup>50</sup> Instead of elucidating the ambiguous aspect of the Hebrew term, Origen emphasized the persuasiveness of the virgin birth as a miraculous sign and showed his conviction for the Septuagint’s translation.

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<sup>48</sup> Origen, “Origen against Celsus,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Frederick Crombie, vol. 4, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 411.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Justin Martyr, “Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew,” 241.

Origen also focused on the different persons and numbers of the verb “call” between the Septuagint and Matthew’s descriptions. He said in the following way: “The integrity of the original manuscripts [the LXX] of this prophet says, ‘You will call.’ In Matthew, we know [the thing] to be read next: ‘And they will call his name Immanuel.’ We cannot say that it is reasonable to make something less of the prophet. But how does the Gospel render this writing?”<sup>51</sup> When it comes to the original Hebrew word, *קרא* (קרא, “call,” *qal*, perfect, third person, feminine, singular) in Isaiah 7:14, it has the meaning of “and she will call.” However, the Septuagint opted for the translation of *καὶ καλέσεις* (*καλέω*, “call,” future, active, indicative, second person, singular) that means “and you will call,” and Matthew changed it to *καὶ καλέσουσιν* (*καλέω*, “call,” future, active, indicative, third person, plural), which means “and they will call.” The meaning of the LXX translation became broad because it may denote the virgin or Ahaz. However, Matthew 1:23 includes a bigger difference, which is the change of numbers from singular to plural. It does not indicate an individual but multiple. Origen gave more weight to Matthew’s transcription, “they will call,” than the Hebrew text or the Septuagint, and he argued that “they” in Matthew 1:23 means the “house of David” mentioned in Isaiah 7:13.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, he allegorically moved to the frame of Christ and the church of God to explain this as follows:

What, then, is the house of David? If David is Christ, as I have demonstrated often, we, the church of God, are the house of David; and it is said to us, who are the church, that we should not wrestle with the Lord, as said above, but when the Lord gives a sign, we should receive it. To us these things are said, not to the house of David. And it is prophesied that, if someone is the house of David, he will call his name Immanuel; for at the coming of Christ our church alone says of Christ: “God with us.” With these things explained, as the grace of the Lord has granted, let us now seek out

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<sup>51</sup> Origen, *Homilies on Isaiah*, trans. Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, vol. 142, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 53.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

other mysteries.<sup>53</sup>

This paragraph shows how Origen applied the allegorical interpretation to Isaiah 7:14 and how he displayed the Christological interpretation through the method. According to Origen's explanation, "they," as implied in Matthew 1:23, might mean today's readers in the church. For Origen, this prophecy means that we will call Jesus Christ Immanuel. From Matthew's transcription of "they will call," Origen observed the implication of the house of David, and then he developed it into the frame of Christ and the church of God.

In conclusion, Origen basically had the same position as his predecessors in that he understood *הַלְוִיָּהּ* as the virgin, agreed with the miraculous sign, and admitted the credibility of the Septuagint. Moreover, he presented a new approach to interpreting Isaiah 7:14, which is an allegorical method. It was considered one of the interpretive methods until the Reformation era, and some following scholars employed the allegorical approach to find the spiritual meaning beyond the literal meaning in the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14.

### **Eusebius (ca. 260–339)**

Eusebius presented the basic interpretive frame as follows: "At times the Spirit delivered his revelation to the prophet plainly, so that there was no need of allegory to explain the message, but only an understanding of the actual words themselves. But at other times, the Spirit communicated through symbols and circumstances, placing other meanings

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

in certain keywords and even in names.”<sup>54</sup> This division between the literal and spiritual senses that Eusebius mentioned appears to be the same as Origen’s perspective.<sup>55</sup>

*Commentary on Isaiah*, Eusebius’s writing, provided specific explanations verse by verse. Compared to the interpretations of the previous scholars, Eusebius’s commentary was close to a modern commentary’s feature. When it comes to Isaiah 7:14, Eusebius generally presented similar standpoints of the virginity of the woman and the translation of the Septuagint as the predecessors interpreted. In the first paragraph of his commentary, Eusebius referred to the unique nature of the sign as follows: “And what is this sign? A certain paradoxical wonder will appear among humanity, such a sign as never before has been heard of from the beginning of time. A virgin will conceive, apart from relations with a man, and she will give birth to God, the Savior of the human race.”<sup>56</sup> Eusebius said that virgin birth is noteworthy not only, but giving birth to God is also noteworthy. He perceived another miraculous aspect of the sign. It presupposes that Eusebius basically agreed with the Septuagint’s translation and the virgin birth. He seemed to be aware of the debate between Christians and Jews concerning the translation of the virgin or young woman and thus might intentionally begin his comments with this issue.<sup>57</sup> As predecessors understood, Eusebius found the validity of the virgin birth from the term “sign,” which means a miraculous mark, and moreover, he focused on the paradoxical situation of the virgin’s giving birth to God.

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<sup>54</sup> Eusebius, Jonathan J. Armstrong, and Joel C. Elowsky, *Commentary on Isaiah*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, trans. Jonathan J. Armstrong (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>55</sup> Keith D. Stanglin, *The Letter and Spirit of Biblical Interpretation: From the Early Church to Modern Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 50.

<sup>56</sup> Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 37.

<sup>57</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 81.

From the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, Eusebius observed the message of the Messiah coming through the virgin, and this interpretive result was based on the literal approach. On the other hand, he also found a spiritual message from the meaning of the name of the son, Immanuel, and he used the symbolic and allegorical interpretation for it as follows: “For that very reason, O house of David, you surely remember the time when your enemies were assembling and you pronounced this one’s name Immanuel. The force of the word is present in the translation, for the name means God with us.”<sup>58</sup> Eusebius did not restrict Isaiah 7:14 only as the prophecy that was already finished in the past but connected the spiritual implication of Immanuel to the current dimension as follows: “If one believes in the divine ordinance, you might unceasingly invoke the same aid, calling on Immanuel. For you do not need a magic spell or to call on demons to assist you, but only call on Immanuel and thus be saved.”<sup>59</sup> Eusebius recognized the implication of Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 as the crucial principle that transcends the eras. He did not mention the allegorical frame, such as David (Christ) and the house of David (the Church of God) that Origen used, but he focused on the name that is considered to have a spiritual meaning. Eusebius first applied the spiritual message of Immanuel to the first audience of Isaiah, who is the house of David, and then he applied the same message to the readers of the commentary. This part is not a grammatical-historical explanation of the verse but a spiritual appeal to those who are reading his book.

In conclusion, Eusebius had the same position as the previously mentioned scholars when it comes to the virgin birth and the translation of the Septuagint. Also, Eusebius can be

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<sup>58</sup> Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 37.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

assessed to follow the overall interpretive frame that Origen sought, which is the combination of literal and spiritual meanings.

### Jerome (ca. 347–419/420)

Jerome basically believed that Isaiah 7:14 is about the Messiah and the virgin birth, and he explained it in philological and historical aspects. Childs says, “A classic example of Jerome’s use of Hebrew philology is reflected in his lengthy discussion of Isaiah 7:14.”<sup>60</sup>

Compared to the predecessors, Jerome increased verisimilitude in the analysis of the Hebrew term עַלְמָה as follows:

In Hebrew, a virgin is called *bethula*. This word is not used in the present passage, but instead *alma* is recorded, which everyone except the Septuagint translated as “young girl.” Moreover, among them *alma* is an ambiguous word, for it is used both of “young girl” and of one who is “hidden,” that is ἀποκρυφος. This is why even in the heading of the ninth Psalm, where in Hebrew *almanoth* is recorded, the other translators rendered it, “for the youth,” which the Septuagint translated, “for the hidden things” [cf. Ps 9:1]. And we read in Genesis, where Rebecca is called *alma* [cf. Gen 24:16, 43], that Aquila translated it neither as “young girl” nor “girl,” but “hidden.” The Shunammite woman too who had lost her son, when she prostrated herself at Elisha’s feet and Gehazi thrust her away, heard from the prophet, “Dismiss her, for she is in grief, and the Lord has hidden from me” [2 Kgs 4:27]. What is said in Latin as, “has hidden from me,” is written in Hebrew as, *eelim memmenni*. Therefore *alma* is said not only of a “girl” or a “virgin,” but has an extension (*cum επιτασει*) of a “hidden” and “secret” virgin, who has never been exposed to the sight of men, but who has been guarded by her parents with great diligence. In the Punic language too, which is derived from Hebrew sources, *alma* is said of a virgin proper.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to Jerome’s insight that עַלְמָה has the subtle implication of “hidden,” he presented a different assumption from Eusebius regarding the age of the virgin in Isaiah 7:14.

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<sup>60</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 95.

<sup>61</sup> St. Jerome, *St. Jerome: Commentary on Isaiah: Including St. Jerome’s Translation of Origen’s Homilies 1–9 on Isaiah*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, vol. 68, *Ancient Christian Writers* (New York; Mahwah, NJ: The Newman Press, 2015), 169.

Eusebius reckoned that “the virgin might conceive the Savior not as a prepubescent child but as a marriageable age and mature young woman,”<sup>62</sup> but Jerome considered, “she is not only a virgin, but a virgin of younger age and in the years of her youth.”<sup>63</sup> Jerome understood the term *עלמה* as an even younger virgin than *בתולה*, and thus *עלמה* is less possible to be revealed by men’s sight than *בתולה* because she is not a marriageable age. Younger age is the reason for being “hidden” that Jerome understands.

When it comes to Isaiah 7:14, Jerome’s interest is mainly in philological analysis. However, even though it is only a paragraph, this section shows his penchant for the historical viewpoint as follows:

The Hebrews think this is prophesied about Hezekiah son of Ahaz, because Samaria was captured when he was ruling. This cannot be completely proven, if indeed Ahaz son of Jotham reigned over Judah and Jerusalem for sixteen years [cf. 2 Kgs 16:1–2]. His son Hezekiah succeeded him in the kingdom at the age of twenty-five years and reigned over Judah and Jerusalem for twenty-nine [cf. 2 Kgs 18:1–2]. How then, granting that this prophecy was made to Ahaz in his first year, is there talk of the conception and birth of Hezekiah, when at that time when Ahaz began to reign, Hezekiah was already nine years old, unless perchance they say that the sixth year of Hezekiah’s rule [cf. 2 Kgs 18:10] when Samaria was captured was called his infancy not in terms of his age but of his rule? It is plain even to fools that this is a forced and violent interpretation.<sup>64</sup>

Jerome was the first figure to approach this issue from the perspective of chronology. In conclusion, Jerome held on to the stance of the virgin birth and Christological view in the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. He tried to provide a better explanation in the aspects of philological and historical analysis, such as a new insight into *עלמה* and the Chronological

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<sup>62</sup> Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 37.

<sup>63</sup> St. Jerome, *St. Jerome: Commentary on Isaiah: Including St. Jerome’s Translation of Origen’s Homilies 1–9 on Isaiah*, 169.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 170–171.

calculation. These developments are Jerome's major contribution to the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14.

### **Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 378–444)**

Cyril, in *Commentary on Isaiah*, began with the repetition of the existing perspective of the virgin birth and Christological interpretation when it comes to the explanation of Isaiah 7:14. However, it seems worthy to note how he refuted the interpretation of Jews regarding the upcoming son, compared to Jerome who employed the chronological analysis.

Some of those who have translated the divine Scriptures have rendered this: 'Behold a young woman shall conceive in the womb.' It seems to the Jews that the mother of the Lord should be indicated by the expression 'young woman' and should not rather be called a virgin. For they think it possible to invalidate the power of the mystery if she is called a young woman rather than a virgin. One may note their ignorance on a number of levels. First, even if the virgin is called a young woman, that does not exclude her from being a virgin. Secondly, they say that the prophet uttered the words 'Behold, a young woman shall conceive in the womb and shall bear a son' about the wife of Ahaz, so that we should take this to refer to the birth of Hezekiah. ... (ellipsis) ... But, my friends, one might say to them, who has called Hezekiah Immanuel? Or how can it be proved that before he had knowledge of good and evil he rejected wickedness and chose the good? We therefore say farewell to their quibbling and welcome what is right and true, believing that in this prophecy God is indicating the holy Virgin to us. For in this way there will truly be a miracle and a great sign in both its depth and its height that has come about in accordance with the divine promise.<sup>65</sup>

For a rebuttal to the Jews' conclusion that the son is Hezekiah, Cyril simply employed the immediate context around Isaiah 7:14 and the information about Hezekiah. In addition to this, Cyril provided an allegorical explanation similar to Origen's, who suggested the

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<sup>65</sup> Cyril and Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2000), 78–79.



allegorical explanation with the frame “David-Christ” and “David’s house-church of Christ.”<sup>66</sup>

He says furthermore that the land about which he is suspicious and alarmed on account of the two kings will be abandoned. This is similar to saying openly: ‘When the Virgin who is pregnant gives birth, you, O house of David, will call his name Immanuel. Then all who trouble the holy land will abandon her. For she is not yet accessible to those who wish to penetrate her.’ This is a spiritual saying. For when Immanuel was born, the real holy land and city, which is the Church, became the good thing that was hoped for. She was trampled on by every enemy, who finding her disinclined to fight departed, leaving her to be saved by God. ‘For I shall be to her, says the Lord, a wall of fire surrounding her and I will be the glory within her.’ (Zechariah 2:5)<sup>67</sup>

Cyril tried to interpret this verse in light of its spiritual meaning, which is timeless, not the limited and historical implications related to the times of Ahaz. Through the prophecy of Immanuel, he found a spiritual message of Christ and the blessing given to the church through Christ. When it comes to the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, Origen and Cyril shared the allegorical method. That being said, the difference between Origen and Cyril is that Origen saw David’s house as the church, while Cyril recognized the holy land and city as the church.

Even though Cyril had the same theological stance as the previous exegetes regarding Isaiah 7:14, his exegesis on this verse included a supplementary interpretation beyond the meaning of the divine birth of Jesus. He presented a more elaborate explanation of the divinity and humanity within a single person of Jesus than his predecessors.

For he who is from above, and is by nature the only begotten Son of God the Father, emptied himself and was brought forth from a virginal womb according to the flesh, receiving his generation not from the human emission of seed but from the power and energy of the Holy Spirit. ... (ellipsis)...Observe how in order to show that he was truly God as well as man, the prophet assigned to him attributes that were both divine

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<sup>66</sup> Origen, *Homilies on Isaiah*, 54.

<sup>67</sup> Cyril and Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 80.

and human. For when he says that he was given food suitable for infants, namely butter and honey, he is trying to assure us that he came to be in the flesh in reality.<sup>68</sup>

Cyril first illustrated the divinity within the person of Jesus. On the one hand, he is “from above” and the “only begotten son of God by nature.” This origin and nature are different from that of a normal human, and moreover, the miraculous virgin birth is a persuasive reason for Jesus’ divine nature. On the other hand, he also focused on the humanity within the person of Jesus, describing that the son will eat “honey and butter” as other human infants eat. These two different natures in the state of unity coexist within a single person of Jesus. For Cyril, Isaiah 7:14–15 is about the proper description that shows the mysterious union of the two different natures, the divinity and the humanity, within a single person of Jesus Christ. Similarly, the two natures of Immanuel are also emphasized by other scholars in the same era. Augustine of Hippo (A.D 354–430) figuratively explains, “Christ was born a visible man of a human virgin mother, but he was a hidden God because God was his Father.”<sup>69</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 329–390) says specifically, “The two natures meeting in one thing, but not two sons.”<sup>70</sup> Leo the Great repeats, “By giving birth in this wonderful way the holy Virgin brought forth in a single offspring both a truly human nature and a truly divine one.”<sup>71</sup> During the third to fourth centuries, these scholars shared an interest in the two different natures of a single person, Jesus.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>69</sup> Gerald G. Walsh, and Daniel J. Honan, “Book Eighteen,” in *The City of God, Books XVII–XXII (The Fathers of the Church, Volume 24)*, 83–182. (Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 16

<sup>70</sup> Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God : in Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 129.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Louis Wilken, Angela Russell Christman, and Michael J. Hollerich, eds., *Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators*, trans. Robert Louis Wilken, Angela Russell Christman, and Michael J. Hollerich, *The Church’s Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 105.

In conclusion, Cyril's exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 agrees with the virgin birth and Christological interpretation. Furthermore, the intentional balance between the natures of both the divinity and humanity of Immanuel is reflected in the exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 that Cyril provides, and it seems to be due to the controversial Christology at that time. Justin Martyr had to emphasize the divine birth in Isaiah 7:14 as the counteraction to Jews' rejection of the Septuagint's translation and Jesus Christ. After that, Irenaeus tried to focus on the humanity of Jesus in Isaiah 7:14–15, which was not highlighted by Justin. At last, in the times of Cyril, these two natures are simultaneously spotlighted in Isaiah 7:14–15 because of the keen theological interest of the era.

### **Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274)**

The succinct term that presents Thomas Aquinas' interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 is the "incarnation."<sup>72</sup> On the whole, Aquinas followed the church's traditional position when it comes to the Septuagint's translation and Christological interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. The exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 was written in the format of the introduction of Jews' interpretation and Aquinas' refutation of it. Aquinas said, "Now this is the sign of the incarnation of Christ. But the Jews object to this in many ways. First, that the Lord was giving a sign of the liberation of the Jews at that time, with which the Incarnation of Christ agrees in nothing."<sup>73</sup> Aquinas believed that Isaiah 7:14 is the prophecy about the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and he was also aware of a different perspective of Jews that Isaiah 7:14 is about the birth of

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<sup>72</sup> Joseph Wawrykow, "Introduction," in *Commentary on Isaiah*, trans. Louis St. Hilaire (Steubenville, OH; Green Bay, WI: Emmaus Academic; Aquinas Institute, 2021), 12.

<sup>73</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Isaiah*, trans. Louis St. Hilaire (Steubenville, OH; Green Bay, WI: Emmaus Academic; Aquinas Institute, 2021), 142.

Hezekiah or Isaiah's son<sup>74</sup> and the sign of the liberation of Jews at that time,<sup>75</sup> which was a thorough historical view. Even though modern scholars focus on Aquinas' rational attitude, he rather criticized Jews' rational interpretation that restricted the implication of Isaiah 7:14 only within the historical context. Aquinas thoroughly approached this verse in light of Christology. For Aquinas, the incarnation of Jesus meant liberation from the greater perspective. He said as follows:

To which is to be said that the Incarnation of Christ signifies that liberation by an argument from the greater: for if God will give his son for the salvation of the whole world, much more can he save you from these enemies? *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all* (Rom 8:32); or as a motive cause, for this moves the Lord, as it were, since many good things are conceded to this people, however unjust they were, because he had provided for his Son to be made incarnate from them.<sup>76</sup>

Aquinas did not ignore the necessity of contemporary salvation in the circumstances of Ahaz, but he emphasized that faith in contemporary salvation is easily given by faith in ultimate salvation through Jesus Christ, the son of God. From the historical and contextual dimension, the incarnation was not achieved in the days of Ahaz. Aquinas mentioned the Jews' argument of the incarnation as follows: "Likewise they object that the sign that follows is given to those who are present, but the incarnation did not happen in their time, and so it would appear that no sign was given."<sup>77</sup> Aquinas responded to this, saying, "To which is to be said that, although the incarnation did not happen in the presence of those men, it nevertheless did happen in the presence of the abiding house of David: hence he says, hear

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid..

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

ye, O house of David (Isa 7:13).”<sup>78</sup> Aquinas understood the house of David in the timeless aspect and connected it to the fulfillment of Jesus’ birth in the lineage of David.

Aquinas also observed the sophisticated nuance of עֲלֻמָּה. He says, “Therefore, according to us, עֲלֻמָּה is used rather than young girl, because עֲלֻמָּה signifies a virgin, according to the origin of the word, and still more, it means one who is protected, about whom there can be no suspicion of evil. But בְּתוּלָה signifies virgin according to a later manner of speaking.”<sup>79</sup> Jerome argued that עֲלֻמָּה has a sense of “hidden,” but Aquinas thought that the word has an implication of “protected,” and “no suspicion of evil.” Even though they did not share the same definition, both suggested the sophisticated nuance regarding עֲלֻמָּה. Aquinas continued to refute Jews’ interpretations of this verse as the birth of Hezekiah or Isaiah’s son as follows:

The Jews, however, explain this verse in two ways. Some say it concerns Ezechias; some say it concerns the son of Isaiah, whom they imagine to have been called Emmanuel. But that the first cannot stand is thus shown, because Ezechias was twenty-five years old when he began to reign (2 Kgs 18:2), and Achaz reigned sixteen years (2 Kgs 16:2); therefore Ezechias was ten years old when his father began to reign; and thus he could not be promised to be born here. Moreover, how would he not know to call his father and mother, when, in the sixth year of his reign, Samaria was captured? Likewise, that the second cannot stand is shown because this would be no sign at all. And moreover the son of Isaiah was not Lord of Judea, and yet, in Isaiah 8:8, the land of Judea is spoken of as a possession of Emmanuel. And therefore it is necessary to understand this to be speaking of the son of God.<sup>80</sup>

Here is an interesting insight that Aquinas provided. Regarding “And the spread of its wings will fill the expanse of your land, Immanuel” in Isaiah 8:8, Aquinas saw it as the reign of Immanuel as the king over the land of Judah. In addition to Jerome, Aquinas followed

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 143–144.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 144.

Cyril's interpretation. Aquinas' exegesis also focused on Immanuel's two different natures. He said, "The naming of the miraculously begotten child; and first as to his divinity: shall call, namely, the virgin shall call, or you yourself, Judah, shall call, in danger; his name Immanuel, which is translated: "God with us."<sup>81</sup> After dealing with the divinity, he addressed the humanity of Immanuel as follows: "As to his humanity: he shall eat butter and honey, literally, manly foods because from infancy he held himself to the manner of other men."<sup>82</sup> Based on the assurance that the coming son indicates Christ, the two different natures of Christ are projected in the son of the virgin.

In conclusion, Aquinas focused on the incarnation of God in Isaiah 7:14. This verse included the prophecy of how God became human in order to save humans from sin. Even though Aquinas was known as a rational scholar who sought literal-historical interpretation, his conclusion of Isaiah 7:14 was thoroughly Christological. His exegesis was combined with the rebuttal to the Jews' rejection of Christ. Also, when seeing the interpretive focus and the supposed opponent in the controversy, Aquinas' interpretation in the thirteenth century was not generally different from the interpretations of scholars such as Jerome and Cyril in the fourth or fifth century. Furthermore, it synthesized the previous scholars' insights. This shows how Aquinas considered the church tradition important in interpreting Isaiah 7:14.

#### Interpreters in the Reformation Era (1500s)

The Reformation was a challenge to the medieval church and papal authority. The reformers initiated a new movement to restore the biblical church with the chief authority of

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 145.

the Scripture. The two major reformers, who are Martin Luther and John Calvin, will be dealt with in this section. These two scholars focus on the grammatical and historical interpretation rather than the allegorical interpretation, which is one of the features of the early and medieval church.

### **Martin Luther (1483–1546)**

Martin Luther did not provide much explanation regarding Isaiah 7:14, but there are two major arguments to consider. The first argument is about the hidden sign to Ahaz. Luther mentioned the two signs in Isaiah 7–8. The first sign is the birth of Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14, and the second sign is the birth of Isaiah’s son in Isaiah 8:1–4. Luther said as follows: “And he foretells two signs: The one is hidden, the other open. The latter he explains in chapter 8 in a way not much different from Hosea, chapter 1. But Isaiah includes both signs. The first one does not apply to Ahaz, because he did not live to see it, but the second does.”<sup>83</sup> Luther understood Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy for the distant future and Isaiah 8:1–4 as a prophecy fulfilled in the days of Ahaz. In the explanation of Isaiah 7:14, Luther expanded the discussion by including Isaiah 8 and recognizing it as the second sign. Consequently, he tried to focus on the contemporary meaning that the second sign gives in the original context.

Luther’s second argument is his consideration of the Hebrew terms in Isaiah 7:14. There are three terms that he deals with. First, Luther said, “עַלְמָה, a young woman capable of giving birth, for an old woman can be a virgin too, but she is not called עַלְמָה.”<sup>84</sup> Basically, he

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<sup>83</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, vol. 16: Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 16 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 84.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

believed that the woman was a virgin and the sign was a miracle.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, he emphasized that the woman is young when considering she is called a virgin.<sup>86</sup> Second, when it comes to הָרָה, Luther suggested a different reading as follows: “In Hebrew, it is “has conceived,” and that is the indication of a miracle; it is as if the prophet were already seeing it.”<sup>87</sup>

Interestingly, his translation is different from the modern translation, which is “will conceive” (NASB 2020, NIV) or “shall conceive.” (ESV) Another interesting point is that this translation provides a new perspective to approach Isaiah 7:14 as a vision. The prophet Isaiah may not simply prophesy but may explain what he is seeing now in a spiritual realm. The last philological reference is about the implications of עִמּוֹ אֵל. Luther says, “This describes what kind of person it will be. This is not a proper name. He is indeed the Son of a virgin, and yet He is “God with us,” therefore God and man.”<sup>88</sup> Luther follows the stance of Cyril, which is the son as both the true God and the true man.

In conclusion, even though Luther did not provide abundant explanations of Isaiah 7:14, it is evident that he held on to the Christological interpretation of the verse and tried to suggest new insights into Isaiah 7:14 in the Christological light. Moreover, he argued for two signs in Isaiah 7–8 and tried to reveal the contemporary meaning of the second sign. In this respect, it is noteworthy that Luther considered the original context in addition to the Christological implication.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.



### John Calvin (1509–1564)

Calvin's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 basically rehearses the earlier discussions, indicating that the verse is the prophecy about the coming of Jesus Christ. However, he presented a more developed exegesis in that he connected the historical circumstances in the times of Ahaz and the promise of the prophecy. Calvin first refuted three interpretations of Isaiah 7:14: Hezekiah, Isaiah's son, and some child who was born then.

Those who apply this passage to Hezekiah are excessively impudent; for he must have been a full-grown man when Jerusalem was besieged. Thus they show that they are grossly ignorant of history. But it is a just reward of their malice, that God hath blinded them in such a manner as to be deprived of all judgment. This happens in the present day to the papists, who often expose themselves to ridicule by their mad eagerness to pervert the Scriptures. As to those who think that it was Isaiah's son, it is an utterly frivolous conjecture; for we do not read that a deliverer would be raised up from the seed of Isaiah, who should be called *Immanuel*; for this title is far too illustrious to admit of being applied to any man. Others think, or, at least, (being unwilling to contend with the Jews more than was necessary,) admit that the Prophet spoke of some child who was born at that time, by whom, as by an obscure picture, Christ was foreshadowed. But they produce no strong arguments, and do not show who that child was, or bring forward any proofs. Now, it is certain, as we have already said, that this name *Immanuel* could not be literally applied to a mere man; and, therefore, there can be no doubt that the Prophet referred to Christ.<sup>89</sup>

The most impressive point of Calvin's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 is that he approached this verse with a close examination of the historical context. He began by mentioning the context of the dialogue between Isaiah and Ahaz. Calvin focused on the fact that the prophecy was given in a specific historical context, which was the national crisis of Judah. Scholars before Calvin did not suggest a sufficient link between the situation in the days of Ahaz and the implication of the prophecy of the coming Jesus Christ in the far future. However, Calvin said it in the following way.

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<sup>89</sup> John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 244–245.

But all writers, both Greek and Latin, are too much at their ease in handling this passage; for, as if there were no difficulty in it, they merely assert that Christ is here promised from the Virgin Mary. Now, there is no small difficulty in the objection which the Jews bring against us, that Christ is here mentioned without any sufficient reason; for thus they argue, and demand that the scope of the passage be examined: “Jerusalem was besieged. The Prophet was about to give them a sign of deliverance. Why should he promise the Messiah, who was to be born five hundred years afterwards?” By this argument they think that they have gained the victory, because the promise concerning Christ had nothing to do with assuring Ahaz of the deliverance of Jerusalem. And then they boast as if they had gained the day, chiefly because scarcely any one replies to them. That is the reason why I said that commentators have been too much at their ease in this matter; for it is of no small importance to show why the Redeemer is here mentioned. Now, the matter stands thus. King Ahaz having rejected the sign which God had offered to him, the Prophet reminds him of the foundation of the covenant, which even the ungodly did not venture openly to reject. The Messiah must be born; and this was expected by all, because the salvation of the whole nation depended on it. The Prophet, therefore, after having expressed his indignation against the king, again argues in this manner: “By rejecting the promise, thou wouldest endeavour to overturn the decree of God; but it shall remain inviolable, and thy treachery and ingratitude will not hinder God from being continually the Deliverer of his people; for he will at length raise up his Messiah.”<sup>90</sup>

When reading the paragraph above, Calvin had a thorough Christological understanding of Isaiah 7:14, but he also recognized that the promise of Immanuel was closely related to Judah’s current security. Calvin said as follows:

Most appropriately, therefore, did Isaiah say, “True, thou dost not believe the promises of God, but yet God will fulfil them; for he will at length send his Christ, for whose sake he determines to preserve this city. Though thou art unworthy, yet God will have regard to his own honour.” King Ahaz is therefore deprived of that sign which he formerly rejected, and loses the benefit of which he proved himself to be unworthy; but still God’s inviolable promise is still held out to him.<sup>91</sup>

In this respect, the security of Jerusalem does not depend on the faith of Ahaz but on the promise of Immanuel. When it comes to Immanuel, Calvin focused on the fact that Christ became God-man, saying, “This name was unquestionably bestowed on Christ on account of

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 245–246.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 246.

the actual fact; for the only-begotten Son of God clothed himself with our flesh, and united himself to us by partaking of our nature.”<sup>92</sup> In this respect, Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 is important evidence for Calvin to prove Christ as the true God-man.

One of the features of Calvin’s commentary is his propensity for lexical analysis. In the exegesis, he examined a variety of Hebrew terms and specifically defined their implications and functions, even sometimes pointing out other scholars’ wrong understanding of the grammatical analysis. He explained עַלְמָה as follows:

Although the word עַלְמָה, (*gnālmāh*), a *virgin*, is derived from עַלַם, (*gnālām*), which signifies *to hide*, because the shame and modesty of *virgins* does not allow them to appear in public; yet as the Jews dispute much about that word, and assert that it does not signify *virgin*, because Solomon used it to denote a young woman who was betrothed, it is unnecessary to contend about the word. Though we should admit what they say, that עַלְמָה (*gnālmāh*) sometimes denotes a *young woman*, and that the name refers, as they would have it, to the age, (yet it is frequently used in Scripture when the subject relates to a *virgin*,) the nature of the case sufficiently refutes all their slanders.<sup>93</sup>

Calvin basically agreed with the traditional understanding of the church and believed that עַלְמָה should be translated into virgin because it is a miraculous sign.<sup>94</sup> However, there is a meaningful advance of the עַלְמָה discussion. Calvin presented a similar understanding of עַלְמָה to what Jerome explained, saying that the Hebrew term has a sophisticated nuance of “to hide” when considering its derivation. This consensus between Jerome and Calvin seems to provide a clue to bring out a new discussion on the implication beyond the virginity of עַלְמָה.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 247–248.

In conclusion, when considering the theological discernment of Calvin as one of the most influential theologians in the Reformation, it is meaningful that he still holds on to the Septuagint's translation and Isaiah 7:14 as the prophecy of the coming Christ. Calvin's agreement with the predecessors' interpretation means that Christological interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 is proved again in the times of the Reformation.

#### Interpreters in the Post-Reformation Era (1600s–1700s)

This section will examine three scholars' interpretations of Isaiah 7:14 during the period of the Post-Reformation: Abraham Calov, Johannes Cocceius, and Augustin Calmet. In general, they continued the traditional view of Isaiah 7:14 as the Christological interpretation. However, Calmet showed a slightly different view from the previous scholars, even though he did not evidently deny the Christological implication of Isaiah 7:14. This view is noteworthy because it will be refined in the coming centuries.

#### **Abraham Calov (1612–1686)**

Abraham Calov was a German theologian trained by strict Lutheran orthodoxy in theology and philosophy.<sup>95</sup> One of his writings is *Biblia Testamenti Veteris Illustrata*. This book includes commentary on Isaiah.<sup>96</sup> The second edition in 1719 of Isaiah 7:14 says as follows:

*Tum vero de virgine fermo est cujus virginitas intemerata est, & illibata. Hoc enim vox alma importat quae non juvenulam, uti reddit Socinus, fed virginem notat, neque*

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<sup>95</sup> José David Rodríguez, "Calov, Abraham (1612–86)," ed. Justo L. González, trans. Suzanne E. Hoferkamp Segovia, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theologians* (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 72–73.

<sup>96</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 232.

*aliter, quam de virgine illibata ufpiam in Sacris occurrit. Eft enim flatus non aetatis nomen, quod vioriginis ab alm abfcondit, virginem abfconditam fignificat, velut Hieronymus quaeft.*<sup>97</sup> [But indeed, it is certain concerning the virgin whose virginity is uncorrupted and untouched. For this word, *alma*, signifies not a young girl (or heifer), as Socinus renders, but signifies a virgin, and nowhere in the Sacred Scriptures is it otherwise. For it is not the name of age, which conceals the virginity of *alm*, it signifies a hidden virgin, just as Jerome seeks.]

Calov referred to the philological analysis of עֲלְמָה that Jerome and Calvin suggested.

He also recognized that עֲלְמָה has a subtle nuance based on עלם (qal: what is hidden, nif: to be concealed, hif: to conceal, secrete, hitp: to hide oneself<sup>98</sup>), which may imply something beyond simple virginity. When considering the interpretation of Luther, it might mean that this virgin was hidden from contemporary people in the days of Ahaz and was about futuristic salvation.<sup>99</sup>

### **Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669)**

Johannes Cocceius was a German Reformed Protestant theologian.<sup>100</sup> Cocceius repeated the traditional debate of Isaiah 7:14. He refuted the Jewish interpretation that the son is Hezekiah based on the chronological explanation,<sup>101</sup> referring to Jerome. His Latin text says as follows:

*Judaeus commentator, quem faepe nominamus, poit Judaeos alios, qui Ezechiam per*

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<sup>97</sup> Abraham Calov, *Biblia Testamenti Veteris Illustrata: In Quibus Emphases vocum ac mens dictorum genuina è fontibus, contextu, & analogia Scripturae eruuntur*, 2nd ed. vol. 2 (Dresdæ & Lipsiæ : Zimmermannus, 1719), 46.

<sup>98</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 834.

<sup>99</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 16: *Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 84.

<sup>100</sup> José David Rodríguez, “Cocceius, Johannes (1603–69),” ed. Justo L. González, trans. Suzanne E. Hoferkamp Segovia, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theologians* (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 93.

<sup>101</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 242.

*hunc puerum putaruot pofle intelligi. (quosrefutat Hieronymus; & Abenefa & Abarbenel relinquit, quippe Ezechias natus 25 annos rex factus eft, & Achaz fumum 16. annis regnavit. Ergo jam tum fuit natus)*<sup>102</sup> [The Jewish commentator, whom we often mention, believed that other Jews thought that Hezekiah could be understood through this boy. (This is refuted by Jerome, and Aben Ezra and Abarbanel also leave it, for Hezekiah became king at the age of 25, and Ahaz reigned for only 16 years. Therefore, he was already born by then.)]

A distinguishing point among Cocceius' interpretations is that he connects Isaiah 8:1–4 to 7:14. He explained that Isaiah 8:1–4 is another sign related to the earlier prophecy of Immanuel,<sup>103</sup> as Martin Luther said. According to Cocceius, Isaiah 8:1–4 should be read in an apocalyptic way, and the two witnesses in Isaiah 8:2, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah were not the figures in the times of Ahaz.<sup>104</sup> These are the figures in the future. Uriah, the priest in Isaiah 8:2, is not the one in the times of Ahaz because Uriah, the priest in 2 Kings 16:10–16, was an idolater, and thus, he cannot be a reliable witness as Isaiah 8:2 describes. Uriah in Isaiah 8:2 will appear in the times of Jeremiah. He is the one who prophesies in the name of the Lord (Jer. 26:20). Uriah was finally killed by King Jehoiakim due to his prophecy against the city and land (26:23). Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, is the very prophet in the times of Darius (Zec. 1:1), and he prophesied the coming of the Messiah (9:9).<sup>105</sup> Two figures that will appear in the future are described as witnesses for a present event. The way of description in Isaiah 8:2 is similar to 7:14. When understanding 7:14 as the future coming of Christ, 7:14 tells that the future birth of Christ is the sign of the solution to the present crisis. Luther focused on the birth of Isaiah's son in 8:3–4 as the open sign, which

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<sup>102</sup> Johannes Cocceius, *Esaiæ*, Opera Omnia Theologica, Exegetica, Didactica, Polemica, Philologica, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: J. C. Zimmermann, 1701), 132.

<sup>103</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 242.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Cocceius, *Esaiæ*, 136.

has a contemporary nature in the days of Ahaz, while Cocceius observed the apocalyptic implications based on 8:2, which cannot be applied to the days of Ahaz but supports the future birth of Christ in 7:14.

### **Augustin Calmet (1672–1757)**

Augustin Calmet was a celebrated French exegetist on the Roman Catholic side. Florentine Betchel said, “The work inaugurated a new method of Biblical exegesis, inasmuch as its author very sensibly departed from the general custom of giving an allegorical (mystical) and tropological (moral) interpretation besides the literal, and confined himself to the latter.”<sup>106</sup> Childs thoroughly analyzes Calmet’s dissertation on Isaiah 7:14. According to Childs, Calmet suggested a new approach to the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 compared to the traditional interpretation, saying, “At the outset, Calmet argues that one cannot understand the figure of the Messiah from a single passage, especially not just from Isaiah 7:14, but the interpreter must take into consideration the whole range of passages within the larger narrative context that together encompasses a true profile.”<sup>107</sup> Even though he did not deny the Christological interpretation, he did not say that the verse has an evident description of Jesus Christ. In fact, Calvin also admitted the ambiguity of the verse.<sup>108</sup> The Christological conclusion of Isaiah 7:14 might be prior knowledge-based. Without Matthew’s citation, it is

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<sup>106</sup> Florentine Bechtel, “Dom Augustin Calmet,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann et al., (New York: The Encyclopedia Press; The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1907–1913).

<sup>107</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 257.

<sup>108</sup> Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 244.

not easy to connect the son and the Messiah. Calmet pointed it out and recommended reading the broad context. Then Childs said as follows:

Calmet argues that the Jewish interpretation of chapter 7 is correct in stressing the fully human component of the prophetic passage. The biblical text speaks of a genuinely historical event occurring in recognizable time and space. There is a real child promised, an earthly father and a wife, probably of the prophet rather than of Ahaz. However, these earthly, historically concrete elements of the passage do not mean that the birth of Jesus would not be accompanied by extraordinary, mysterious, and divine elements.<sup>109</sup>

This paragraph includes four important statements. First, Calmet positively understood the Jewish interpretation as a human component in Isaiah 7:14, not divine. Second, accordingly, the son will have a normal father and mother. Third, presumably, the parents may be Isaiah and his wife. Lastly, however, this interpretation did not deny the divine birth of Jesus Christ. The intention of Calmet is to embrace both the historically applicable meaning and the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This is like a dual-meaning reading, which is close to the modern interpretation. Calmet explained it as follows: “The Isaianic passage, like so many other prophetic oracles, has a double sense: there is the historical and the spiritual. One does not exclude the other; the two flow together. There are two children intertwined in the passage: a historical son of Isaiah, and a promised Son of God. These are not two separate levels, but are portrayed as a unity.”<sup>110</sup>

When it comes to the Hebrew term *עלמה*, Calmet again suggested the double possibility. Childs says as follows: “Calmet begins by conceding to Jewish interpretation that the element of virginity is not primary in the word. In fact, the passage provides the potential for ambiguity. It is possible to read the passage as if it spoke of the ordinary birth of a maiden

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<sup>109</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 258.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.



shortly to conceive a child from the prophet. Yet it is also possible to read it according to the traditions of the church.”<sup>111</sup> It is evident that Calmet saw Isaiah 7:14 from a neutral perspective, and his approach was different from the traditional interpretation of the church.

### Challenges to Traditional Interpretation and Ensuing Reactions (1800s)

Edward Young said that Old Testament theology in the nineteenth century was under the influence of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. In this era, the status of human reason was exalted, and the Bible was denigrated as simply human writing.<sup>112</sup> After the rise of this new *Zeitgeist*, on the one hand, the church’s traditional interpretation was easily ignored, and new attempts based on rationalism began to be accepted in biblical interpretation. On the other hand, some scholars resisted the new critical perspective and tried to preserve the traditional standpoint. Lastly, the third position, which was eclectic, appeared.

### Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842)

Wilhelm Gesenius was a German biblical critic and lexicographer. He incorporated a significant amount of rationalism from the Enlightenment into his interpretation. Interestingly, all later analyses of Isaiah, regardless of being conservative or liberal, were directly or indirectly impacted by Gesenius, who established the basis for the contemporary study of Hebrew that continued for many generations.<sup>113</sup> When it comes to Isaiah 7:14,

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 21–22.

<sup>113</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 265.

Gesenius presented a different interpretation from the traditional interpretations. He says as follows:

*Die Jungfrau d. i. eine Gattin oder verlobte Jungfrau des Propheten - so lautet das Wahrzeichen - wird schwanger werden, and nech neun Monden einen Sohn gebähren, den sie Gott mi penden wird, weil Gott dann schon, mit dem Zolks seyn wird, d. i. binnen neun Monden wird Jada sebon gerettet seyn.*<sup>114</sup> [The virgin, i.e., a wife or betrothed virgin of the prophet - so the sign goes - will become pregnant and bear a son after nine months, whom she will call “God with us,” for by then God will already be with the people; that is, within nine months, Judah will be saved.]

Gesenius considered the woman as “a wife or betrothed virgin of the prophet” (*eine Gattin oder verlobte Jungfrau des Propheten*). Even though he believed that this verse was about the sign (*das Wahrzeichen*) of God, he did not present the implication of the divine birth and the virgin birth because the woman might be a wife who had already married the prophet.

Gesenius’ understanding of Isaiah 7:14 can be confirmed again through his lexicon of Hebrews. He defines עַלְמָה in the following way: A “marriageable girl” (*mannbares Mädchen*) specifically, referring only to the girl as marriageable, neither as a virgin nor as married (*bezeichnet lediglich das Mädchen als mannbares, nicht als Jungfrau [בְּתוּלָה], auch nicht als verhelicht od. nicht verhelicht*).<sup>115</sup> Gesenius emphasized that this Hebrew term is not related to the virginity of the woman. It only refers to the mature girl, not as a virgin, nor as married or unmarried.

Gesenius’ cynosure was the historical and political aspect of Isaiah 7:14, not the Christological interpretation that has traditionally been accepted. He said as follows:

*Die Voraussage besteht nun auch hier nicht in dem Schwangerwerden der Jungfray*

<sup>114</sup> Wilhelm H. Gesenius, *Der Prophet Jesaia* (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1821), 296.

<sup>115</sup> Wilhelm Gesenius et al., *Hebräisches Und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch Über Das Alte Testament*, ed. Frants Buhl (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1915), 594.

*oder des jungen Weibes, nicht in der Geburt des Kindes, sondern dieses beydes gibt gleichsam den Faden her, sa welchen sich die wichtigen politischen Ereignisse, die w verheilst, zeihen.*<sup>116</sup> [The prediction does not consist here in the impregnation of the virgin or the young woman, nor in the birth of the child, but both of these aspects provide the thread upon which the significant political events that are being foretold unfold.]

Gesenius first referred to “political events” and argued for the political viewpoint of Isaiah 7:14. However, the sense seems to be consistent with Calmet’s historical consideration.<sup>117</sup> Compared to Calmet, Gesenius was more far from the traditional interpretation. Calmet still admitted the Christological meaning, while Gesenius denied it. Based on a new philological research of עלמה, Gesenius initially provided a different interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 from the traditional one within the Christian scholarship.

### **Ferdinand Hitzig (1807–1875)**

Childs assesses Ferdinand Hitzig’s literary analysis of Isaiah as both brilliant and radical. Hitzig challenged the assumption of Isaiah’s literary coherence and highlighted the presence of contradiction and tension in the prophetic text. Hitzig remained critical of traditional Christian interpretation throughout his career, considering it an obstacle to genuine exegesis.<sup>118</sup> In the commentary of Isaiah, Hitzig said as follows:

*Zum Wahrzeichen für das Eintreffen dieses Orakels macht er in einer wirklich glänzenden Wendung ein Ereignis fausti ominis, nämlich, dafs ein Weib, welches jetzt schwanger wird, ihren Neugeborenen Immanuel Gott mit uns nennen werde, zum Andenken an die durch Uebersiehung ihres Landes bewirkte Siehe das junge Weib wird schwanger, und gebiert einen Sohn, Und nennt seinen Namen Gottmituns.*<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Gesenius, *Der Prophet Jesaja*, 297.

<sup>117</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 258.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 265–266.

<sup>119</sup> Ferdinand Hitzig, *Der Prophet Jesaja* (Heidelberg: C. F. Winter, 1833), 84–85.

[As a sign for the fulfillment of this oracle, he makes a truly splendid turn of events, namely, that a woman who is now pregnant will call her newborn Immanuel, ‘God with us,’ in memory of the salvation wrought upon her land. See, the young woman is pregnant and gives birth to a son, and she names him ‘God with us.’]

When it comes to Isaiah 7:14, Hitzig described עֲלֵמָה as “*welches jetzt schwanger wird,*” which meant “who is now pregnant.” It might appear to be similar to Luther’s insight, which translated into “has conceived.”<sup>120</sup> However, they had different interpretations of the whole verse. While Luther admitted the virgin birth, Hitzig did not consider the verse as a special miracle. For Hitzig, it was a normal event that a pregnant woman would give birth to a son. Even though he admitted that this passage is about the sign from God, he did not deduce the supernatural and divine birth from it. Hitzig considered that the church’s traditional interpretations concerning the virginity of עֲלֵמָה could not be deducible from the verse. He approached this verse thoroughly based on common sense, not relating it to the birth of Jesus Christ.

### **Joseph Addison Alexander (1809–1860)**

Joseph Addison Alexander graduated from Princeton University and taught ancient languages and Oriental literature at the same place in the period of the Old Princeton.<sup>121</sup> Childs assesses, “Alexander’s commentary is a reaction to the Enlightenment.” The main objective of Alexander’s biblical commentary was not to entirely align with the Protestant Reformers’ traditional approach. Rather, it primarily aimed to serve as an apologetic

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<sup>120</sup> Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 16: *Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, 84.

<sup>121</sup> Hugo Magallanes Tejera, “Alexander, Joseph Addison (1809–60),” ed. Justo L. González, trans. Suzanne E. Hoeferkamp Segovia, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theologians* (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 10.

response, refuting the critical interpretations of the preceding two centuries.<sup>122</sup> He understood that *עַלְמָה* in Isaiah 7:14 indicated the concept of a virgin or at least of an unmarried woman and strongly denied the translation as a young woman. He believed that the birth was “something more than a birth in the ordinary course of nature.”<sup>123</sup>

When it comes to the identity of Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14, Alexander said, “The choice lies between the supposition of a double sense and that of a reference to Christ exclusively but in connection with the promise of immediate deliverance to Ahaz.”<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, he emphasized his position to support the traditional interpretation of the church, saying, “The church in all ages has been right in regarding this passage as a signal and explicit prediction of the miraculous conception and nativity of Jesus Christ.”<sup>125</sup>

### **Franz Julius Delitzsch (1813–1890)**

Franz Julius Delitzsch was a German OT scholar who authored an extensive collection of interpretations of the Old Testament that were inclined towards traditional and pragmatic perspectives but showcased a growing comprehension of the critical outlook towards the Old Testament.<sup>126</sup> When seeing the commentary of Isaiah that Delitzsch wrote, both aspects of the traditional and critical interpretations are presented concerning Isaiah

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<sup>122</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 267.

<sup>123</sup> Joseph Addison Alexander, trans., *The Prophecies of Isaiah Translated and Explained*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1870), 168.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. 172.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 470.

7:14. First, Delitzsch agreed with Gesenius' lexical definition of עֲלֻמָּה. Comparing עֲלֻמָּה and בְּתוּלָה, he said as follows:

The two terms could both be applied to persons who were betrothed, and even to such as were married (Joel 2:16; Prov. 30:19: see Hitzig on these passages). It is also admitted that the idea of spotless virginity was not necessarily connected with *'almâh* (as in Gen. 24:43, cf., 16), since there are passages—such, for example, as Song of Sol. 6:8—where it can hardly be distinguished from the Arabic *surrîje*; and a person who had a very young-looking wife might be said to have an *'almah* for his wife. But it is inconceivable that in a well-considered style, and one of religious earnestness, a woman who had been long married, like the prophet's own wife, could be called *hâ'almâh* without any reserve.<sup>127</sup>

Delitzsch's standpoint regarding עֲלֻמָּה was closer to critical scholars than Alexander's and the traditional interpretation. He did not concede the implication of virginity from עֲלֻמָּה. However, he noticed the incarnation of God from this prophecy. He said as follows:

The incarnation of Deity was unquestionably a secret that was not clearly unveiled in the Old Testament, but the veil was not so thick but that some rays could pass through. Such a ray, directed by the spirit of prophecy into the mind of the prophet, was the prediction of Immanuel. But if the Messiah was to be *Immanuel* in this sense, that He would Himself be *El* (God), as the prophet expressly affirms, His birth must also of necessity be a wonderful or miraculous one.<sup>128</sup>

Delitzsch seemed to leave room for the Christological viewpoint of Isaiah 7:14, which the church traditionally believed. He understood this verse as mysterious and enigmatic and considered that God did not openly reveal the coming of Jesus Christ to all people but secretly and implicitly revealed it only to the chosen people. He illustrated, “A mystery smiling with which consolation upon the prophet and all believers, and couched in these

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<sup>127</sup> Franz Delitzsch, “The Prophecies of Isaiah,” In *Commentary on the Old Testament*, authored by Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 141.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

enigmatical terms, in order that those who hardened themselves might not understand it, and that believers might increasingly long to comprehend its meaning.”<sup>129</sup>

### Interpreters From the 1900s Onward

The most distinguished feature of hermeneutics in the twentieth century is the influence of postmodernism. Relativism affects the biblical interpretation, denying the absolutism that seeks one right interpretation. This century sees all kinds of perspectives reappear with refinement.

#### **Postmodern Interpretation of Walter Brueggemann**

Childs defines Walter Brueggemann’s interpretation as one that reflects the typical postmodern interpretation. According to Childs, Brueggemann gainsaid the one correct interpretation of the text and argued for the impossibility of the monopolistic interpretation.<sup>130</sup> When it comes to Isaiah 8:1–22, Brueggemann mentioned as follows:

Perhaps the greatest learning from this difficult chapter is how tentative our reading and interpretation of the Bible must be. If one did not notice this, one could be overly impressed by those who seem to know completely and without question what the Bible says, what it means, and how it applies. Closer examination of such absolutism discloses that such certainty applies only to a few selected portions of the Bible, and then often by overriding and disregarding the elusiveness that is intrinsic to the text.<sup>131</sup>

Moreover, Brueggemann commented regarding Isaiah 53:10–12 as follows:

“Interpretation may legitimately cease in awe, refusing to decode the imagery, because we

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 293.

<sup>131</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 75.

are very close here to what seems to be quintessential holy ground. Neither Christian nor Jew knows how to decode this poetry.”<sup>132</sup> Brueggemann considered that it is necessary to cease to interpret some elusive passages, and our interpretations concerning them are only tentative and provisional. He said that the fundamental reason for the elusiveness of some biblical passages is that God Himself is elusive.<sup>133</sup> When it comes to the book of Isaiah, Brueggemann was reluctant to accept the Christological reading, which was the traditional reading of the church. He said as follows:

It is legitimate to see how the book of Isaiah fed, nurtured, and evoked Christian imagination with reference to Jesus. But that is very different from any claim that the book of Isaiah predicts or specifically anticipates Jesus. Such a preemption, as has often occurred in the reading of the church, constitutes not only a failure to respect Jewish readers, but is a distortion of the book itself.<sup>134</sup>

For Brueggemann, the Christological interpretation of Isaiah was considered harsh and distorted.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, in his commentary of Isaiah 7:14, he did not deal with any connection between the verse and Jesus Christ in the distant future, denying the virginity of *הַלְוָיָהּ*, saying as follows: “Her status has been of as much interest to interpreters as her identity. The phrase “young woman” (*almâ*) means a woman of marriageable age, but it completely begs the question of virginity. It is undoubtedly clear that a status of virginity is not of any interest or importance for the sign of Isaiah.”<sup>136</sup> Instead, he focused on *עַמּוּנָה אֵל*, saying as follows:

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<sup>132</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 149.

<sup>133</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 75.

<sup>134</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 6.

<sup>135</sup> Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 294.

<sup>136</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 69–70.



The crucial element in the sign concerns the child whose name is “Immanuel,” that is, *God is with us*. We have seen a particular child’s name in 7:3, there a quite ominous name. Here this child’s freighted name is positive and reassuring, for it asserts the entire affirmation of Davidic theology rooted in the ancient oracle of 2 Samuel 7. The child is to be a visible, physical, concrete reassertion of the core conviction of royal Israel that God is present in and with and for Israel as defender, guardian, and protector, so that Israel need not be afraid.<sup>137</sup>

Brueggemann did not relate Isaiah 7:14 to the birth of Jesus Christ but related it to the Davidic covenant. Thus, it is not predictive but retrospective to emphasize the current security of Jerusalem based on the promises made in the past.

### **Messianic Interpretation of John Watts and Brevard Childs**

John Watts and Brevard Childs can be categorized into the same group in that both used the term “messianic” in the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. Watts said that the meaning of עֲלְמָה lies somewhere between a virgin and a young woman. He did not seem to strongly gainsay the virginity of עֲלְמָה. He admitted the possibility of a double entendre in the meaning of עֲלְמָה.<sup>138</sup> However, when it comes to the chronological issue related to Hezekiah, he said that chronology in this period is not certain, so it is difficult to make a sure decision.<sup>139</sup> He appeared to admit that the prophecy of עֲמִנוּ אֵל may indicate Hezekiah because he says, “העלמה, the young woman, must be someone in sight to whom Isaiah points. The most likely woman to have been present with the king would have been the queen.”<sup>140</sup> Watts suggested a messianic interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 in the following way.

The entire setting shows a positive attitude toward the house of David. העלמה, “the

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>138</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 136.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 139.

young woman,” must be someone in sight to whom Isaiah points. The most likely woman to have been present with the king would have been the queen. If this is true, the son that is to be born will be the heir apparent to the throne, i.e., the Anointed One. In this sense, at least, the passage is “messianic.” It is related to the fulfillment of God’s promises to David and his dynasty.<sup>141</sup>

When it comes to the term “messianic,” Watts does not refer to a purely Christological viewpoint of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. He approaches this verse from a historical and contextual perspective.<sup>142</sup> For Watts, “messianic” is related to the divine covenant that protects and preserves the dynasty of David. It does not explicitly indicate the coming of Christ in the distant future, but it has more emphasis on the current security of Judah. Even though he did not admit the Christological meaning, he seemed to accept the typological fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23. He says, “Christological implications may more profitably be discussed in the commentary on Matthew than in the one on Isaiah.”<sup>143</sup>

Brevard Childs also presented a vague range of implications of עלמה, as Watts did. He said, “The English translation of the Hebrew by the A.V. as “virgin” is misleading in too narrowly focusing on virginity rather than on sexual maturity. Conversely, the preferred modern translation of “young woman” (NRSV) is too broad a rendering since it wrongly includes young wives.”<sup>144</sup> Childs also understood the prophecy of Immanuel from the perspective of the messianic hope,<sup>145</sup> but it is not about Jesus Christ but the rule of God.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 139–140.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>144</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, ed. William P. Brown, Carol A. Newsom, and Brent A. Strawn, 1st ed., The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 66.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 81.

He said, “The sign of Immanuel (“God-with-us”) must serve, not just as a pledge of judgment (v. 17), but also as a promise of the future, the sign of which the name anticipates by its content.”<sup>147</sup> In the context of the unstable situation of Judah, the prophecy of Immanuel has the purpose of encouraging Ahaz to hold on to God, reminding him of the sovereign rule of God.

### **Near and Distant Fulfillment of Walter Kaiser**

Walter Kaiser strongly asserted that עִלְמָה should be translated into a virgin. He said, “To date, no one has produced a clear context, either in Hebrew or in the closely related Canaanite language from Ugarit (which uses the cognate noun *ǵlmt*), where עִלְמָה can be applied to a married woman.”<sup>148</sup> Kaiser’s understanding of עִלְמָה shows the traditional view before Gesenius. However, he also sought to embrace historical and contextual clues in the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 with a focus on Hezekiah. He said as follows:

Nevertheless, this message must have some significance for Ahaz and the people of his day, rather than it being only for an event that turns out to be more than seven centuries away! What significance could it hold for Ahaz and his generation if this event pointed solely to something over seven hundred years away? There was simultaneously a near as well as a distant fulfillment, and the prophecy simultaneously pointed to both a near and a distant future. Rather than a son of Tabeel taking over the throne of David, through whom God had promised to send his Messiah, a son was born to Ahaz: Hezekiah. It may well have been that the prophet pointed to a “young woman” standing nearby, who at the time was unmarried and a virgin (the two were assumed to go together). The son born to them, then, would be Ahaz’s son, Hezekiah.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>148</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr. et al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 301.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

Kaiser admitted that Hezekiah did not entirely fulfill the contents of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. The birth of Hezekiah was not a miraculous birth. However, he explained that it should be considered from the perspective of the tension between “now” and the “not yet” with Isaiah’s speech to the “house of David.”<sup>150</sup> In other words, the prophecy of Isaiah should be understood in light of the long-term history and plurality of David’s lineage.<sup>151</sup> Kaiser said, “God promised that there would be something miraculous about the birth, and if that promise was not completed in the near fulfillment, then it would be in the final fulfillment. That One would be Immanuel, “God with us.”<sup>152</sup>

### **Christological Interpretation of Edward J. Young**

Edward Young argued that עֲלֵמָה should be translated into an unmarried woman, and the employment of עֲלֵמָה instead of בְּתוּלָה is intentional because בְּתוּלָה may indicate a betrothed virgin.<sup>153</sup> When considering the relationship between Joseph and Mary, בְּתוּלָה seems to be more proper. However, the focus is on the miraculous sign. Isaiah reveals the unusual birth through an unmarried woman. In this respect, עֲלֵמָה is deliberately used to denote such an impossible birth. Young had a solid perspective that Isaiah 7:14 is about the coming of Jesus Christ. He emphasized three points as follows: 1) “the birth as a sign,” 2) “the woman as both unmarried and good,” and 3) “the fact that the son brings God to His

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 288.

people.”<sup>154</sup> Young presented the most evident Christological interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. When considering the prophecy’s nature as the sign of God, the usage of *הַמָּלְאָכָה*, and the meaning of Immanuel, Isaiah 7:14 only indicates the birth of the son of God.

### Summary of Chapter 2

Isaiah 7:14 was consistently interpreted from the Christological perspective in the early and medieval church. Specifically, the Hebrew term *הַמָּלְאָכָה* in Isaiah 7:14 was a crucial clue for this interpretation. The Hebrew term was commonly understood as virgin, and Christian interpreters accepted the Septuagint’s translation into *παρθένοϛ*. Based on this lexical consensus, Isaiah 7:14 was considered the prediction of the birth of Jesus Christ in the early and medieval church, and the Christological view of Isaiah 7:14 has been gradually developed and specified, adding the allegorical, historical, and philological explanation.

The Reformation era continued the understanding *הַמָּלְאָכָה* as virgin and the Christological interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, which the predecessors sought. Compared to the early and medieval church, however, the Reformers sought the historical-grammatical interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 instead of the allegorical interpretation. The post-Reformation era also followed the traditional interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, but the possibility of a double meaning of *הַמָּלְאָכָה* initially was suggested: historical and Christological, even though it did not deny reading Isaiah 7:14 Christologically.

The Enlightenment affected theology and produced a new trend in biblical interpretation in the nineteenth century. This era saw significant challenges to the traditional interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. A new approach appeared in the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14,

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 291.

denying the virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14. It could be possible because of new philological research. According to the lexicon of Gesenius,  $\text{עַלְמָה}$  is not about the virginity of the woman but refers to the mature girl. Rather than the Christological implication of Isaiah 7:14, this new view sought to reveal the historical and political implications of the verse.

Since the twentieth century, three different views have been refined regarding the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14: the Christological interpretation, the non-Christological interpretation, and the third view, which is the reactions to the two different interpretations. The Christological view admits the sense of virginity of  $\text{עַלְמָה}$  and Isaiah 7:14 as the predictive meaning, while the non-Christological view does not admit these two points. The third view is eclectic and difficult to define because each scholar has a different understanding of  $\text{עַלְמָה}$  and the embedded meaning of the prediction of Christ. However, they deviate from the purely Christological and purely non-Christological interpretations.

### **Chapter 3. The Duality of the Birth Motif and the Adamic Descendants**

This dissertation aims to interpret Isaiah 7:14, and the previous chapter has dealt with the interpretation history of Isaiah 7:14. Chapter 3 begins to deal with the birth motif that will be used as a new interpretive clue to Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah 7:14 employed the literary form of the birth announcement to convey the birth of Immanuel. Thus, it is necessary to understand how the birth and the description of the birth function in the Bible. The concept of birth is basically about producing a descendant or descendants, and the birth motif includes the derivative implications that the birth brings about. The Bible highlights some births in diverse ways and traces how the descendants grow and what they achieve. The research on the birth motif deals with all these descriptions after the birth. The biblical usage of the birth motif has a certain purpose in each text. This chapter will find the theological implications of the birth motif by examining the diverse biblical usages of birth. In short, the birth motif in the Bible is related to the two dimensions of reversal: from the current evil and suffering and from the fundamental fallen status. In this respect, Isaiah 7:14 can be seen as the employment of dual implications related to the reversals that the birth motif includes.

First of all, Genesis 3:15 will be dealt with to discuss the birth motif. The verse is important because it initially implies the birth motif in the Bible. It is like a root that contains the basic concepts of the birth motif. Specifically, Genesis 3:15 refers to the future descendant of the woman and foretells what the woman's descendant will do. It reveals the fundamental identity of the woman's descendant. In essence, the term **יָרֵעַ** (descendant) can be seen as having dual implications: individual and collective. Based on the basic concepts of the birth motif in Genesis 3:15, this chapter will reveal the theological implications of the birth motif throughout the Old Testament. In conclusion, the birth motif hints at the

impending appearance of the human agent for God's saving purpose and functions as a reminder of the promise concerning the coming Savior.

### The Duality of יָרַע in Genesis 3:15

Birth is the opposite concept of death, which is the destiny of the fallen humankind. Thus, birth implies God's grace of preservation. Even though God judged the first human beings, He preserved humankind through birth instead of exterminating them. Genesis 3:15 implies the birth motif, which includes the plan of salvation more than the grace of physical preservation. Briefly, the victory described in Genesis 3:15 is God's leading work but implemented through יָרַע. In this section, the duality of יָרַע in Genesis 3:15 will be introduced, and the explanations of גֵּאֲלָה and the dual authorship of Scripture as the supplementary concepts will support the concept of the duality of יָרַע.

### The Birth Motif in Genesis 3:15

Birth is for gaining a descendant or descendants, and the parents may continue the lineage through the birth of a child. Thus, birth has its significance due to the newborn descendant. Genesis 3:15 is technically not about the birth announcement but mentions the woman's descendant who has not been born yet. The birth motif is implied here. When considering 3:15 and its context, it is possible to understand the pivotal identity of the descendant that will appear through birth. The woman's descendant(s), in both aspects of singular and collective meaning, is born in the background of humankind's fall and God's judgment and will be related to conquering the serpent's descendant.

Genesis 3:14–19 describes a series of God's judgments on the serpent, the woman, and the man. Genesis 3:15 is a part of the curse on the serpent. God says that He will put



enmity between the serpent and the woman and between the serpent's descendant and the woman's descendant. In this hostile relationship, they will strike each other. The woman's descendant will strike the head of the serpent, which can be considered a vulnerable spot, while the serpent will strike the heel of the woman's descendant. This verse prophetically deals with the ongoing confrontation and struggle between the two sides, even though the main point is about the judgment of the serpent. In conclusion, Genesis 3:15 does not primarily focus on the birth of the woman's descendant but on the descendant's fight against the serpent's side. In this description, the identity of the woman's descendant as the conqueror over the serpent's side is implied. The research on the birth motif is not only limited to the announcement or narrative of the birth but covers how the figure grows and achieves in his life. The identity and achievement of the figure described in the birth motif passage are essential parts of this research.

### **Interpretations of Genesis 3:15**

When it comes to Genesis 3:15, there have been diverse interpretations. The first plausible interpretation is that this verse indicates the coming of the Messiah. In this view, the woman's descendant indicates the Savior, while the serpent's descendant corresponds to Satan. John Collins says as follows: "Genesis 3:15, then, is a promise of a personal redeemer who will undo the trouble Adam brought us all into, by acting as a champion or representative."<sup>155</sup> He argues that Genesis 3:15 indicates a single descendant, and it continues to develop as the messianic theme in 22:17–18 and 24:60.<sup>156</sup> In his other article on

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<sup>155</sup> C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2006), 176.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 157, 179.

Galatians 3:16, Collins explains that Paul's referring to *σπέρμα* in Galatians 3:16 is based on *זרע* in Genesis 22:18 that points to the Messiah.<sup>157</sup> Collins also suggested some New Testament passages that allude to Genesis 3:15, such as Romans 16:20, Galatians 4:4, Revelation 12:1–17, etc.<sup>158</sup> These verses show partial imagery of Genesis 3:15. Romans 16:20 presents the image of God's crushing Satan, and Galatians 4:4 describes Jesus Christ as "born of a woman." Revelation 12:1–17 gives a more detailed narrative. It is a vision that portrays the war in heaven between the dragon and the woman's side. George Ladd explains it as follows: "The dragon represents Satan; the woman represents the ideal people of God—the church. The vision describes in mythological terms the effort of the dragon to destroy both the woman and the Messiah, the preservation of both from the wrath of the dragon, the overthrow of the dragon, and his effort to destroy the church on earth."<sup>159</sup> The synthesis of these passages mentioned above supports the Christological conclusion of Genesis 3:15. K.

A. Mathews provides a similar view as follows:

Our passage [Gen. 3:15] provides for this mature reflection that points to Christ as the vindicator of the woman (cp. Rom. 16:20). There may be an allusion to our passage in Gal 4:4, which speaks of God's Son as "born of a woman." Specifically, Paul identified Christ as the "seed" ultimately intended in the promissory blessing to Abraham (Gal. 3:16), and Abraham's believing offspring includes the church (Rom. 4:13, 16–18; Gal. 3:8). This is further developed in John's Gospel, where the spiritual dimension is at the forefront. Jesus alluded to our verse when he indicted the Pharisees as children of the "devil" because of their spiritual apostasy (Jn. 8:44), contrary to their claims to be the offspring of righteous Abraham (8:39). John used similar imagery when he contrasted God's "seed" and those who are "of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:7–10). This is heightened by his appeal to Cain's murder of righteous Abel as paradigmatic of one "who belonged to the evil one" (3:11–15). Finally, the Apocalypse describes the "red dragon," who is identified as "that ancient serpent"

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<sup>157</sup> C. John Collins, "Galatians 3:16: What Kind of Exegete Was Paul?" *Tyndale bulletin*, 54, no. 1 (2003): 75–86.

<sup>158</sup> Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*, 158.

<sup>159</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 166.

(Rev. 12:9), opposing the believing community (i.e., the woman) and plotting the destruction of her child (i.e., the Messiah). Ultimately, “that ancient serpent” is destroyed by God for its deception of the nations (Rev. 20:2, 7–10).<sup>160</sup>

Mathews says that Genesis 3:15 has traditionally been recognized as *protevangelium*, the “prototype for the Christian gospel,” and observed that the LXX version rendered the pronoun הוּא indicating זָרַע (σπέρμα, which is neuter) into “he” (αὐτός), not “it” (αὐτό).<sup>161</sup> This translation reflects the translator’s specific recognition of the identity of זָרַע as a singular person. In this respect, the purely Christological view of Genesis 3:15 suggests the development of the messianic theme indicating Christ in the book of Genesis and provides the New Testament authors’ Christological understanding of σπέρμα (זָרַע). That being said, this view does not reflect the plausibility of the collective meaning of זָרַע, which the original text provides. This view only focuses on the singular meaning of זָרַע.

The second plausible interpretation of Genesis 3:15 is the non-Christological interpretation. This position focuses on the collective meaning of זָרַע or considers both the collective and individual meanings of זָרַע. In Genesis 3:15, זָרַע can denote a descendant or descendants.<sup>162</sup> When it is used as multiple, it may mean lineage, family, tribe, group, or community.<sup>163</sup> Claus Westerman, who denied Genesis 3:15 as the *protoevangelium*, saw זָרַע as the collective sense and said as follows: “In Genesis 2:19–20, the animals are characterized as a help to humanity; here the permanent strife between humanity and one

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<sup>160</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 247–248.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>162</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 283.

<sup>163</sup> H. D. Preuss, “זָרַע,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 144.

species of animal is attributed to a curse.”<sup>164</sup> He understood Genesis 3:15 in light of the changing relationship between humankind and the serpent species as a result of the fall.

Bruce Waltke accepted two possibilities of the collective and singular implications of זָרַע. He said as follows: “Offspring renders זָרַע seed, which is used commonly as a figure for descendants. Like the English word, זָרַע can refer to an immediate descendant (Gen. 4:25; 15:3), a distant offspring, or a large group of descendants. Here and throughout Scripture, all three senses are developed and merged.”<sup>165</sup> Waltke considered diverse possibilities of the implication of Genesis 3:15 instead of focusing only on the Christological interpretation. However, when it comes to the descendant of the serpent, he did not apply the same frame that was applied to the woman’s descendant. Waltke considered the serpent’s seed should not be read as literal because the serpent serves as a disguise for a celestial being. He said as follows: “Neither is the seed demons, for such an interpretation does not fit the context and Satan does not father demons. Rather, the seed of the serpent refers to natural humanity whom he has led into rebellion against God.”<sup>166</sup> Waltke observed the two divided groups from Genesis 3:15 regarding spiritual identity. He says as follows: “Humanity is now divided into two communities: the elect, who love God, and the reprobate, who love self (Jn. 8:31–32, 44; 1 Jn. 3:8). Each of the characters of Genesis will be either of the seed of the woman that reproduces her spiritual propensity, or of the seed of the Serpent that reproduces his unbelief.”<sup>167</sup> God-given enmity based on conflicting spiritual identities is the clue to explain

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<sup>164</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: Continuum International Publishing, 2004), 25.

<sup>165</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 93.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

the wrath of God in the flood context (Gen. 6) and Samson's incomprehensible activities (Jdg. 14:4). The intermarriage between God's sons and man's daughters and the peaceful coexistence between the Israelites and the Philistines should be understood in this light.

John Walton also put forth a perspective that supports a non-Christological interpretation of Genesis 3:15, emphasizing the collective understanding of *אָרֶע*. According to his argument, the serpent's strike at the heel is deadly because of its venomous nature. Consequently, the verse does not imply a one-sided battle but rather signifies an ongoing conflict between humanity and evil forces.<sup>168</sup>

The third interpretation is basically a Christological interpretation but also considers a nuance of the collectivity of *אָרֶע*. Derek Kidner showed an eclectic view of the two former interpretations. He said, "The latter (her descendant), like the seed of Abraham, is both collective (cf. Rom. 16:20) and, in the crucial struggle, individual (cf. Gal. 3:16), since Jesus as the last Adam summed up mankind in Himself. RSV's personal pronoun 'He,' allowed but not required by the Hebrew, has a pre-Christian precedent in the LXX here."<sup>169</sup> Kidner saw Genesis 3:15 as the *protevangelium*, which is "the first glimmer of the Gospel."<sup>170</sup> It means that this verse is about the coming of Christ, who conquers Satan. However, the interesting point is that Kidner considers the simultaneous duality of *אָרֶע*. He thinks that *אָרֶע* can be both individual and collective, saying that such duality is possible because Jesus includes multiple descendants into Himself, who is one descendant. The integration of one descendant and multiple descendants can be explained through the double nuances of *אָרֶע*.

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<sup>168</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2001), 181.

<sup>169</sup> Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 75–76.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

### The Duality of עֵרֶב as the Essence of the Birth Motif

When considering the spiritual connection between Jesus and His chosen people, such duality is more reasonable compared to the former two interpretations of Genesis 3:15 and may be admitted as a crucial interpretive principle. In the New Testament, the spiritual connection between Jesus and His chosen people can be explained well through the metaphor of the vine in John 15:1–8. D. A. Carson says as follows: “Chapter 14 has already introduced the mutual indwelling of the believer and Jesus. Here the same notion is portrayed in the vine imagery. Jesus is the vine; his disciples are the branches. The branches derive their life from the vine; the vine produces its fruit through the branches.”<sup>171</sup>

Also, 1 John 3:6 and 9 are reasonable evidence for this view. 3:6 says, “No one who remains in Him sins continually; no one who sins continually has seen Him or knows Him,” while 3:9 says, “No one who has been born of God practices sin, because His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin continually, because he has been born of God.” The one who remains in Him (v. 6) is paraphrased as “His seed remains in him (v. 9).” Regarding “God’s seed” (σπέρμα, עֵרֶב in Hebrew) in 1 John 3:9, Colin Kruse admits that His seed may mean Christ, even though he prefers to interpret it as the Holy Spirit.<sup>172</sup> These verses describe the spiritual integration of Christ and His people. The Descendant (Christ) includes multiple descendants in Himself, and each descendant (human) includes the Descendant (Christ) in himself.

In addition, Romans 16:20 is also a crucial verse to support this view. Leon Morris says as follows: “Notice that it is God who does the crushing, but that Satan ends up under

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<sup>171</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 514.

<sup>172</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2000), 125.

the feet of believers. The metaphor is a vivid one and looks for the complete triumph of the Christian.”<sup>173</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker provide the same explanation: “He will crush Satan. In other words, he will fulfill the promise of Genesis 3:15. Not Satan, but God is victor. He will crush him under your feet. Those who are co-heirs (Rom. 8:17) are also co-conquerors. The saints will participate in God’s victory over Satan.”<sup>174</sup> These biblical examples show the spiritual integration between God-Descendant and descendants. God is the principal, but God’s people are used instrumentally or participate, even considered co-conquerors (8:37) in this fight. However, the terms “co-heirs” and “co-conquerors” do not mean equal status between the God-Descendant and the descendants. God-Descendant is the irreplaceable one who achieved the critical victory on the cross in this fight. The descendants are sovereignly called in this fight according to the predestination of God (8:30) to share the glory of the victory (8:17). In the New Testament light, the spiritual connection reflected in the duality of *אֵרֶע* is based on God’s saving plan (*πρόθεσις*: that which is planned in advance, plan, purpose, resolve, will<sup>175</sup>) (8:28), the robust connection is bound by Christ’s love (8:35), and the ultimate victory is given through God who loves us (8:37). Absolutely, the descendants should suffer with the Descendant in order to share the glory (8:17). In this respect, the third view holds on to both the Christological and collective meanings of the woman’s descendant based on the duality of *אֵרֶע*.

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<sup>173</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 541.

<sup>174</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 12–13, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 512.

<sup>175</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 869.

The first sin of Adam and Eve brought a radical change to human beings in two dimensions: the spiritual-fundamental status as the sinner under death and the consequential-superficial curses such as evil and suffering. The former is solved only by the Descendant, the Savior. The ultimate redemption was directly achieved by the coming of Jesus Christ. However, the latter is responded to by the multiple descendants, the human agents for God's salvation history. God sovereignly and ultimately used them to reveal temporary salvation from evil and suffering in each era. It does not simply mean that the multiple descendants were the heroes in solving the contemporary issues of evil and suffering, but it means that such issues in their lives were the triggers to reveal how God may work as the Savior and what shape the coming Descendant as the Savior will be. Due to the consequential-superficial curses such as evil and suffering, the spiritual-fundamental status as the sinner under death could not be forgotten, and the expectation for the coming Savior has continued. The multiple descendants in each era had to be involved in the spiritual war against the serpent's side, and their unwavering faith recorded in the Bible means that they were the victors in the spiritual wars. Essentially, the victories in salvation history were God's victories, and God called the multiple descendants to be the co-victors. Also, Jesus Christ, the ultimate victor, comes through the godly line who is elected by God. The multiple descendants form the godly line for the Descendant. The Savior is the end, and the human agents are the process for the end. The duality of *נָרַע* is related to the simultaneous necessity of the Savior and the human agents. Both are closely related to each other. Briefly, the Savior achieves the ultimate victory for salvation, while the human agents pave the way for the Savior.

In conclusion, Genesis 3:15 implies the birth motif, and *נָרַע* in the birth motif has dual implications. The duality is related to the two aspects of God's way to progress the salvation history: the Savior and the human agents, and the interwoven relationship between the two will be the interpretive key to understanding other birth motif texts. In particular,



Isaiah 7:14 should be understood in this light. Isaiah 7:14, which employs the birth motif, does not exclusively point to a partial aspect of salvation, but it has comprehensive implications of both aspects of salvation, which are fundamental and current. Diverse birth motif texts describe how the woman's descendants conquer the serpent's descendant in each era and include how God gradually progresses the plan of salvation in the ultimate dimension. Moreover, certain aspects of each descendant's life prefigure the Descendant, who will achieve ultimate salvation. In this respect, this chapter will focus on how the duality of נָרַע is presented in each birth motif text.

### **The Interwoven Relationship between God and the Human Agents**

The salvation history, which progresses toward the coming of the Savior, is filled with God's preliminary works through human agents. In addition to the duality between the coming Savior and the human agents, there is another dual relationship to note, which is related to God's providential way. The Bible shows that God did not work alone after the creation but used human agents for His purpose. This section deals with the two examples of the duality, such as לָצַד and the dual authorship of Scripture. These explain the interwoven relationship between God and the human agents. This section's observation of the duality or the interwoven relationship is not simply about the analogy but God's consistent providential way.

As the first example, the concept of לָצַד (redeemer) is conducive to understanding the relationship between God and the human agents in this research. Lexically, "to redeem" corresponds to the Hebrew verb לָצַד. It has diverse meanings as follows: in the Qal form 1) "To buy back, to release a person from debt bondage, sacrificial animal, dedicated house or field," 2) "Duty of the male relative of a deceased, who leaves a childless widow behind, to

redeem her from childlessness through marriage,” 3) “Avenger of blood,” 4) “To redeem (God): Israel, Jerusalem, Zion, the pious, widows, and orphans,” etc.<sup>176</sup> When לָאַֿ is used in the Niphal form, it means “to be bought back, redeemed.”<sup>177</sup> Rick Brannan added the explanation concerning the sense of לָאַֿ as “to bring into safety” and “to be brought into safety.”<sup>178</sup> The one who redeems is called the “redeemer (לָאַֿ),” and לָאַֿ can be considered in two biblical categories.

First, the divine לָאַֿ can be explained through the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Exodus 6:6 says, “I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the labors of the Egyptians, and I will rescue you from their bondage. I will also redeem you (יִגְאֶלְךָ) with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments.” Robert L. Hubbard Jr. focused on how God redeemed His people as follows: “When Yahweh commissions Moses, he promises miraculously to redeem Israel from slavery. The context marks this redemption as the rescue of people unjustly enslaved by decisive military means, not as the release of slaves by purchase.”<sup>179</sup> This imagery of the mighty redeemer became the formula to express the character of God. The Isaianic literature provides diverse examples of God as the redeemer (Isa. 41:14–16; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 48:17; 49:7).<sup>180</sup> These passages do not include the imagery of God who pays for something.

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<sup>176</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 169.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Rick Brannan, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

<sup>179</sup> Robert L. Hubbard Jr., “לָאַֿ,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Willem VanGemeren, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 792.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

Second, the Bible also shows the role of *לְקַיֵּם* that a certain type of people play in the property context, which is based on Leviticus 25:25–34. Helmer Ringgren suggests the biblical usages of *לְקַיֵּם* as follows: “If someone sells a house or a piece of property to pay a debt, there is a right of redemption (*ge'ullah*), and the nearest relative at the time is bound to buy back that which was sold and thus restore the possession of the family.”<sup>181</sup> Jeremiah 32:6–15 describes that the prophet redeemed his relative Hanamel’s field. Also, Ruth 3:12–13; 4:2–10 describes how Boaz became *לְקַיֵּם* of Naomi and Ruth.<sup>182</sup> *לְקַיֵּם* in Leviticus 25:25 is translated into the “closest redeemer.” Jeremiah and Boaz specifically illustrate the role of the “closest redeemer” according to Leviticus 25:25. It is important to note that God Himself made the social system to redeem the one who economically suffers in the same community, and the “closest redeemer (*לְקַיֵּם*)” is passively used by God to redeem the lost right of house or property within the God-made system. This relationship between “God” and “closest redeemers” may give insight into the essential nature of the relationship between God and human agents in salvation history, as shown below.

It is necessary to note the analogous shape between the redemption of the lost land and the redemption of the fallen humankind. The land is originally God’s possession (Lev. 25:23), and thus, it is originally prohibited to be sold in perpetuity (v. 23). In this analogy, it is important to note that God is both the owner of the land and the maker of the law. Selling the land is wrong because the seller considers himself the owner of the land, not considering God the owner. However, if the land is sold, the sold property can be legally redeemed by a relative who is prosperous (25:25–26). Since this law is made by God, the redemption of the

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<sup>181</sup> Helmer Ringgren, “*לְקַיֵּם*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 352.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

property is legitimately allowed by God. Here, לְאִשׁוֹ is a middle agent involved in the redemptive process of the property. לְאִשׁוֹ is the passive one who follows the God-made system. God’s salvation history employs the analogous principle used in property redemption. God planned the redemption of the fallen humankind, and the Savior was predestined to come to achieve the critical foundation for redeeming people. Then, as a prosperous relative is commissioned to redeem the land, the human agent, who has faith in God, is called to be partially used in God’s salvation history. The prosperous relative is not the owner of the land but one of the strangers and sojourners with God (v. 23). The action of the prosperous relative is passive within the law, not active outside the law. Even though the relative is called לְאִשׁוֹ, the actual redemption could be possible due to God, who is the real owner and lawmaker. The law of God drives the prosperous relative to redeem those in need. Likewise, the human agent involved in God’s salvation plan is not the Savior but one of the redeemed people. The action of the human agent is passively led by God. The preexistence of God’s revelation in the human agency shown in the birth motif passages is the evidence that supports the passivity of the human agent.

Also, in the redeemer context in the Bible, the terms “redeem (לְאִשׁוֹ),” “redeemer (לְאִשׁוֹ),” and “redemption (פְּדוּת)” are usually related to “technical legal terminology of Israelite family law.”<sup>183</sup> Here are two things to consider: family and law. First, the redemption of the closest redeemer is based on the family connection in Leviticus 25:25. Likewise, God’s saving work is closely related to the spiritual family connection (Rom. 8:14–17). The Descendant and the descendants can call God the father together, and the ultimate redemption can be explained as the “adoption as sons” (Rom. 8:15, 23). Second, the duty of the redeemer

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<sup>183</sup> Hubbard, “לְאִשׁוֹ,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 790.

is legally binding. Specifically, the legality is based on the divine origin (Lev. 25:1), and the motif of the legal action is due to God's grace of redemption (25:38), not the fear of punishment. On the same principle, the human agents involved in God's salvation history are firmly bound by divine calling and sovereign grace. Also, like the strictness and systematicity of the law, God's will to redeem humankind is presented as an intelligently and solidly designed plan that must be achieved. To sum up, the biblical usages of אָל show that God Himself is the divine redeemer, but He also uses the human agents within certain rules and designed plans that He made. This is an example to explain the concept of the human agent. In light of the duality of נָרַע, when admitting the plurality of נָרַע in Genesis 3:15, the role of the human agents should be understood in this light.

As the second example, the dual authorship of Scripture may explain the relationship between God and the human agent. Abner Chou, on the one hand, refers to the Bible's nature as the word of God as follows: "Titles, such as the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12), the Word of God (Lk. 8:11; Jn. 10:35; Ac. 4:31), and the council of God (Ps. 107:11; Prov. 19:21), establish the text is inextricably linked with its divine author. For that reason, Paul declares all Scripture is God's very communication (2 Tim. 3:16)."<sup>184</sup> On the other hand, he also refers to the facet of human authorship in recording the Bible as follows: "Second Peter 1:21 reminds us God moved certain men to speak, such that their message is actually from God. Man's words precisely communicate God's own ideas. The way the apostles quote Scripture affirms that alone is the meaning of the text."<sup>185</sup> Chou referred to three different biblical expressions to indicate the same sense, such as the "prophet spoke" (Rom. 10:16),

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<sup>184</sup> Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2018), 28.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

“God spoke through the prophet” (Ac. 28:25), and the “Scripture spoke” (Gal. 3:8). These expressions can be interchangeably used, and this interchangeability shows “human intent is God’s intent and this unified intent is the legitimate meaning of Scripture.”<sup>186</sup> As in the dual authorship of Scripture, it is noteworthy that God’s salvation history progresses in the intertwined relationship between God and the human agents. Also, the unified intent in the dual authorship is a good example to explain that God’s instrumental use of the human agent does not lack the shared mind between God and human agents. As the human authors were not mechanically inspired, the human agents were not involved in salvation history without consciousness of God’s intention. Despite the apparent passivity of human agency, it is fundamentally organic and characterized by a shared mindset.

## **Conclusion**

God’s sovereign role and human agency are already mentioned before the fall of humans. God Himself created the world as sovereign, but God commissioned human beings to have dominion over creation as God’s proxy (Gen. 1:26). The same God’s providential way appears in saving the humans and creation. The critical atonement for our sins was commissioned to Jesus Christ, but God progressed the salvation history through human agents. Here, the human agents are thoroughly “instrumental”<sup>187</sup> and “like a glass through

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Richard B. Gaffin Jr., “The Redemptive-Historical View,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell, Spectrum Multiview Books (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 96.

which the divine light is reflected.”<sup>188</sup> In this respect, it is necessary to understand the dual facets of the salvific process in the Bible. This section also provided two biblical examples to explain the concept of duality, which are אֱלֹהִים and the dual authorship of Scripture. These two examples, which reflect God’s consistent and providential way, not the simple analogies, have in common that they show the closely interwoven connection between the principal and the agent. In the same light, the dual implication concerning אֱרֶץ in Genesis 3:15 can be understood.

### The Adamic Descendants

After the fall, humankind saw their corrupt nature and the world filled with suffering and evil, which is the result of the fall. Despite living in a miserable reality, they could have hopeful expectations of the future based on Genesis 3:15. The hope is specifically related to their descendant because the woman’s descendant will ultimately conquer the serpent’s side who tempted the first humankind. In light of Genesis 3:15, gaining the descendant for Adam and Eve was not only the continuation of the lineage but was also related to God’s salvation history to restore the original state before the fall. However, God did not send the Messiah right after the revelation of Genesis 3:15 but sent the temporary and limited human agents commissioned for God’s salvation history because the salvation plan is accomplished step by step. This section is about the descendants of Adam. In particular, the two figures, Abel and Noah, will be discussed from the perspective of the human agent here. The woman’s descendants, as human agents, are called to be involved in God’s salvation history, and they

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<sup>188</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 14.

show the features of revelation, faith, and preservation. These three terms are founded on the continuity of God's salvific providence. First, throughout the whole Bible, God continues to reveal His will of salvation. Second, the human agents, who are divinely called to be involved in the salvific process, have faith in God Himself and His plan. Finally, the godly line, who are the carriers of the revelation, is divinely preserved until the coming of the Savior. In addition to the Savior, the lives of the human agents show the conquering imagery in Genesis 3:15, in which the woman's descendant crushes the serpent's head in the dimension of spiritual victory. This section will show how Abel and Noah fit with the identity of the human agent commissioned by God.

## **Abel**

Genesis 3:15 says the woman's descendant will conquer the serpent's descendant, and Genesis 4 focuses on the following births. The first descendants of Adam and Eve are Cain and Abel, and Genesis 4:1–15 refers to their births, how they lived, and the effects of their lives. It is noteworthy who fits with the quality of the woman's descendant in Genesis 3:15, the human agent. The Scripture assesses Abel and Cain as follows: Abel is righteous (Matt. 23:35; Heb. 11:4), while Cain is evil (1 Jn. 3:12; Jd. 11). The first one to show the agential role was Abel, not Cain. With this regard, it is necessary to focus on two facets of Abel: his offering and death.

### Abel's offering

Genesis 4:3–5 provides an episode of the first offerings of the first offerors: Cain and Abel. The brothers respectively offered their produce to God. Offering (מִנְחָה) in 4:3–5 is the first sacrificial term in the Scripture. The term was initially used in this cultic context, and



then it was also used in the non-cultic contexts (Gen. 43:11, 15, 25, 26; 2 Kgs. 17:4, 20:12, etc.). Richard E. Averbeck understands the basic concept of מְנִחָה as a “gift,” suggesting that it can be used in the cultic or non-cultic context.<sup>189</sup> Similarly, Heinz-Josef Fabry and M. Weinfeld recognize the nuance of the acknowledgment of the “receiver’s superiority” from the non-cultic biblical usages of מְנִחָה.<sup>190</sup> The idea of the “gift based on the acknowledgment of the receiver’s superiority” in the non-cultic usages reflects the original cultic idea implied in the first cultic usage of מְנִחָה in 4:3–5.

When focusing on the later biblical usages in the cultic context, מְנִחָה is used as a “general term for offering, whether from crops or flocks/herds.”<sup>191</sup> In the Mosaic law, מְנִחָה is employed to indicate a “technical term for the grain offering presented to the Lord” (Lev. 2:1–7; 6:12–14; Num. 15:1–16). However, 1 Samuel 2:17 uses a different usage, which denotes the animal offering presented to the Lord.<sup>192</sup> In Genesis 4:3–5, both offerings of Cain and Abel are referred to as מְנִחָה. The kinds of offerings do not appear to be related to whether God accepted them or not. Rather, the sum of the offerings of Cain and Abel may be a good combination because the Scripture shows diverse usages of the combination of the grain offering and animal offering (Lev. 9:4, 17; 14:10, 20, 21, 31; 23:13, 37; Num. 8:8; Josh. 22:23, 29; Jer. 14:12; 33:18; Ezek. 45:13–17, 24–25; 46:5, 7, 11; Amos. 5:22; also Ezra. 7:17 [Aram.]; and esp. Num. 15:1–15).<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Richard E. Averbeck, “מְנִחָה,” ed. VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 980.

<sup>190</sup> Heinz-Josef Fabry and M. Weinfeld, “מְנִחָה,” ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. Douglas W. Stott, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 412.

<sup>191</sup> Averbeck, “מְנִחָה,” 979–980.

<sup>192</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 267.

<sup>193</sup> Averbeck, “מְנִחָה,” 983.

However, Cain and his offerings were rejected. Bruce Waltke points to the “deformed character” as the reason why Cain and his offering were rejected by God, based on Numbers 16:15, 1 Samuel 26:19, and Isaiah 1:13.<sup>194</sup> Also, Waltke and Fredricks explain the difference in the inner heart between Cain and Abel through the descriptions of the outer offerings as follows: “Cain brings ‘some of the fruits.’ There is no indication these are the first or the best. Abel brings the best, fat from ‘the firstborn.’ Cain’s sin is tokenism. He looks religious, but in his heart he is not totally dependent on God, childlike, or grateful.”<sup>195</sup> Cain’s offering must not have been an accidental behavior or mistake because God rejected Cain himself, not only his offering. God saw Cain’s heart, which would produce consistent attitudes and behaviors. K. A. Mathews observed the same point, saying as follows: “However, Cain did not bring the firstfruits (*bikkûrîm*; cp. Lev 2:14); he brought only ‘some’ of his crop (v. 3). This is contrasted with the offering of Abel (‘but Abel’), who brought not only ‘some’ of his ‘firstborn’ (*bikkôrôt*) but the best of the animal, the fatty portions (v. 4).”<sup>196</sup>

Interestingly, the offeror is mentioned earlier than the offering itself. Genesis 4:4–5 says as follows: “And the Lord had regard for (עָשָׂה) Abel and his offering; but for Cain and his offering He had no regard (לֹא עָשָׂה).” God saw the offerors connected to the offerings.<sup>197</sup> This shows that God’s response depends on the inner motive of the offeror (1 Sam. 16:7). According to J. R. Lundbom, the Lord’s regard (עָשָׂה) means the divine attention that “brings

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<sup>194</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, “Cain and His Offering,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* 48, no. 2 (1986): 371.

<sup>195</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 97.

<sup>196</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 267.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 268. See also, John Calvin and John King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 194.

joy to the individual.”<sup>198</sup> In this respect, the Hebrew term *שָׂעָה* reflects the close relationship between two persons. Without the full description of the background, Genesis 4:4–5 simply describes God’s final responses to the offerors and offerings. However, the difference between their offerings is described, and their different motives can be inferred from the description of the difference.

In addition to the inner motive of the offeror, it is necessary to note the Christological implication of Abel’s offering. The initial animal offering by Abel ultimately prefigures the sacrifice of Christ and implies the substitutionary sacrifice. James Petigru Boyce says as follows: “The faith of Abel, by which he ‘offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain’ (Heb. 11:4) and the ‘coats of skins’ which ‘the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife’ (Gen. 3:21), are strongly suggestive of bloody sacrifices, typical of Christ, commanded by God in the very beginning.”<sup>199</sup> The Savior, Christ, came in the shape of the eternal, perfect, and final sacrifice (Jn. 1:29; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 10:10). In this respect, Abel’s animal offering is revelatory in that it prefigures Christ. In conclusion, Abel’s offering includes the faithful motive, and it furthermore prefigures Christ. From these two aspects, Abel’s offering laid the initial edifying and exemplary foundation for the faith of the following descendants. Thus, Abel has the edge over Cain in terms of the qualifications of the human agent serving the salvation history.

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<sup>198</sup> J. R. Lundbom, “שָׂעָה,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 351.

<sup>199</sup> James Petigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 259.

## Abel's death

In addition to the offering, Abel's death shows further evidence of the human agent. Here, the death of Abel ultimately prefigures the death of Jesus. Henri Morris says as follows: "Abel's blood crying from the ground is the prototype of all the suffering inflicted on the righteous through the ages by the children of the wicked one. Its climax and fulfillment are seen in the conflict of Satan and Christ on Calvary."<sup>200</sup> Morris observed a pattern that begins with Abel and moves forward to Jesus Christ. In Matthew 23:35, Jesus refers to Abel as the first martyr, and thus, the death of Abel is a revelatory prototype of all martyrdoms that repeat throughout the history of the Bible. Abel was killed by Cain, but he spiritually defeated the serpent because he was commended as righteous by God (Heb. 11:4). When considering the nature of the confrontation implied in Genesis 3:15, the struggle between the woman's descendant and the serpent is not physical but spiritual. The achievement of righteousness in the sight of God is a more important issue in this struggle rather than the preservation of physical life. The death of righteous Abel provides the crucial hint of spiritual victory through physical death. The victory is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Absolutely, Abel's blood is different from Jesus's blood in nature. Mathews says as follows: "Although it is Abel's blood that convicts the sinner, it is the blood of Christ that makes adequate reparations for the sins of the unrighteous, offering forgiveness and not vengeance, speaking a better word (Heb. 12:24)."<sup>201</sup> In this respect, Abel as the human agent plays a role of glass

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<sup>200</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), 139–140.

<sup>201</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 275.

that reflects the divine light,<sup>202</sup> not replacing the coming Messiah. As the human agent, the revelatory death of Abel foreshadows the coming Savior.

In conclusion, Cain and Abel were the first descendants of the woman after the revelation of Genesis 3:15. Among the two descendants, only Abel can be considered the woman's descendant that God promised in Genesis 3:15 because only his offering was approved by God. The author of Hebrews points to Abel's faith as the cause of the acceptable sacrifice and evaluates him as righteous because of his faith. Through his faith, Abel won the spiritual victory over the serpent. When it comes to the content of faith that Abel held on to, Genesis 4 does not explain it specifically. However, when considering that the revelation precedes faith and faith is based on the revelation, Genesis 3:15 can be considered the preceding revelation for Abel's faith. Genesis 3:15 hints at the Savior, and Abel's offering also prefigures Christ. In addition, Abel's death is symbolic because it is a prototype of subsequent martyrdom and foreshadows the crucifixion of Jesus. In light of the human agent, Abel's faith, which is the acceptance of the revelation, proves him as the godly carrier of the revelation. Moreover, through God's sovereign preservation, Abel's revelatory life was not forgotten, even though he was killed. Abel's offering and death still point to the Savior. Thus, Abel is one of the human agents who connect Genesis 3:15 and the Savior. Lastly, God's approval proves Abel as the spiritual victor in Genesis 3:15 and shows reversal, which contrasts with the first disobedience of his parents.

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<sup>202</sup> Vos, *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, 14.

## Noah

Even though Abel died, the godly line was preserved through Seth and his descendants. In light of the collective meaning of נָרַע, there are multiple descendants of the woman in the process of salvation history. Noah is another descendant of the woman. Also, when considering Genesis 3:15 as the compressive message of the appearance of the Savior-human agents and the grand salvation plan, the human agent is the title that shows the specific role of the woman's descendants. Noah is specifically considered the human agent in God's salvation history in three aspects: his faith, God's revelation through the judgment and the Noahic covenant, and God's preservation through the ark.

Genealogy as the record of the birth of the woman's descendants

Genealogy is the record of the birth of descendants. The Bible includes genealogies, but the descendants in the genealogies are not identical to the woman's descendants that Genesis 3:15 indicates. Genesis 4:17–24, which is the first genealogy, provides the list of Cainite descendants, but they are not included in the genealogy of Adam listed in Genesis 5. Wenham says as follows: “Genesis always records the descendants of the unfavored sons before the elect line.”<sup>203</sup> The author of Genesis appears to compare the two genealogies and show that Adamic lineage, which is the elect line, continues through Sethite descendants, not Cainite descendants.<sup>204</sup> In this respect, Genesis 5 includes a matter of spiritual succession. Morris says in the comment about Genesis 5, “God was preserving and recording the divinely

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<sup>203</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 97.

<sup>204</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 295.

ordained line of the promised Seed, with the appropriate genealogical and chronological data.”<sup>205</sup> Genesis 5 begins with Adam and his son Seth, and it finishes with Noah and his three sons. When it comes to the structure of Genesis 5, Ross points out three names that have different patterns as follows: “The writer digresses from this rigid pattern in three places—at the beginning with Adam, in the seventh panel with Enoch, and at the end with Noah. These three parts will be of the greatest interest to the expositor, for, with their additional information, they form a marked contrast to the routine of the genealogy.”<sup>206</sup>

In addition to Adam, Enoch and Noah, who walked with God, are especially emphasized in the genealogy, and furthermore, Genesis 6–9 specifically deals with the life of Noah. Also, it is noteworthy that the genealogy in Genesis 5 is similar to that of Matthew 1 in the two aspects. First, the births of Noah and Jesus are listed in the last order. After the genealogy, the life of the protagonist begins to be described. Second, it is necessary to note the arrangement of the list. Matthew’s list is designed as the three groups of the fourteen descendants, such as from 1) “Abraham the founder of the line,” to 2) “David the ideal king,” through the “exile to Babylon,” finally to 3) the “age of the Messiah.”<sup>207</sup> As the literary feature of the genealogy in Matthew 1 contributes to highlighting the birth of Jesus, the genealogy in Genesis 5 also highlights the birth of Noah. When seeing the list of Genesis 5, Adam is in the first order, Enoch is the seventh descendant, and Noah is the tenth descendant (cf. Cainite genealogy in 4:17–24 includes six.). Between Enoch and Noah, the ninth Lamech expresses the painful toils due to the cursed ground. Adam is parallel to Abraham in that both

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<sup>205</sup> Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginning*, 151.

<sup>206</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 172.

<sup>207</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 22–23.

are progenitors in the genealogy. The seventh Enoch in Genesis 5 is parallel to the fourteenth David in Matthew 1 in that both show the heyday of faith. The period of Babylonian captivity is parallel to Lamech, who refers to the cursed ground and the painful toils of hands. Lastly, Noah is parallel to Jesus in that Noah built the ark to save his family, and Jesus became the ark to save all His people. As those in Noah's ark could be preserved, those in Jesus Christ will not be condemned (Rom. 8:1), will be forgiven (Eph. 4:32), and will be a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). In conclusion, the genealogy in Genesis 5 introduces the elected line of Adam and highlights Noah's birth.

The background of the birth of Noah

Genesis 5:28–29 is the last part of the genealogy, and it highlights the birth of Noah. Noah's father is Lamech, and Lamech's grandfather is Enoch if the genealogy does not omit some of the descendants. The same names, Enoch and Lamech, are also listed in Genesis 4:18–19, but they are different figures from Enoch and Lamech listed in Genesis 5:19–31 because Genesis 4:17–24 is about Cainite genealogy, and Genesis 5:1–32 is about Adamic genealogy that recognizes the Sethite lineage as legitimate. The distinction between the two genealogies can be understood as the literary feature of Genesis. Wenham observed as follows: “The genealogies of Japheth and Ham precede that of Shem (chap. 10); Ishmael's genealogy precedes Isaac's (25:12–34); and Esau's, Jacob's (chaps. 36–37). So here the genealogy of Cain precedes Seth's (4:17–5:32).”<sup>208</sup>

Lamech named Noah and said in Genesis 5:29, “This one will give us comfort from our work and from the hard labor of our hands caused by the ground which the Lord has

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<sup>208</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 97.



cursed.” Noah is the only one whose name’s meaning is explained in this genealogy.<sup>209</sup> It is noteworthy that Lamech’s utterance reflects Genesis 3:15–19. Wenham said as follows: “Lamech’s remarks look back to the curse on the land (Gen. 3:17). But the very terminology he uses obliquely hints at Noah’s future achievements, namely, his construction of the ark (Gen. 6:14–22) and his planting of a vineyard (Gen. 9:20).”<sup>210</sup> Mathews also said as follows: “His vision for Noah rings with the reverberating sounds of the garden’s tragedy. Reference to toilsome labor and the cursed ground reflects the verdict of God’s judgment in Genesis 3:17–18, where ‘cursed is the ground,’ and the man is doomed to beat out his existence by ‘painful toil.’”<sup>211</sup> He also said as follows: “Lamech looks ahead to a future victory (as Gen. 3:15) and prays that Noah will be instrumental in achieving it. His sweeping expression ‘he [Noah] will comfort *us*’ refers in a general sense to the Sethite ancestral line. Lamech envisions an inclusive vindication.”<sup>212</sup> In addition to the reminiscence of Genesis 3:15, Mathews says that the name Noah foreshadows his future role in the subsequent flood context, and furthermore, “keeps alive the hope of a final deliverer.”<sup>213</sup> When considering that Adam lived until the times of Lamech,<sup>214</sup> God’s revelation in Genesis 3:15–19, which includes the curse and promise, must not have been forgotten at that time.

Noah’s name is related to the wordplay, as in Cain’s name. Mathews says as follows: “‘Noah’ (*nōah*) is better related to ‘rest’ (*nûah*) than to ‘comfort’ (*nāham*). For the name

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<sup>209</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 316.

<sup>210</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 28–129.

<sup>211</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 317.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 317–318.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, ed. Peter Ackroyd et al., trans. John H. Marks, Revised Edition., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1972), 72.

‘Noah’ we expect the interpretation ‘this one will give us rest (*yěniḥēnû*).’<sup>215</sup> Wenham argued that the name Noah in Genesis 5:29 provides the theological motif to dominate the following flood context.<sup>216</sup> Based on Genesis 3:17–19, God cursed the ground due to the fall of humankind, and thus, men should experience painful labor on the rough ground. When seeing Noah’s name, Lamech recognized God’s curse on the “ground.” That being said, Calvin provides a slightly different view, not limiting the suffering that Lamech felt to agriculture, saying as follows: “In the expression, ‘the toil of our hands,’ there is the figure *synecdoche*; because under one kind of toil he comprises the whole miserable state into which mankind had fallen.”<sup>217</sup> In this respect, Lamech’s utterance is not limited to the current suffering but may point to a more fundamental dimension of the fall and salvation.

Genesis 6:1–7 describes the pervasive evil in the world and God’s response to the world. Genesis 6:2 includes a controversial interpretive phrase as follows: “The sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.” When it comes to “the sons of God,” Wenham summarizes three kinds of interpretations as follows: “First, ‘the sons of the gods’ are nonhuman, godlike beings such as angels, demons, or spirits. Second, ‘the sons of the gods’ are superior men such as kings or other rulers. Third, ‘the sons of the gods’ are godly men, the descendants of Seth as opposed to the godless descendants of Cain.”<sup>218</sup> Among these three views, the third position is plausible in light of the contextual flow, and this view provides the proper explanation for the preservation of the godly line, which is related to the birth motif.

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<sup>215</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 316.

<sup>216</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 128.

<sup>217</sup> Calvin and King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 233.

<sup>218</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

When it comes to the first view, Wenham explained this intermarriage as follows: “Those who believe that the creator could unite himself to human nature in the Virgin’s womb will not find this story intrinsically beyond belief.”<sup>219</sup> Also, Wenham thought that the sons of God in Genesis 6:2 might be evil spiritual beings, giving examples of biblical and Canaanite descriptions as follows: “In Job 1 and 2, ‘the Satan’ appears as one of ‘the sons of God’ and is a highly malevolent member of the heavenly court. This OT picture of the heavenly council, in which the LORD chairs a committee of ‘the sons of God’ (cf. Ps. 82), parallels Canaanite descriptions of the heavenly pantheon, whose gods often enjoy sexual intercourse.”<sup>220</sup> However, when considering it biblically, marriage is the concept indicating the unity between man and woman, who are humankind (Gen. 2:24). Jesus said that angelic beings cannot be in marital relations (Mt. 22:30; Mk. 12:25; Lk. 20:36). The proponents of the first view connect Genesis 6:1–4 to 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6–7.<sup>221</sup> However, these passages do not refer to the intermarriage between the angelic beings and humankind and do not provide any reason to connect the fallen angels with the flood context; rather, they refer to their fallen status and God’s judgment of them with other examples of the fall and God’s judgment (2 Peter 2:4–6 deals with the examples of the fallen angel, the flood, and Sodom-Gomorrah, and Jude 6–7 deals with the examples of the fallen angel and Sodom-Gomorrah).

In addition, it is necessary to note the plurality of the “sons” of God in Genesis 6:2. The Bible describes Satan came “with” the sons of God in the heavenly council, but other evil angels, which are multiple, have never been mentioned as sons of God in the Bible. Job 1:6–12, 2:1–6, Zechariah 3:1–10, and 2 Chronicles 18:18–21 describe the heavenly council.

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 139.

The participants in this council are God, Satan, and angels of the Lord. Satan, who is essentially an angel, is described as an accuser or a lying spirit in this council, but the angels of the Lord serve God. In all these contexts, the angel(s) as plural or singular and Satan as singular are distinctly mentioned as follows:

Job 1:6, “Now there was a day when *the sons of God came* to present themselves before the LORD, and *Satan also came among them.*”

Job 2:1, “Again, there was a day when *the sons of God came* to present themselves before the LORD, and *Satan also came among them* to present himself before the LORD.”

Zechariah 3:1, “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before *the angel of the LORD*, and *Satan standing at his right* to accuse him.”

2 Chronicles 18:18–21, “I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and *all the angels of heaven* standing on His right and on His left. ... (ellipsis) ... And one *spirit* said this, while another said that. Then *a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD* and said, I will entice him.”

These biblical examples show that it is difficult to identify the sons of God with evil beings. The second view is also unreasonable due to the lack of biblical evidence. The context does not mention the occurrence of a hierarchical system, including rulers or kings. Also, the intermarriage between the high-status and the low-status cannot be considered the reason for judgment from the whole biblical perspective.

The third view is the most reasonable. When seeing the uses of the “sons of God” (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים) in the Old Testament, it usually indicates the heavenly beings (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Pss. 29:1; 89:6; Dan. 3:25, etc.).<sup>222</sup> However, it is necessary to note the use of “gods” (אֱלֹהִים) and “sons of the Most High (עֲלִיּוֹן)” in Psalm 82:6. עֲלִיּוֹן is a “divine epithet, which occurs

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<sup>222</sup> Matthew James Hamilton, “Sons of God,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

either by itself (in parallelism) or as an attribute.”<sup>223</sup> עֲלִיּוֹן is parallel with אֱל in Numbers 24:16 and Psalm 73:11, with יהוה in Deuteronomy 32:8, 2 Samuel 22:14, Psalms 9:3, 18:14, 21:8, 91:9, 92:2, Isaiah 14:14, with אֱלֹהִים in Psalms 46:5, 50:14, and with שְׁדַי in Psalms 77:11, 78:17, 87:5, 91:1.<sup>224</sup> In this respect, “sons of the Most High” can be parallel with “sons of God.” Psalm 82:7 says that “gods” and “sons of the Most High” die like men, and thus, they do not mean immortal heavenly beings in the context of Psalm 82. When considering that death is only applied to fallen human beings, it is unlikely to denote angelic beings. “Like men (כְּאָדָם)” may be considered to weaken the meaning of humankind. However, In Ephesians 5:8, Paul uses this expression, “Now you are light in the Lord; walk *as* (ὡς: as, like) children of light.” This does not mean to deny the identity of the child of light but rather emphasizes it. It encourages the readers to live like that. In this respect, the expression “die like men” rather emphasizes that they are essentially human beings, not denying it.

Allen Ross indicated biblical usages that God made Moses as “god” to Aaron (Exod. 4:16; 7:1),<sup>225</sup> and when it comes to “His assembly” or “divine council” (עֲדַת־אֱל) in Psalm 82:1, Ross considered them “human judges who serve as God’s vice-regents on earth.”<sup>226</sup> Calvin also presented the same view of Psalm 82:1 as follows: “Civil order is termed the assembly of God (עֲדַת־אֱל).”<sup>227</sup> In addition, Calvin says in the commentary of Psalm 82:6 as

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<sup>223</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 833.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms 1–89: Commentary*, vol. 2, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2011–2013), 717–718.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 721.

<sup>227</sup> John Calvin and James Anderson, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 330.

follows: “God has invested judges with a sacred character and title.”<sup>228</sup> Also, in John 10:34–35, the appellation “god” given to people is related to the word of God as follows: “Jesus answered them, ‘Has it not been written in your Law: ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came.’” In this respect, the appellation “god” may be related to a God-given role and revelation in certain contexts. The “sons of God” in Genesis 6:2–4 should be understood in this light.

As mentioned above, Genesis 4:17–24 deals with the genealogy of Cainite descendants. The following chapter, Genesis 5:1–32, deals with the genealogy of Adamic descendants. Afterward, Genesis 6:1–4 deals with the intermarriage between the two different lines. In light of the contextual flow, the intermarriage could be done between the Adamic line (or the Sethite line) and the Cainite line. Seeing the genealogy of Cain, they deserve the title “daughters of mankind.” Genesis 4:19–24 focuses on Lamech and his family. Here, Lamech is a different figure from Noah’s father Lamech. Lamech, in the Cainite line, was the first polygamist and the second murderer in the Bible. His children’s secular occupations are specifically described. However, in the Adamic line, Genesis 5:21–24 focuses on Enoch, who walked with God and then was taken by God. In this respect, the Adamic line deserves the title “sons of God.” Instead of the argument that sons and daughters may reflect the actual genders, it is reasonable to see that sons and daughters are meant to be distinguished when it comes to inheritance from parents. Sons and daughters are the terms used to distinguish between the elect and the reprobate in spiritual succession. Their lineages, “of God” and “of mankind,” fit with each gender, which denotes a determinant of spiritual inheritance. Since

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 334.

this intermarriage could cause the demise of the purely godly line, God destroyed the world through the flood and preserved only the line of Noah.

Genesis 6:1–4 specifically points out the intermarriage between the sons of God and the daughters of man. Genesis 6:2 and 6:4 refer to the intermarriage of the two lines, and Genesis 6:3 and 6:5–7 describe God’s responses to it. Genesis 6:3 says that God’s spirit will not abide in man forever, for he is flesh. Genesis 6:5–7 portrays God’s grief over the constant evil of human beings and His determination to judge the world. When seeing God’s responses, this intermarriage must have included the evil elements in the sight of God. Calvin points out the lust in this intermarriage as follows: “Moses more clearly describes the violent impetuosity of their lust, when he says, that ‘they took wives of all that they chose;’ by which he signifies, that the sons of God did not make their choice from those possessed of necessary endowments, but wandered without discrimination, rushing onward according to their lust.”<sup>229</sup>

To sum up, Noah was called by God in the background of God’s judgment. The intermarriage between the godly line and the ungodly line would be a serious threat to the purity of the spiritual succession. Therefore, the flood has implications more than the judgment. The purpose of the flood is to preserve the godly line centered around Noah. Preservation is one of the sub-meanings that the birth motif includes, and this long discussion is necessary because it evidently shows what God tried to preserve.

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<sup>229</sup> Calvin and King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 239.

## Noah as the human agent

The flood, in the era of Noah, means more than the divine judgment on the corrupt world. The judgment of flood is a kind of revelation of God. It includes diverse meanings such as the “deliverance from judgment by divine grace,” the “revelation of God’s sovereignty over all creation,” “purging the corrupt world,” and “starting a new creation.”<sup>230</sup> Even though the theme of judgment is obvious, it is necessary to recognize that God’s salvation history is still in progress through the preserved human race. This judgment rather became a vivid example to illustrate God’s power, God’s character, the end times, and the implication of deliverance, and thus, it accounts for a crucial part of God’s long-term plan.

Noah, as the human agent, was called to be involved in God’s salvation history. In other words, Noah’s life was instrumentally used for God’s plan. When involved in it, the human agents reveal specific evidence that they are saved, and the revealed evidence is further used as the right example for the following descendants. In this way, revelations gradually accumulate. Human agency is the bridge between Genesis 3:15 and the Savior. Abel showed the right faith through his offering and the prefigurement of Christ through his death. It reflected the spiritual victory over the serpent and foreshadowed Christ. Likewise, Noah was also the bridge between Genesis 3:15 and Jesus Christ. Specifically, the human agency of Noah for God’s redeeming purpose can be explained in four points: Noah’s faith based on the grace of God, the burnt offerings as the pleasing aroma, the preservation through the ark, and the sovereign grace of the covenant. The two former aspects are considered similar to Abel’s features, while the two latter aspects are considered to include Noah’s somewhat unique features when compared to Abel’s.

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<sup>230</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 190.



First, Noah, as the human agent, showed his faith in the word of God and was distinct from the ordinary people who were the objects of judgment in his era. To be specific, he found favor (יָרַח) in the eyes of the Lord, was a righteous man, blameless in his generation, and walked with God (Gen. 6:8–9). God’s favor on Noah foreshadows God’s favor on Jesus (Lk. 2:40). Also, he obeyed all God’s commandments regarding the construction of the ark and the specific boarding plan. Ross focuses on the biblical repetition of Noah’s obedience (Gen. 6:22; 7:5, 9), saying as follows: “The note that ‘Noah did according to all that God commanded him—so did he’ is most important. Here, the reader may catch a glimpse of what it means to walk with God, or to be righteous.”<sup>231</sup>

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve initially showed what disobedience is. However, Noah evidently showed obedience by following God’s instructions thoroughly. Noah left a good example of obedience, foreshadowing the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ in the future (Jn. 17:4; Heb. 5:8). Noah illustrated the concept of obedience, and Jesus showed the perfect obedience. Jesus’s obedience is not independently revealed but revealed on this sort of foundation that the human agency achieved. In this sense, Noah, as the human agent, functioned to foreshadow Jesus Christ.

It is interesting and noteworthy that the Hebrew term יָרַח (Gen. 6:8) is initially used in this context. “God’s favor” in Genesis 6:8 contrasts with the description of the evil in the era in Genesis 6:1–12. The contrasting descriptions of Noah and the world are paralleled by the contrasting God’s responses toward the two offerings of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:4–5. In the previous episode, Abel showed the good faith commended by God through the successful offering. Likewise, Noah was also evaluated as a righteous man.

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 194.

However, in the description of Noah, the origin of faith is further specifically illustrated through the Hebrew term  $\text{יָרָא}$ . Calvin explains Genesis 6:8 as follows: “Did he attain this integrity, but from the preventing grace of God? The commencement, therefore, of this favour was gratuitous mercy. Afterwards, the Lord, having once embraced him, retained him under his own hand, lest he should perish with the rest of the world.”<sup>232</sup> Morris also emphasizes the grace of God and explains the biblical order of grace and action. He says as follows: “In sovereign mercy and by the election of grace, God had prepared the heart of Noah to respond in obedient faith to His will. Note the consistent Biblical order here. First, Noah “found grace.” Then Noah was “a just man.” Thus he was “perfect in his generations,” and therefore, he was able to “walk with God.”<sup>233</sup> Waltke and Fredricks also agree that Noah’s righteousness is due to the sovereign grace and focus on the literary place of Genesis 6:8, saying, “This statement appears climactically at the end of the account of Adamic descendants. Noah represents a new beginning, an inversion that was anticipated in Genesis 5:29.”<sup>234</sup> Genesis 6:8 is a meaningful verse because it reveals that the grace of God is the fundamental motive of not only Noah’s obedient life but also salvation history.

The second evidence of the human agent in the life of Noah can be observed in his burnt offerings ( $\text{עֹלֹת}$ ) after the flood in Genesis 8:20–21. As in the case of Abel, the offering leads to God’s response, God’s response is related to the faith of the offeror (Heb. 11:4), and God’s response shows the fact that the offeror is acceptable to God (Gen. 4:4). Faith is the feature of the human agent, and faith itself means the spiritual victory over Satan who has the

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<sup>232</sup> Calvin and King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 250–251.

<sup>233</sup> Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginning*, 177.

<sup>234</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 119.

purpose to break it. The first humans in the garden failed due to the absence of faith. In this respect, Noah's offering is the opportunity to present God's response to Noah's faith.

The Hebrew term *עֹלָה* means "sacrifice which is wholly burned."<sup>235</sup> Noah offered burnt offerings on the altar, and the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma (Gen. 8:20–21). Ross explains, "The whole burnt offering represented the worshiper's total surrender and dedication to the Lord, and the expression of the Lord's smelling the sweet fragrance represented God's acceptance."<sup>236</sup> When it comes to the expression *וַיִּרְחַח* (and he smelled), Waltke and Fredricks also say, "The figure derives from the Canaanite roots of the Hebrew language. It is a technical term, no longer mythological, and expresses God's favor and pleasure toward the sacrifice and worshiper (cf. Ex. 29:18; Lev. 1:9; 3:16; Num. 15:3)."<sup>237</sup> After the smelling by God, God reveals His new determination that he will never curse the ground again. Mathews explains it as follows: "The favorable response of the Lord shows his pleasure at Noah's offering. Verse 21 echoes 6:5, where the Lord determined to destroy the earth as a result of human wickedness; now God resolves to spare the earth such further calamity."<sup>238</sup>

God's favorable response to Noah reminds the readers of Abel's offering. As the Lord regarded for Abel and his offering as well, the Lord regarded for both Noah and his burnt offerings. In this respect, Abel and Noah were righteous before the Lord, and their offerings were acceptable to the Lord. These are evidence of their right relationship with God, and thus, it shows that Abel and Noah were redeemed in the aspect of the true spiritual

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<sup>235</sup> Koehler, et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 831.

<sup>236</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 197.

<sup>237</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

<sup>238</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 392.

connection to God, which had been lost due to the fall. Ross says, “By his sacrifice Noah expressed his submission to the gracious government of God in his life and in his world.”<sup>239</sup>

This explanation recalls the function of *הקִּיָּם*, which establishes and maintains the relationship between two parties.<sup>240</sup> The human agent Noah had the right relationship with God, and thus, God could accept his offering and resolve to spare the earth. As Noah’s successful offering led to God’s favorable determination, Jesus’s successful sacrifice led to God’s forgiveness for all sinners.

The third evidence of the human agent in the life of Noah is revealed in the process of the preservation of the human race and creation. It is necessary to note what God did in Noah’s life, not what Noah did. Noah obeyed God’s word and built the ark to preserve Noah’s family and animals from the flood. Consequentially, the godly line was preserved, and the spiritual inheritance succeeded. However, this incident reveals significant implications besides preserving the godly line. Noah was called to be involved in God’s providential pattern of judgment and deliverance, and thus, his life consequentially functioned to foreshadow future events. Waltke and Fredricks observed the parallels between the Noah context and the Lot context as follows: Sexual immorality (Gen. 6:1–4; 19:1–11); God remembered (8:1; 19:29); Warnings (6:13–22; 19:15–22); The elected in the safe zone (7:16; 19:10); Judgment from above (7:4; 19:24); Destruction (6:17; 19:13); God’s grace (6:8; 19:19); One family (7:21–23; 19:15, 25–29); Drunkenness and sin.<sup>241</sup> Waltke and Fredricks said, “Noah’s deliverance from the Flood foreshadows Lot’s deliverance from

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<sup>239</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 197–198.

<sup>240</sup> Fabry and Weinfeld, “*minha*,” 416–417.

<sup>241</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 130.

Sodom.”<sup>242</sup> The case of Lot is conducive to generalizing the flood pattern. As Noah (Heb. 11:7), Lot is evaluated as righteous (2 Pt. 2:7), and his line was preserved from the judgment. Also, in Matthew 24:37, Jesus points out the parallelism between the days of Noah and the Parousia of Jesus. Morris referred to the common feature between the two as follows: “The emphasis is on the suddenness of the deluge. So, Jesus says, will be the coming of the Son of man. We get the picture of a long time of waiting and of a sudden act at the conclusion.”<sup>243</sup>

In this respect, Noah’s life became a foreshadowing of future events, and it was the human agency between Genesis 3:15 and Christ. The “closest redeemer (לְקַיֵּם)” in Leviticus 25:25 only obeys the God-made system to redeem the lost property or house of the relative. Likewise, God judged the world through the flood and delivered Noah and his family through the ark. The work of Noah as a human agent was only to obey the word of God and build the ark that was designed by God. Noah’s life was passively employed to reveal God’s providential pattern. In this regard, the human agency has the identity to reveal God. Finally, God brought about the preservation of humankind through Noah’s obedience. Furthermore, Noah’s life consequentially became a foreshadowing of judgment and deliverance to future believers. In this respect, Noah’s life as a human agent was used to reveal both God’s preservation and providence.

The fourth evidence of Noah’s human agency is the covenant that God made with Noah. Noah was not an ordinary individual but a representative of humans and creation because the covenant covered all descendants and creation (Gen. 8:20–9:17). O. Palmer Robertson defines the basic concept of the biblical covenant as follows: “A covenant is a

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 613–614.

bond in blood sovereignly administered. When God enters into a covenantal relationship with men, he sovereignly institutes a life-and-death bond. A covenant is a bond in blood, or a bond of life and death, sovereignly administered.”<sup>244</sup> In the establishment of the covenantal relationship, the sovereignty of God is emphasized. Mathews explains the characteristics of the Noahic covenant as the “royal grant known from the ancient Near East where a deity bestows a benefit or gift upon a king.”<sup>245</sup> Thus, it is different from the Mosaic covenant, which has the conditional feature. Mathews says that “God alone is under compulsion by oath to uphold his promise to the favored party” in the Noahic covenant.<sup>246</sup>

This shows the feature of the Noahic covenant as unilateral and sovereign on the side of God for salvation and preservation, and it corresponds to the sovereign grace of God given to Noah described in Genesis 6:8. God repeatedly revealed His will to preserve humankind through His sovereign grace when seeing that God’s two utterances of the covenant before the flood (Gen. 6:18–22) and after the flood (Gen. 9:8–17). Genesis 6:18 says, “I will establish my covenant with you (singular)” (וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ), and Genesis 9:11 says, “I will establish my covenant with you (plural)” (וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם). The content of the covenant is the preservation of the elect and creatures. In Genesis 6:19–20, “to keep alive” is mentioned twice (לְהַחְיֶינָם, לְהַחְיֶיהֶן). This is God’s promise to keep the elect in the ark alive from the flood. After the flood, God promised that he would not destroy all flesh and earth again. לֹא is used emphatically three times to denote negation in Genesis 9:11–15. In this respect, Robertson says, “The covenant with Noah primarily may be characterized as the covenant of

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<sup>244</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), 4.

<sup>245</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 368.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

preservation.”<sup>247</sup> To sum up, the Noahic covenant is God’s sovereign covenant for the preservation of creation, and this preservation accounts for one of the crucial parts of God’s salvation history. Here, Noah’s status as the covenantal representative shows his agential role in revealing God’s will to preserve the creation.

That being said, a different view from a unilateral view of the Noahic covenant is also suggested. Ross says that Genesis 9:5–6 includes the warnings of God against the “violation of the law of blood” (v. 5) and the “shedding of human blood” (v. 6) as follows: “God’s warnings in this section taught people to safeguard life, both in how they ate meat and in how they preserved human life on the earth. By these teachings, humankind would learn that law was necessary for the stability of life in the new order, that wickedness could not go unchecked as it had before.”<sup>248</sup> Steven D. Mason also sees the conditional and bilateral aspects of the Noahic covenant as follows: “While God’s side of the covenant is essentially fulfilled according to the integrity of his word, cosmic consequences indeed arise when humankind fails in its calling and thus breaks the eternal covenant.”<sup>249</sup> Mason says as follows: “This new post-flood relationship between humans and animals thus prefigures Israel’s mandated relationship to its human, international enemies.”<sup>250</sup> The viewpoints of Ross and Mason focused more on the human responsibilities of the Noahic covenant. Here, Noah’s agential role is to teach the covenantal responsibilities to people. When combining the two different perspectives, the Noahic covenant can be considered from both aspects of

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<sup>247</sup> Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 114.

<sup>248</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 205–206.

<sup>249</sup> Steven D. Mason, “Another Flood? Genesis 9 and Isaiah’s Broken Eternal Covenant,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32, no. 2 (2007): 177–198.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

God's sovereign grace for preservation and the caution of breaking the stipulations. In this respect, God revealed His character of grace and mercy and a new life order after the flood through the Noahic covenant. Between God and the covenant people in all eras, Noah was the human agent for revealing the Noahic covenant that includes both divine preservation and human responsibility.

In conclusion, Genesis 5:29 and 6:1–7 give the background of Noah's birth. The biblical description of the suffering and evil in the world was to explain the reason for the appearance of the human agent. God redeemed the right relationship with Noah as with Abel, and the covenant between God and Noah is revelatory about the will and law of God. In addition, Noah was employed to preserve his family and the selective creatures from the flood, and his life going through the flood became a foreshadowing for future believers. The most interesting point is that the sovereign grace of God flows throughout Noah's narrative. The righteousness of humans is ultimately based on the grace of God. It makes the readers focus on God's initiative in the salvation history, not the human agent. Nevertheless, the Bible highlights Noah's faith because God's saving plan is achieved through Noah, the human agent. Hebrews 11:7 says as follows: "By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." In this respect, the overall description of the Noahic episode gives the combined image of the sovereign divine redeemer and the obedient human agent.



## **Chapter 4. The Abrahamic Descendants**

This chapter is about the Abrahamic descendants. The Abrahamic descendants form the only legitimate and orthodox succession through the Isaac-Jacob lineage. Abraham is a revelatory progenitor for his posterity because God revealed the grand plan of the descendants to Abraham, and his life also became a prophetic example for the future life of his descendants. God's plan for Abrahamic descendants corresponds to the salvation history throughout the Scripture. The divine plan revealed to Abraham is to continue and develop the revelation of Genesis 3:15 and to make the Abrahamic descendants be the womb to give birth to the Descendant, the Savior. The history of the Abrahamic descendants progresses according to God's predestined plan. Thus, the revelation given to Abraham is not limited to him alone but covers all his descendants. The Abrahamic descendants should be considered one mass, not separate individuals. They are connected to each other, and as generations progress, the next generation continues to build on the previous generation. In this respect, the history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Israelites should be understood in light of the development of God's salvific process, especially the formation of God's sovereignly designed nation, which is the womb for Christ.

### Genesis 11 as the Background of Abraham's Calling

Genesis 11 consists of two parts: the narrative of the tower of Babel (vv. 1–9) and the genealogy of Shem-Terah's descendants (vv. 10–32). First, Genesis 11:4 refers to the construction of the city-tower and the intention of the builders. There are different explanations for the construction of the city-tower. Mathews says as follows: "The description of the tower 'that reaches to the heavens' has been taken as the builders' ambition of autonomy. This does not mean that they intended to depose God. A similar expression

describes Jacob's ladder with 'its top reaching to heaven' (Gen. 28:12).<sup>251</sup> Mathews thought that the tower of Babel was a "stairway that would give them access to the realm of the divine."<sup>252</sup> Even though the motive of the construction was based on the "ambition of autonomy," the people sought to reach God. Wenham observed the similarity between the previous sins in Genesis and the tower of Babel as follows: "From a purely human viewpoint, building a tower as high as the sky is an audacious undertaking, but it seems likely that Genesis views it as a sacrilege. For the sky is also heaven, the home of God, and this ancient skyscraper may be another human effort to become like God and have intercourse with him (cf. Gen. 3:5; 6:1–4)."<sup>253</sup>

Waltke and Fredricks say, "Cities in the ancient Near East were not designed to be lived in but were intended for religious and public purposes."<sup>254</sup> Genesis 11:4 explicitly mentions that the builders of the city-tower had two purposes: "making a name for ourselves" and "stopping the scatter." These two pronounced intentions show how and in what direction the religious nature of the city-tower is embodied. They tried to make a name for themselves, not for God. The two constructions by Noah, the altar and the ark, were for the sake of God. In this respect, Mathews assesses the city-tower as prideful autonomy.<sup>255</sup> Interestingly, this expression "make a name for ourselves" contrasts God's blessing for Abraham in Genesis 12:2, "make your name great." Mathews explains the difference between the two as follows:

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<sup>251</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 481.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 239.

<sup>254</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 179.

<sup>255</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 481.

“The striking difference between the two examples lies in how the “name” is achieved. Reflexive “ourselves” and “for themselves” highlight the self-interested and independent efforts of the Babelites, but for Abraham the Lord bestows the blessing of reputation as a gracious gift.”<sup>256</sup> In addition, the builders intended for people to gather around the city tower. This is against God’s will to fill the earth (Gen. 1:28; 9:1). Waltke and Fredricks say, “This skyscraper is a symbol of their united titanic societal self-assertion against God, who commands them to ‘fill the earth.’”<sup>257</sup> However, the builders could not achieve their purpose. God dispersed them over the face of all the earth. Their ending was also similar to Adam and Eve, who were expelled from the garden. Wenham and Mathews observed the parallel between the expulsion in Genesis 3:22 and the dispersion in Genesis 11:8.<sup>258</sup>

It is necessary to understand the intention of the biblical description in Genesis 11:1–9 before introducing the narrative of Abraham. The description of the tower of Babel, which reflects the corrupt nature of humankind, is related to the following episode. God’s promise of the woman’s descendant in Genesis 3:15 has its background in the fall of humankind. Also, the previous godly woman’s descendants, such as Abel and Noah, appeared in the background of the corrupt world. Likewise, the appearance of Abrahamic descendants has the same background: the “prideful autonomy” of the fallen humankind.

The second noteworthy point in Genesis 11 is the genealogy that includes the birth of Abraham (v. 26–27). Mathews says as follows: “The genealogy of 11:10–26 imitates the pattern of Genesis 5 in several ways, indicating its continuum with the antediluvian world. By this means, Genesis 1–11 showed the unity and purposeful aim of God’s salvific enterprise

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 482.

<sup>257</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 180.

<sup>258</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 240. Also, Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 484.

for humanity.”<sup>259</sup> In the genealogy of the antediluvian world (Gen. 5), Adam was the first, and Noah was the tenth figure. Likewise, in the genealogy of the postdiluvian world (Gen. 11), Shem was the first, and Abraham was the tenth figure.<sup>260</sup> Through the consistent literary pattern, the human agents, Noah and Abraham, were highlighted.

To sum up, Genesis 11, which contains the Babel story and the genealogy, functions in two facets: providing the background of the appearance of the Abrahamic descendants and highlighting the appearance. Moreover, the genealogy initially includes an important theme that will be repeated in the passages about the birth motif. The theme is the barrenness, which is the suffering of the woman.

#### Abraham

God sovereignly called Abraham to begin to progress the salvific plan. Abraham shares some common features with Abel and Noah. He obeyed the word of God (Gen. 12:4), built the altars (Gen. 12:7–8), rescued Lot (Gen. 14:1–6), was a man of faith and righteousness (Gen. 15:6), and knew God’s judgment in advance (Gen. 18:20–21). God made the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15, 17). In addition, Abraham initially offered a tithe of his possession (Gen. 14:20), and he was initially circumcised as the sign of the covenant (Gen. 17:24). Abraham was also the intercessor (Gen. 18:23–33) and prophet (Gen. 20:7). All the evidence shows that Abraham was familiar with the Lord, and his life was employed to progress the salvation history.

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<sup>259</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 487.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.* 488.

The most noteworthy point as the human agent in his life is that he was employed to reveal God's plan of the salvific process, which is how the woman's descendant conquers the serpent's descendant. In the days of Abel, God's salvific plan was achieved in the dimension of an individual, and then, in the days of Noah, the salvific plan was achieved in the dimension of an individual and his family. In the days of Abraham, the plan of God's salvation began to expand into a national dimension. The revelation was given to Abraham in two aspects. First, the Lord revealed the overall design to form a great nation (Gen. 12:2–3) and revealed **אֱרֶבְרָא** who will be multiplied and possess the gate of their enemies and bring the global blessing (Gen. 22:17–18). Second, the Lord let Abraham live a prophetic life to foreshadow the future events of the “Descendant” through the human sacrifice (Gen. 22:1–18) and the “descendants” through the sojourn in Egypt (Gen. 12:10–20).

### **The Revelation of the Woman's Descendant and Descendants**

Genesis 12:2 is God's promise of blessings for Abraham in three aspects: a great nation, a great name, and a blessing. Gerhard von Rad provides a crucial perspective to understand this promise as follows: “The promise given to Abraham has significance, however, far beyond Abraham and his seed.”<sup>261</sup> In the era of Abraham, he could not see the complete fulfillment of the promise. However, when God said this to Abraham, God saw the future descendants in Abraham and the worldwide fulfilled promise in the future.

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<sup>261</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, ed. Peter Ackroyd et al., trans. John H. Marks, Revised Edition., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1972), 160.

First, Nahum M. Sarna said that a “great nation” is about the numbers and significance of Abraham’s future descendants.<sup>262</sup> God had the plan to form a large group of people through the descendants of Abraham. However, the promise of a great nation means more than the number of people. E. A. Speiser says as follows: “People (אָמֶץ) tends to common cultural and social characteristics, while nation (אֶרֶץ) is political designation associated as a rule with state and government.”<sup>263</sup> It is noteworthy that the promise of a great nation also includes the sense of divine rule, in addition to the increase in the number. In the era of Moses, the contour of a great nation is specifically presented: a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. 19:6).

Second, when it comes to a “great name,” Sarna says as follows: “In the ancient Near East, the name was not merely a convenient designation but an expression of the very essence of being. Hence, this promise means not only that Abraham will acquire fame but also that he will be highly esteemed as a man of superior character.”<sup>264</sup> A “great name” is about the identity of Abraham and his descendants. It implies that God had a plan to achieve a great thing through the Abrahamic lineage. As mentioned in Genesis 11:4, the tower of Babel was an attempt to make their name and form a big gathering around the tower. Their attempt ended up failing because God dispersed them, but God promised to give Abraham exactly what the city-tower builders sought. Mathews says as follows: “The naming of “Abraham” best explains the promise of Genesis 12:2; Abraham will be revered as “father” by a host of peoples whom he will influence throughout the centuries. The telling reality of this promise is

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<sup>262</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 89.

<sup>263</sup> E. A. Speiser, “‘People’ and ‘Nation’ of Israel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79, no. 2 (1960): 157.

<sup>264</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 89.

that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam “look to Abraham” (Isa. 51:2) as their spiritual progenitor.”<sup>265</sup>

Third, God promised to “bless” Abraham and said that he would be a “blessing.” Furthermore, Genesis 12:3 says that in Abraham, all the families of the earth will “be blessed.” The promised blessing is related to the achievement of a great nation and a great name. Waltke and Fredricks say as follows: “The three nuances of bless—prosperity (13:2, 5; 14:22–23; 24:35; 26:12–13; 30:43; 32:3–21), potency/fertility (1:28; 13:16; 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; 28:3, 14; 35:11), and victory (cf. 1:22)—are spelled out in 22:17.”<sup>266</sup> Mathews at least agrees with the two facets: “progeny and material wealth.”<sup>267</sup> Since the sense of a blessing includes progeny or fertility, a blessing is related to the formation of a great nation. Also, Wenham says, “Material blessings are in themselves tangible expressions of divine benevolence.”<sup>268</sup> Indeed, Abraham and his descendants could experience divine favor through material blessings (Gen. 12:16; 13:2; 26:12; 30:43, etc.). All these material blessings are visibly revealed to make a great name for the Abraham family. However, when considering that all the families of the earth will be blessed in Abraham, the blessing is more than progeny and material wealth. Genesis 12:2–3 provides the expanding imagery of the blessing from an individual to all the families of the earth. In this respect, God’s blessing is a “constant process,” not an isolated act,<sup>269</sup> and it is like “a command to history.”<sup>270</sup> These

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<sup>265</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 114.

<sup>266</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 205.

<sup>267</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 113.

<sup>268</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 275.

<sup>269</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: Continuum International Publishing, 2004), 99.

<sup>270</sup> Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 160.

descriptions show the meaning of blessing as the continuously flowing nature toward an ultimate end. When it comes to the end, Galatians 3:29 provides a relevant clue as follows: “If you [Galatians] belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.” This shows the expanding progeny; even Gentiles become Abrahamic descendants through Christ.

God’s hidden intention behind the blessings for Abraham is revealed in the two passages: Genesis 18:19 and 22:17. First, Genesis 18:19 says as follows: “For I have chosen him (יִדְעָתִי), so that he may command (יְצַו) his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.” “I have chosen him” in Genesis 18:19 is יִדְעָתִי. יָדַע has the meanings of “notice,” “hear of,” “learn,” “know,” etc.,<sup>271</sup> and G. Johannes Botterweck and Jan Bergman suggest the biblical usages of יָדַע to denote the “special association of Yahweh with Israel or with individual leaders” (Gen. 18:19; Exod. 33:12, 17; Deut. 34:10; 2 Sam. 7:20; 1 Chr. 17:18; Jer. 1:5; Am. 3:2).<sup>272</sup> Genesis 18:19 says that Abraham was especially associated with God, and God expected Abraham to command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice. Finally, Abraham would become a great and mighty nation (v.18). The private relationship between God and Abraham would develop into a communal dimension through the future descendants. The descendants are not limited by lineage but expanded to all the families of the earth through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:7, 22, 26, 29).

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<sup>271</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 390.

<sup>272</sup> G. Johannes Botterweck and Jan Bergman, “יָדַע,” ed. Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 468.



Waltke and Fredricks say as follows: “Israel’s inspired spiritual and ethical heritage was passed down through generations within the home.”<sup>273</sup> Sarna also explains the Hebrew term צוה (give an order, command, instruct, send, commission, entrust, etc.<sup>274</sup>) as follows: “In the Bible the education of the young is the responsibility of parents. The Hebrew phrase, not usually used in this context, literally means ‘he will enjoin ... after him.’ Used here, it implies a charge made in anticipation of death and indicates that the inculcation of moral values constitutes the richest and most enduring of legacies.”<sup>275</sup> Calvin related Genesis 18:19 to its context, which is the announcement of God’s judgment over Sodom and Gomorrah as follows: “And the simple meaning of the passage is, that Abraham is admitted to the counsel of God, because he would faithfully fulfill the office of a good householder, in instructing his own family. Hence we infer, that Abraham was informed of the destruction of Sodom, not for his own sake alone, but for the benefit of his race.”<sup>276</sup> When considering the education of Abraham’s following descendants, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was worth recording because it shows the miserable results when the descendants do not remain in the right relationship with God.

Another revelation of God’s hidden intention behind the blessings for Abraham is Genesis 22:17–18. In these verses, “your seed (צֶרְפִּי),” which can be translated into “your descendant,” is mentioned three times. The interpretation of the three usages should consider

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<sup>273</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 269.

<sup>274</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1011.

<sup>275</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 131.

<sup>276</sup> John Calvin and John King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 480–481.

the two different senses of זָרַע: a descendent (individual) or descendants (collective).<sup>277</sup> The first use of זָרַע denotes collective meaning. In Genesis 22:17, God says that Abraham's seed will be like the "stars of heaven" and the "sand on the seashore." It is a similar expression to the "dust of the earth" in Genesis 13:16. These expressions serve as a metaphor for a large quantity or multitude.<sup>278</sup> Furthermore, it repeats God's promise of a "great nation" in Genesis 12:2. However, the latter two uses of זָרַע are different from the former. Genesis 22:17 says that your seed will possess the gate of their enemies," and Genesis 22:18 says that in your seed (בְּזָרְעֶךָ) all the nations of the earth will be blessed. There are different interpretations of these three uses.

Ross explains as follows: "But there is also an addition to the promise of blessing: not only would Abraham's descendants be numerous, they would triumph in the gate of their enemies. In practical terms for the nation, Abraham's seed would dispossess the Canaanites, just as the way of faith in fearing God would be victorious over the Canaanitish way."<sup>279</sup> Ross understood both זָרַע in Genesis 22:17 as plural. Wenham provides the same view as Ross. He consistently applied the plural sense of זָרַע in Genesis 22:17–18. Wenham translated "I will greatly multiply your seed" in Genesis 22:17 into "I shall really multiply your descendants."<sup>280</sup> Also, he said that the global blessing in Genesis 22:18 is to come through Abrahamic descendants.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 283.

<sup>278</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 154.

<sup>279</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 401.

<sup>280</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, vol. 2, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1994), 112.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

However, Morris focuses on the individual meaning of זרע as follows: “At that time, Abraham had only one seed, Isaac, but that seed was to be multiplied and to bring blessing to all. Nevertheless, the fact that God stressed the word in the singular, rather than plural, was significant in that it would be through the Abrahamic nation that the world’s Savior would one day come (Gal. 3:16; Eph. 1:3).”<sup>282</sup> Luther also explains the same view in the commentary of Genesis 22:17–18. He focused on “in your Seed” (Gen. 22:18) and related it to Galatians 3:16, which refers to the Seed as Christ.<sup>283</sup> Based on Galatians 3:16, Morris and Luther focused on the individual meaning of זרע.

Calvin also admitted Christ as the promised seed, but he gave a slightly different view from preceding views because he focused on the collective sense of זרע as follows: “Moreover, we must remember what has before been stated from Paul, concerning the unity of the seed; for we hence infer, that the victory is promised, not to the sons of Abraham promiscuously, but to Christ, and to his members, so far as they adhere together under one Head.”<sup>284</sup> He observed the imagery of co-victor through the unity of Christ and His members over the enemies in Genesis 22:17. He already expressed a similar view when it comes to Genesis 3:15 as follows:

There is, indeed, no ambiguity in the *words* here used by Moses; but I do not agree with others respecting their *meaning*; for other interpreters take the seed for *Christ*, without controversy; as if it were said, that some one would arise from the seed of the woman who should wound the serpent’s head. Gladly would I give my suffrage in support of their opinion, but that I regard the word *seed* as too violently distorted by them; for who will concede that a *collective* noun is to be understood of one man

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<sup>282</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), 383.

<sup>283</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 4: Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 21-25*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 4 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 151–152.

<sup>284</sup> Calvin and King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 572–573.

*only?* Further, as the perpetuity of the contest is noted, so victory is promised to the human race through a continual succession of ages. I explain, therefore, the *seed* to mean the posterity of the woman generally. But since experience teaches that not all the sons of Adam by far, arise as conquerors of the devil, we must necessarily come to one head, that we may find to whom the victory belongs. So Paul, from the seed of Abraham, leads us to Christ; because many were degenerate sons, and a considerable part adulterous, through infidelity; whence it follows that the unity of the body flows from the head. . . . By which words he signifies that the power of bruising Satan is imparted to faithful men, and thus the blessing is the common property of the whole Church; but he, at the same time, admonishes us, that it only has its commencement in this world; because God crowns none but well-tried wrestlers.<sup>285</sup>

Calvin rejected the ambiguity of זרע, but he did not reject the collective meaning of זרע and argued for the unity of זרע in Christ, who is the head, and he understood the victory of זרע from the perspective of the whole biblical history. What Calvin described is the dualistic meaning of זרע that this dissertation seeks. That being said, Paul’s usage of the seed in Galatians 3:16 appears to admit the singular meaning זרע. Galatians 3:16 says as follows: “Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, “And to your seed,” that is, Christ.”

James D. G. Dunn provides an explanation of the issue in Galatians 3:16. He basically admitted the ambiguity of זרע and introduced זרע in Genesis as follows: “It [seed] was a collective singular: the promise, after all, was for ‘seed’ as numberless as the dust of the earth, or the stars of heaven, or the grains of sand on the sea shore (Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 16:10; 22:17).”<sup>286</sup> Dunn says that Paul recognized the collective meaning of זרע: “Hence the quite proper translation of the Genesis references as ‘descendants.’ The Targums usually render the Hebrew ‘seed’ by the Aramaic ‘sons.’ And Paul was in no doubt himself as to that collective

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 170–171.

<sup>286</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1993), 183–184.

force of the singular (cf. Gal. 3:29; Rom. 4:16, 18—‘all the seed,’ ‘many nations’).”<sup>287</sup>

However, Dunn explained that Paul intentionally employed the ambiguity of זָרַע, saying as follows: “Paul’s point is somewhat analogous, in that the intention is not to deny that Abraham’s seed is multitudinous in number, but to affirm that Christ’s pre-eminence as that ‘seed’ carries with it the implication that all ‘in Christ’ are equally Abraham’s seed (Gal. 3:26–29).”<sup>288</sup>

Mathews also admitted the ambiguity of זָרַע in Genesis 22:17–18 and understood it in the same light of זָרַע in Genesis 3:15, saying as follows: “As we suggested at 3:15, the ambiguity of the term זָרַע serves the author’s intent to bring both an individual and a nation in the purview of the promise.”<sup>289</sup> Moreover, he said as follows: “The same potential ambiguity appears in vv. 17 and 18; the former verse appears to demand the plural sense (as NIV “their enemies”), whereas v. 18 permits an individual in view, though we would expect to interpret “offspring” in the same sense as v. 17.”<sup>290</sup>

The three usages of the Hebrew term זָרַע in Genesis 22:17–18 should not be considered identical. The first use of זָרַע provides the imagery of increasing descendants by employing the metaphor of the “stars of heavens” and the “sand on the seashore.” Thus, the first זָרַע may be admitted as a collective meaning, as Ross, Wenham, Dunn, and Mathews argued.<sup>291</sup> However, the second and third uses of זָרַע can be seen as having singular

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 184–185.

<sup>289</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 299.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 401. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 112. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 184. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 299.

meaning or dualistic meaning. The dualistic meaning basically considers the union between Christ and His members, as Calvin explained. Furthermore, as mentioned briefly above, when it comes to the meaning of the “multiplication of the descendants” and the “blessing for all the nations of the earth” that *נָרַע* brings about in Genesis 22:17–18, Paul’s view in Galatians 3:29 provides a proper explanation. In light of Galatians 3:29, the “multiplied descendants” and the “global blessing” are not separate but interwoven. These two coincide in Christ. The Gentiles may obtain the status of Abrahamic descendant by their faith in the Descendant, Christ. This is a huge increase in the number of Abrahamic descendants and shows that the blessing expands to the global scale beyond the lineage limit.

In conclusion, the revelation given to Abraham is the combined message about the Descendant and the descendants. First, God revealed the plan of a great nation that would be formed through his descendants. Second, God revealed the decisive triumph and the global blessing through the singular Descendant. It also implies co-victory and co-work based on the union between the Descendant and the descendants. These two revelations cannot be separated but are interwoven. In this respect, Abraham became the carrier of revelation and accounted for a part of God’s grand salvific plan that moves forward to the coming of Jesus Christ.

### **The Revelation through the Prophetic Life of Abraham**

Abraham’s life is prophetic. Certain events in his life foreshadow future events. First, one of the prophetic aspects of his life is his stay in Egypt in Genesis 12:10–20. It is like a compressive image of the future Israelite history from Joseph to Moses. Abraham moved to Egypt due to famine (Gen. 12:10). Likewise, Jacob and his sons had to leave the land of Canaan because of a famine (Gen. 42:5).

Abraham had to approach the Egyptians and Pharaoh with a safety strategy to survive in the land (Gen. 12:13). Thus, Abraham only referred to the fact of Sarah as his sister. It was not entirely a lie but partially true (Gen. 20:12). Likewise, Joseph let his family mention only the ancestral occupation as shepherds for the sake of dwelling in the land of Goshen (Gen. 46:34). Joseph did not need to refer to Isaac's farming (Gen. 26:12), which was one of the ancestral occupations. Joseph approached Pharaoh strategically and only revealed a detested occupation to the Egyptians. Sarna says as follows: "One gets the impression that Joseph wishes to obscure the fact that the brothers have an additional occupation."<sup>292</sup> Wenham assesses Joseph's idea as a successful ploy.<sup>293</sup> Mathews explains an important reason for the strategy as follows: "Joseph's eye is ultimately on the future of Israel's descendants who would one day return to their father's land."<sup>294</sup> Joseph knew that the Israelites would depart the land of Egypt in the future (Gen. 50:24) and intended them not to be mixed with the Egyptians.

The Lord afflicted Pharaoh with great plagues (Gen. 12:17), similar to the ten plagues (Exod. 7–12). Abraham and his wife could escape from Egypt, bringing what he gained in the land (Gen. 12:20). Likewise, the Israelites could escape from Egypt, bringing silver, gold, clothing that they plundered from the Egyptians, and livestock (Exod. 12:35–38). Genesis 15:13–14 specifically reveals that the descendants of Abraham will stay for four hundred years as servants in a foreign land (v. 13), and they will come out with great possessions (v. 14).

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<sup>292</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 318.

<sup>293</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 445.

<sup>294</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 843.

Second, another prophetic point in Abraham's life is his wife's sterility. Based on Genesis 3:15, the one who bruises the serpent's head comes as the woman's descendant. Thus, the barrenness of the woman was a serious obstacle for the coming of the one in Genesis 3:15. D. A. Dorsey observed the chiasmic structure in Genesis 11:27–32 as follows:

- A Introduction: Terah and his offspring (11:27)
- B The family lives in *Ur of the Chaldeans*; Haran dies (11:28)
- C Abraham takes (*lāqah*) Sarai as his wife; Nahor marries Milcah, whose father is Haran (11:29)
- X Sarai is barren; she has no children (11:30)
- C' Terah takes (*lāqah*) Abraham, along with Abraham's wife Sarai and Lot, whose father is Haran (11:31a)
- B' The family leaves *Ur of the Chaldeans* and settles in Haran (11:31b)
- A' Conclusion: summary of Terah's life; his death (11:32)<sup>295</sup>

Genesis 11:30 is the center of this passage, and it says that Abraham's wife was barren and had no child. The literary structure emphasizes the impossible pregnancy of Abraham's wife. Barrenness, a frequent theme in the Bible, is a threat to the succession of the godly line. The birth narratives of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist include the same theme. Despite the women's difficulty with pregnancy, these figures were born by the miraculous grace of God. In this respect, this theme rather literarily functions to highlight the births of the babies. From a theological aspect, this theme functions to emphasize God's miraculous grace of preservation in the births. In addition, all the miraculous births converge on one point, which is the most miraculous pregnancy in the Bible: the birth of Jesus Christ from the virgin Mary.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that there is a conflict between Sarah-Isaac and Hagar-Ishmael. The domestic conflict initially occurred in Cain and Abel. A similar family conflict

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<sup>295</sup> D. A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 54.



is seen between Isaac-Esau and Rebekah-Jacob. In the family of Jacob, Leah-her sons conflict with Rachel-Joseph. Furthermore, this conflict expands into the dimension of the nation. Israel is divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. In these conflict situations, God has a biased heart toward one side. Paul emphasizes the sovereign election by God in Romans 9:6–29. The Bible focuses on Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the Southern Kingdom rather than Ishmael, Esau, Leah's sons, and the Northern Kingdom. In addition, the repetitive conflict theme can be traced back to the conflict in Genesis 3:15. God said that He would put the enmity between the serpent's side and the woman's side, implying the ongoing conflict. In conclusion, Abraham's life is prophetic about his descendants and includes repetitive patterns throughout history. God's salvation history will continue on this revelatory foundation reflected in Abraham's life.

### Isaac

Isaac is the legitimate descendant who inherits Abraham's spiritual legacy. God promises Isaac the same blessings that God swore to Abraham (Gen. 26:4; 28). The birth of Isaac was divinely announced. God foretold Isaac's birth to Abraham and Sarah. This announcement allows the readers to expect and focus on the future of the child. The most special thing that stands out in Isaac's life is that Isaac himself was offered to God as a sacrifice by his father, Abraham. Normally, this narrative is read in light of Abraham's obedience, but it is also necessary to read it in light of Isaac, who is the human sacrifice. Isaac became a quietly obedient lamb in this incident. This event has crucial implications in the aspects of the prefigurement of Christ and the development of salvation history, and thus, Isaac's life should be considered to be a prophetic life to show the God-given national identity, as the promises given to Abraham are not limited to an individual but applied to the

enlarged unit. As mentioned above, a great nation, which God predestined them to be, is like the womb for the coming of Christ. Abraham received the grand plan of a great nation, and then Isaac laid the foundation for its fulfillment by becoming a sacrifice.

### **The Birth Announcements of Ishmael and Isaac**

Ishmael and Isaac are the first descendants of Abraham. The Bible describes the common divine favor and revelation for the stepbrothers. However, as in the first brother theme, Cain and Abel, it is necessary to note the differences between Ishmael and Isaac. Genesis 16:10–12 and 17:20 describe God’s revelation of Ishmael’s birth and identity, and Genesis 17:19 describes God’s revelation of Isaac’s birth and identity as the covenantal successor. When considering the descriptive differences between them, God’s sovereign election is implied even before their births. In particular, the miraculous birth of Isaac is noteworthy.

Genesis 16:11 records the birth announcement of Ishmael, who is the firstborn of Abraham from Hagar, the Egyptian servant. The birth of Ishmael was announced by the angel of the Lord, and his name was divinely given at that time. The Bible does not say that the names of Abel, Noah, and Abram are given by God, but it says that Ishmael’s name was given by the angel of the Lord and reveals his identity and future life. Genesis 16:11 explains the reason for the name as follows: “Because the Lord has heard your affliction.” The birth of Ishmael has the background of Hagar’s affliction, and Hagar confessed, “God who sees me” in Genesis 16:13. The birth of Ishmael shows the sovereignty of God in the birth of Abraham’s descendant and the grace of preservation. Hagar was not a legitimate wife, and Ishmael was not a promised descendant. Nevertheless, God preserved them with His grace.

This was because of God's grand scheme. God promised to make Abraham the father of a multitude of nations (17:5–6).

Genesis 17:19 is the birth announcement of Isaac, who is the second son of Abraham but the first and only son of Abraham from Sarah, the legitimate wife. Like the birth of Ishmael, the birth of Isaac was announced by God, and his name was also given by God in advance. However, Isaac is different from Ishmael. Mathews says, "The birth announcements of Ishmael (16:11–12) and Isaac (17:19) present a striking contrast in the destinies of the two sons. Ishmael will become the father of a great people, but he and his offspring will be outsiders, whereas Isaac will assume his father's inheritance."<sup>296</sup> The "brother theme" appears for the second time here after Cain and Abel. The Bible includes the birth announcements of both sons of Abraham but contrasts their different identities and destinies. In addition, the "enmity theme" in Genesis 3:15 is seen in Genesis 16:12 because God revealed Ishmael's identity as a "wild donkey who will live in defiance of all his brothers." It is noteworthy that Hagar and Ishmael are only described in the contexts of the conflict between Hagar-Ishmael and Sarah-Isaac (Gen. 16, 21).

On the other hand, the name Isaac is also a God-given name, and the Bible suggests the three laughters of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 17:17, 18:12, and 21:6 as the background of the name Isaac. The laughter in Genesis 21:6 must be about God's miracle because it is after birth, but scholars understand the laughter in Genesis 17:17 and Genesis 18:12 differently. Ross understands Abraham's laugh as a doubtful response, saying as follows: "The motif of laughter was preserved in the stories to reflect the doubts of Abraham and Sarah. Because the child was named Isaac, a name attesting to divine favor at a birth, the

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<sup>296</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 206.

narrator freely used the same verb (*ṣāḥaq*) to describe the reactions of Abraham and Sarah to the promise.”<sup>297</sup> In light of the consequence of the birth story, the doubtful laughter ironically functions to emphasize God’s grace and power. Gerhard von Rad also says as follows: “The promise that Abraham received in reverent willingness (readiness) ‘was so paradoxical that he laughed involuntarily.’ Abraham attempts to side-step what is incomprehensible to him and to direct God’s interest (typically!) to what is already a certainty, i.e., to Ishmael.”<sup>298</sup>

However, Calvin gives a different view as follows: “For, that this was not the language of one who doubts, Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, is a witness (4:19), who denies that Abraham considered his body now dead, or the barren womb of Sarah, or that he staggered through unbelief; but declares that he believed in hope against hope.”<sup>299</sup> Morris also suggests a similar view as Calvin, saying, “Abraham was so elated at God’s promise that he laughed with joy and surprise. That it was not a laugh of doubt is evident from the fact that God gave him no rebuke, as He later did Sarah when she laughed (Gen. 18:13). The questions which Abraham asked likewise were not in doubt, but in wonder and happy amazement.”<sup>300</sup> Based on Romans 4:19, it is evident that Abraham finally believed in God’s miraculous promise concerning gaining a son through Sarah, who was ninety years old. That being said, Genesis 17:17–18 focuses on the initial response, not hindsight. Abraham and Sarah’s initial responses to God’s announcement of Isaac’s birth were doubtful. Abraham confessed his and Sarah’s disability to produce a descendant and wanted Ishmael to live before God. Genesis

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<sup>297</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 335.

<sup>298</sup> Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 203.

<sup>299</sup> Calvin and King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 460.

<sup>300</sup> Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings*, 335.

15:6 says that Abraham believed in God's promise concerning the birth of an heir, but God did not specify the birth through old Sarah at that time. Abraham's faith described in Genesis 15:6 is about God's preservation of Abrahamic lineage (v.4–5), not about the miraculous birth. In chapters 17–18, which is the context after the birth of Ishmael through Hagar, the birth through old Sarah could be a difficult announcement to believe for Abraham and Sarah. Sarna says as follows: "The repeated laughter of humans in connection with the birth of Isaac is, in a sense, the inverse of God's laughter, for it is a questioning of divine sovereignty (cf. 18:14). The person of Isaac, therefore, represents the triumph of the power of God over the limitations of nature. No wonder he receives his name from God Himself."<sup>301</sup>

In conclusion, Isaac's name was given by God but reflected the doubtful sentiment of the parents when considering their physical condition. This ironically shows how God miraculously intervened in the matter of the descendant. This is the first miraculous birth theme in the Bible, and the theme repeats in the coming births. Overcoming the barrenness is God's grace of preservation. However, the most noteworthy point of Isaac as the human agent is not about the unique birth but the human sacrifice that his body was offered because the sacrifice event implies the essential point that the birth motif converges.

### **The Sacrifice of Isaac**

The sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22:1–14 is normally dealt with in light of God's test, and the interpretation of the passage tends to emphasize Abraham's radical obedience to God's demanding commandment. However, this passage has implications in the dimension of God's grand salvific process beyond the faith and obedience of an individual. Strictly, the

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<sup>301</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 127.

sacrifice of Isaac is the human sacrifice that the Bible prohibits. Mathews says, “Legal texts condemn child sacrifice (Deut. 12:31; 18:10), especially the practice associated with the worship of Molech (Lev. 18:21; 20:2–5). Later, the practice appears in the Southern Kingdom (2 Kgs. 16:3; 21:6) but is eliminated by Josiah (2 Kgs. 23:10) and condemned by the prophets (e.g., Jer. 7:31–32; Ezek. 16:20–21).”<sup>302</sup> Nevertheless, the Lord opted for this unique method of human sacrifice to achieve something He planned. Regarding this, the best-known interpretation is foreshadowing or typology of Christ. Waltke and Fredricks say as follows: “Abraham’s declaration that ‘God himself will provide the lamb’ (Gen. 22:8) resonates with God’s offer of the Lamb to save the world (Mk. 10:45; Jn. 1:29, 36; 2 Cor. 5:17–21; 1 Pt. 1:18–19).”<sup>303</sup> Waltke and Fredricks observed several echoes to imply Christ in Genesis 22:1–14. Isaac and Christ are depicted as lambs being taken to slaughter, but they remain silent and obedient to their fathers. The scene in which Abraham laid the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac (22:6) echoes that God imposed the wooden cross on His son Christ. Also, Isaac’s return alive from the altar echoes the resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>304</sup> The father-son relationship between Abraham and Isaac functions as a type for the Father God and the Son Jesus on the cross in the distant future.

Another interpretation can be suggested by considering the symbolic meaning of Isaac as the firstborn. Abel, the man of faith, offered the firstborn of his flock to the Lord (Gen. 4:4). Also, Exodus 13:2 says, “Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the firstborn of every womb among the sons of Israel, among people and animals *alike*; it belongs to Me.” This verse shows the divine codification of forefathers’ custom of the firstborn in the Israelite context,

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<sup>302</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 285.

<sup>303</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 310.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 310–311.

even though there is a modification from sacrifice to sanctification in this code. The firstborn represents all that comes later, and Isaac, who is the promised son, represents all the elected Abrahamic descendants. The potential posterity is being included within the present forefather. When considering the very nature of Isaac as the firstborn, Abraham's offering of Isaac means that Abraham offered all his descendants, including the future posterity of all the Israelites, to God.

The sacrifice of Isaac can be understood in light of קָרַם. When the Israelite army entered the land of Canaan, they began to conquer the whole land by designating the city of Jericho, which is a part of Canaan, for destruction (קָרַם), according to God's command (Josh. 6:17–19). Calvin properly explains קָרַם in the commentary of Joshua 6:17 as follows: “When it refers to sacred oblations, it becomes, in respect of men, equivalent to *abolition*, since things devoted in this manner are renounced by them as completely as if they were annihilated. The equivalent Greek term is ἀνάθημα, or ἀνάθεμα, meaning *set apart*, or as it is properly expressed in French, *interdicted* [forbidden].”<sup>305</sup> Since Isaac was thoroughly devoted to God, only God can claim the fatherly right to all the elected descendants. A potential nation was devoted to God by offering one son to God.

When considering the narrow context of Genesis 12, the readers can see the radical test by God and the radical obedience of Abraham. This is a definitely admissible interpretation. Having said that, when seeing this event in light of God's long-term salvation history, this dedication is a certain beginning point of the fulfillment of God's salvific plan given to Abraham. Isaac's sacrifice was the first step toward a “great nation” promised in Genesis 12:2, “possessing the gate of their enemies” promised in Genesis 22:17, and

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<sup>305</sup> John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Commentary on the Book of Joshua* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 95.

“blessing for all the nations of the earth” promised in Genesis 22:18. The portion of Scripture devoted to Isaac in the book of Genesis is short compared to other patriarchs but addresses the most powerful and compressive messages through the human sacrifice. Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac clarifies the vague conquering image and accurately foreshadows the Savior on the cross.

In conclusion, the life of Isaac is significantly meaningful in the development of God’s salvific plan. Isaac lived a prophetic life as his father did. Abraham’s offering of Isaac as the sacrifice symbolizes the offering of the future godly line that will form the Israelites. It means that a nation is offered to God to achieve the saving purpose. Moreover, Isaac’s miraculous birth and offering of his body as the human sacrifice foreshadow the birth and death of Jesus Christ, the Savior. All these things finally give insight into the identity of the human agent. The human agent foreshadows the Savior and prepares the way of the Savior.

### Jacob

Waltke and Fredricks give an interesting summary of Jacob’s life in the commentary of Genesis 49 as follows: “Jacob’s life began and now ends with inspired prophecies. An oracle announced his destiny, and now he announces the future of his descendants.”<sup>306</sup> Even though Jacob’s life was filled with supernatural inspiration, he assessed his days as “few and unpleasant” (47:9). Nevertheless, Jacob is significantly important in the development of salvation history in that he built the basic structure of a great nation through the twelve sons upon the foundation of Isaac’s sacrifice, according to Abraham’s blueprint. Also, Jacob’s life is prophetic. His sojourn in the house of Laban foreshadows the Israelites’ sojourn in Egypt.

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<sup>306</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 604.



As he suddenly left Laban's house with increased possessions, wives, and children, the Israelites also left Egypt for the promised land in the same way. Jacob's birth was not divinely announced in advance, but his birth was God's response to Isaac's prayer. Moreover, the oracle given during pregnancy revealed his identity as the spiritual heir of Isaac. This is evidence that shows the sovereignty and intervention of God in the matter of birth.

### **The Birth Narrative and the Oracle of Esau and Jacob**

Isaac's descendants are recorded in Genesis 25:19–26, which is about the genealogy of Esau and Jacob, and this narrative includes the familiar patterns repeated in the forefathers, such as “contrasting genealogies,” “the barrenness,” “brother theme,” and “enmity theme.” First, Genesis 25 is about the genealogy of Abraham's descendants, and it is divided into three groups: descendants born from Keturha, Hagar, and Sarah. The most highlighted group is the last one, Sarah's son Isaac and Isaac's two sons. They are mentioned in the last part of the genealogy, and it is the same style used in Noah and Abraham. Among three groups of Abrahamic descendants, the narrator only focuses on the birth narrative of the twins Esau and Jacob. In this respect, the genealogies in Genesis function to present who the successor of the godly line is.

Second, the birth of the twins has the same background as that of the barren womb of Sarah. Waltke and Fredricks say as follows: “The motif of barrenness highlighted the Lord's power to give Abraham numerous progeny over insuperable odds. Barrenness here is not an occasion for anxiety but for sovereign grace. This generation also has to learn the lessons of faith and to understand that theirs is not a natural but a supernatural seed.”<sup>307</sup> For twenty

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 357.

years, Rebekah could not bear the child, and thus, Isaac prayed (וַיִּעֲתָר) to God. Regarding the Hebrew verb עָתָר, Waltke and Fredricks emphasize the meaning of “to intercede.”<sup>308</sup>

Mathews also says, “The narrative does not report that Rebekah prayed for herself as did Leah and Rachel (29:32; 30:22) and also Hannah (1 Sam. 1:10). The absence of any such petition focuses attention on intercessory prayer, likening Isaac to Abraham who prayed in behalf of the barren women of Abimelech’s household (Gen. 20:17).”<sup>309</sup> Finally, God responded to Isaac’s supplication and gave them the twins. It is noteworthy that Isaac and Rebekah did not employ the concubinage as Abraham and Sarah did but only prayed to God. This shows their reliance on the sovereignty and power of God in the matter of birth.<sup>310</sup>

Lastly, the themes of brotherhood and enmity reappear in the birth narrative. The brother theme repeats here for the third time after Cain-Abel and Ishmael-Isaac. As the previous brothers did, Esau and Jacob also had to be distinguished in light of the succession of the godly line. Abel was distinguished by the acceptable offering, and Isaac was born of a legitimate mother. However, Jacob became distinct as the orthodox heir of the Abrahamic descendants through the oracle given to Rebekah. This reflects God’s sovereign election. Ross says as follows: “By sovereign election, God declared that the promised line would belong to Jacob, the younger son. Jacob thus owed his supremacy not to natural order or to human will but to divine election.”<sup>311</sup> Calvin also emphasizes God’s preference for Jacob over Esau, saying, “(The divine preference) was not granted as a reward for his merits, neither was obtained by his own industry, but proceeded from the mere grace of God

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 386.

<sup>310</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 179.

<sup>311</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 439.

himself.”<sup>312</sup> Jacob was sovereignly singled out but had to live a life in conflict with his older brother. Calvin gives an interesting insight into God’s sovereign election as the reason for the conflict.<sup>313</sup> In Genesis 25:22, the struggle of the twins in the womb prophetically implies the upcoming conflict within the family.

### **The Prophecy for the Twelve Tribes**

In light of the historical development of God’s salvation history, Jacob played a crucial role in forming the structure of a great nation because he became the father of the twelve tribes. Even though Jacob could not yet see the complete fulfillment of God’s promise given to Abraham, at least he could see the overall outline of the nation Israel through his sons in his latter days. Before he died, Jacob summoned all twelve sons. Genesis 49:1 says, “Assemble yourselves, so that I may tell you what will happen to you in the days to come (בְּאַחַד הַיָּמִים).” When it comes to “in the days to come (בְּאַחַד הַיָּמִים),” Ross explained that the expression should be interpreted to denote “an undetermined time in the future, early or late (cf. Dan. 2:28–29, 45; Ezek. 38:16; Jer. 23:20).”<sup>314</sup> Waltke and Fredricks also say as follows: “This prophetic term refers to a future that brings the strivings of the present to a fitting outcome. There is a thickness to the expression, embracing both the near and distant future. Here it embraces the entire history of Israel from the conquest and distribution of the land to the consummate reign of Jesus Christ.”<sup>315</sup> When considering a range of biblical

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<sup>312</sup> Calvin and King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 45.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>314</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 700.

<sup>315</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 605.

usages, it is not easy to determine the exact time that *בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים* indicates. However, Mathews explains the function of *בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים* as follows: “The same language in the prophets announces the events of Israel’s future restoration and preeminence (e.g., Isa 2:2; Dan 10:14; Hos 3:5).”<sup>316</sup> These views suggest that Jacob prophesied in the dimension of the tribe in the distant future, not of any individual in the immediate future.

Genesis 49:1 is the introduction, 49:28 is the narrator’s summary,<sup>317</sup> and 49:2–27 has the form of a poem, which is normally known as “Jacob’s deathbed blessings on the tribes of Israel.”<sup>318</sup> Genesis 49:28 also says that Jacob blessed them. However, the poem does not only include blessings but also condemnation, rebuking, and even curses on certain tribes. In this respect, this poem can be compared to Noah’s curse and blessing in Genesis 9:25–27.<sup>319</sup> Jacob now sees the future tribes through the present sons. Prophecies are for the “individual tribes personified as his sons.”<sup>320</sup> Ross says as follows: “His predictions were based on their actions and their characteristics. No doubt Jacob could discern enough of their traits to make reasonable projections, but in some cases his words went beyond his experience and were more like a prophetic oracle.”<sup>321</sup> Likewise, Noah’s curse and blessing were also based on the actions of his three sons.<sup>322</sup> The seed has the potential of what will be in the future. In this respect, the twelve brothers were seeds that reflected the shape of the future Israelites.

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<sup>316</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 885–886.

<sup>317</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 602–603.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 602.

<sup>319</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 700.

<sup>320</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 332.

<sup>321</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 700.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*

Among the twelve prophecies, the most noteworthy is for Judah (Gen. 49:8–12) because it includes hints of the coming Messiah and Judah’s leadership over his brothers. First, when it comes to Judah’s leadership, it is necessary to see how Genesis 49:8 describes the relationship between Judah and his brothers. His brothers praise Judah, and they will bow down before him. Waltke and Fredricks prove it, saying that Numbers 2:3–4 and 10:14 show that Judah is the largest tribe in the wilderness, Judges 1:1–19 and 20:18 describe that God appointed Judah to lead the tribes, 2 Samuel 5:5 focuses on King David’s coronation and Judah’s hegemony over the Israelites, and 1 Kings 15:4 refers to the God-given lamp as the promise of the unshakable Davidic dynasty.<sup>323</sup>

“A great nation,” which God promised Abraham in Genesis 12:2, contains all the twelve sons of Jacob. They are not in the same relationship as Cain-Abel, Ishmael-Isaac, and Esau-Jacob. That being said, God opted for Judah and gave him authority over other tribes. Second, Jacob’s prophecy for Judah includes symbolic expressions that allude to the Messiah. Genesis 49:8 says, “Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies.” This expression arouses the imagery related to the “woman’s descendant who bruises the serpent’s head” in Genesis 3:15 or the “descendant who possesses the enemies’ gate” in Genesis 22:17. In addition, Judah is described as a lion’s cub (v. 9) and as the one who has the scepter and the ruler’s staff, which are the symbol of kingship,<sup>324</sup> until Shiloh comes (v. 10). Jewish midrash reads Shiloh as “Israel’s future Messiah,”<sup>325</sup> even though others read it differently. Calvin also understood these symbolic expressions in Genesis 48:10 were about the Messiah.<sup>326</sup> He

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<sup>323</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 607.

<sup>324</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, 703.

<sup>325</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 894.

<sup>326</sup> Calvin and King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 452.

said, “The kingdom which began from David, was a kind of prelude, and shadowy representation of that greater grace which was delayed, and held in suspense, until the advent of the Messiah.”<sup>327</sup> Also noteworthy is the shift from “father’s sons bow down before you (Judah)” in Genesis 49:8 to the “obedience of the peoples to him (Shiloh)” in Genesis 49:10. The national rule of Judah changed into the international rule of the Messiah. It shows the change of the ruler and ruling area. Mathews observed the glimpse of the Messiah from the lion based on Revelation 5:5, in addition to King David.<sup>328</sup> These show that Judah was anointed as the channel for the coming of Messiah. The tribe of Judah was used as the womb for the birth of Christ, and it fitted with the calling of the human agent.

In conclusion, Jacob was the heir of faith. His birth and life were evidence of the grace of God’s preservation, and God revealed the salvation plan to the twelve descendants through Jacob. It is Jacob’s significant contribution as a human agent. The revelation given to Jacob and his twelve sons is noteworthy. Jacob prophesied the future of a great nation in the form of a symbolic poem. Compared to Abraham’s blueprint, it became more specific and developed. Judah was prophesied to have leadership among his brothers and to be the chosen tribe from which the Messiah would come. In this respect, God’s salvific process gradually progressed toward the culmination of the coming of the Savior.

### Joseph

The birth of Joseph is described in the form of a narrative without any announcement or oracle, and his birth narrative includes repetitive themes that appeared in Isaac and Jacob,

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 453.

<sup>328</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 891.

such as the domestic conflict and the woman's barrenness. Through the employment of familiar literary themes, the readers can see Joseph in light of the connection with his forefathers. The record of Joseph's life is included within the generations (תְּלֻדוֹת) of Jacob. The Hebrew term תּוֹלְדוֹת means descendants, successors, generations, etc.<sup>329</sup> The much larger portion of the generations (תְּלֻדוֹת) devoted to Joseph shows that Joseph was a more important part of Jacob's life than other sons. Joseph's life shows the typical features of the human agent in the aspects of faith, revelation, and preservation. Specifically, it is necessary to note three points in Joseph's life, such as his dream, his life as a type of Christ, and his unique role in God's salvific plan in his era.

### **The Birth Narrative of Joseph**

The birth narrative of Jacob's descendants begins in Genesis 29:31 and ends in 30:24. Interestingly, the name of יְהוָה is placed both in the beginning and end.<sup>330</sup> The last name mentioned in this birth narrative is Joseph. The domestic conflict repeats in the narrative of Jacob's family, and the birth narrative in Genesis 29:31–30:24 is filled with the tension caused by the rivalry between Leah and Rachel. One of the underlying reasons for the conflict is Jacob's favoritism. However, it is also necessary to note God's sovereign preference in Jacob's family. Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (Gen. 29:18), and this must have been the reason for the affliction of Leah (Gen. 29:32). In response to Jacob's favoritism, Genesis 29:31 says as follows: "Now the Lord saw (וַיִּרְא יְהוָה) that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was unable to have children." Genesis 30:1

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<sup>329</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1700.

<sup>330</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 210.

parallels 29:31 in the literary aspect, but the two verses show the contrast between the two sisters. Genesis 30:1 says as follows: “Now when Rachel saw (וַתֵּרֶא רַחֵל) that she had not borne Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister.” Jacob’s partial preference for Rachel made Leah afflicted, and God’s partial preference for Leah made Rachel jealous. Due to Rachel’s barrenness, Jacob and Rachel finally opted for adoption through the female servant as Sarah did. Rachel’s conception is not mentioned until after Leah finished to gain eight sons and one daughter. Genesis 30:22 says as follows: “Then God remembered (וַיִּזְכֹּר) Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.” Genesis 30:22 shows the sovereign grace of God by repeating God (אֱלֹהִים) twice. At that time, Joseph was born of Rachel.

When it comes to the Hebrew verb זָכַר, scholars focus on the nuance of “reversal” implied in several biblical usages of the term. Wenham observed the parallel between 30:22 and 8:1,<sup>331</sup> which says as follows: “God remembered (וַיִּזְכֹּר) Noah and all the animals and all the livestock that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.” In these two verses, God’s remembrance is described as the reason for the reverse (cf. Exod. 2:25). Mathews also says as follows: “That the Lord “remembered” (*zākar*) Rachel signals a significant reversal in his dealings with her (cf. 8:1; 19:29; Exod. 2:24; Pss. 78:39; 106:45). His attentive ear implies that she continued her petitions for a child, resulting in his gracious answer (20:18; 29:31; 1 Sam. 1:5–6).”<sup>332</sup> The name of Joseph also reflects the nuance of reversal. Sarna says as follows: “The two Hebrew verbs *’asaf* and *yosef*, “taken away” and “add,” provide a double etymology for the name, the first looking

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<sup>331</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 248.

<sup>332</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 490.



back to the past years of shame and anguish, the second looking forward to an even greater measure of joy.”<sup>333</sup>

Leah was afflicted due to the absence of her husband’s love, but God gave her six sons and two adopted sons. Rachel was afflicted due to her childlessness, but God finally gave her two sons and two adopted sons. God gave Leah, who was unloved by Jacob, the double portion in the blessings of descendants, and God gave Rachel, who was barren, the grace of reversal. In this respect, the birth of Joseph is portrayed in the background of the domestic conflict, the barrenness of Rachel, and God’s gracious providence.

### **The Prophetic Life of Joseph and the Achievement of God’s Redemptive Plan**

There are three points to note in the life of Joseph: his dream, his life as a type of Christ, and his role in God’s saving plan in his era. First, it is necessary to understand the significance of the episode of Joseph’s dream within Genesis 37–50. Joseph’s dream narrative in Genesis 37:1–11 is placed at the beginning of 37:1–50:21, which is the entire תּלְדוֹת of Jacob. Even though Genesis 37:2 refers to the “records of the generations (תּלְדוֹת) of Jacob,” chapters 37–50 are nearly filled with the contents related to Joseph, except the episode of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38:1–30. In this respect, Joseph is a protagonist highlighted in the generations (תּלְדוֹת) of Jacob. Mathews observed the same pattern in the patriarchs as follows: “This was the pattern for the Abraham (Gen. 11:27) and Jacob (Gen. 25:19) narratives in which the father’s name (Terah, Isaac) introduces the narrative interest in

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<sup>333</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 210.

the son. This is plainly illustrated by the juxtaposition of ‘Jacob’ and ‘Joseph’: ‘This is the account of Jacob. Joseph ...’ (Gen. 37:2).<sup>334</sup>

God revealed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning their identities and commissioned works within the grand salvific plan. God’s revelation was the common experience of the patriarchs. Likewise, God revealed a brief sketch of the coming future to Joseph in the form of a symbolic dream and led his life to achieve it. In this respect, Joseph’s dream is a kind of God’s confirmation for Joseph as the spiritual successor of the patriarchs, and Joseph’s dream functions as a foreshadowing for the rest of the chapters in the literary aspect, and the whole story progresses toward achieving the dream given by God.

Second, it is necessary to understand Joseph as a type of Christ. Many scholars have observed the allusions to Jesus Christ in several aspects of Joseph’s life. There are several facets in Joseph’s life that foreshadow Jesus. First, Joseph experienced a change of position “from his father’s designated heir to enslavement in Egypt to his exaltation as ruler of Egypt” (Jesus’ incarnation, suffering, and resurrection). Second, the Lord was with Joseph (Gen. 39:2, 23; Lk. 2:40; Jn. 1:32). Third, all the earth came to Joseph to buy grain. (Gen. 41:57; Jn. 6:36, Jesus is the bread of life for those who come to Him.) Fourth, Joseph overcame the temptation of Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:7; Matt. 4:9). Fifth, the innocent Joseph was unjustly charged but silent (Gen. 40:15; Matt. 26:63).<sup>335</sup> Jonathan Edwards gave a comment on Genesis 37:28 as follows: “Joseph was here a type of Christ; he was designed for death by his own brethren, as Christ was. He was cast into a pit, whereby his death and burial were signified. He was lifted out again, and his resurrection was an occasion of their salvation

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<sup>334</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 665.

<sup>335</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 385.

from famine and death.”<sup>336</sup> Wenham’s view is slightly different from the preceding explanations. He simultaneously observed three allusions in Joseph’s life. First, Joseph’s release from prison foreshadows the future release of the Israelites from Egypt. Second, Joseph’s humiliation and exaltation foreshadow what Jesus will experience. Third, Joseph’s experience provides the pattern for all Christians.<sup>337</sup> Joseph had no choice but to be taken as an enslaved person and go to prison against his will. What Joseph’s life shows is that not only God’s grace but also suffering is sovereignly given. However, he came to live a prophetic life that foreshadows Christ, the future Israelites, and Christian life through the afflictions he was forced to endure.

Third, it is necessary to note how God achieved part of the grand salvific plan through Joseph’s life. In particular, Joseph’s life is related to Genesis 12:1–3. Wenham says as follows: “The Joseph story, as already noted above, develops the theme of the Pentateuch by showing the gradual fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham in 12:1–3. In particular, it shows how God blesses the nations through the descendants of Abraham.”<sup>338</sup> God called and used Joseph to save not only his family but all nations from famine (Gen. 50:20). In addition, God’s plan given to Abraham was to make Abraham’s descendants a great nation (Gen. 12:2) and increase the population of his descendants (Gen. 13:16; 15:5), and the plan also includes the future descendants’ sojourning in a foreign land (Gen. 15:13). God brought Jacob’s family members to Egypt to achieve this plan given to Abraham. God confirmed it for Jacob on the way to Egypt (Gen. 46:3). Joseph was called to achieve this plan. Joseph cleverly let

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<sup>336</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Notes on Scripture*, ed. Harry S. Stout and Stephen J. Stein, vol. 15, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (London; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 86.

<sup>337</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 400.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

his family argue that their occupation was livestock farming before Pharaoh. Isolation in the land of Goshen was necessary in that the isolated life could make their ethnicity and religion stay pure, avoiding syncretism with Egyptians and Egyptian religions. In the land of Goshen, Jacob's seventy family members (Gen. 46:27) could grow into the Israelites with a population of about six hundred thousand men (Exod. 12:37). Through Joseph, Jacob's family was preserved from the famine and multiplied in Egypt. Joseph was a guide to the land of Egypt. Also, Joseph was a man of faith (Heb. 11:22). He believed in the coming fulfillment of God's promise made to Abraham and said to the sons of Israel to carry up his bones from Egypt to the promised land (Gen. 50:24–25). In conclusion, Joseph lived a prophetic life, achieved the commission given to him by God, and believed in the fulfillment of the rest of God's grand salvific plan. As a human agent, Joseph was the recipient and carrier of God's revelation and believed that revelation. Furthermore, his entire life and calling shows God's preservation of the godly line.

### Moses

God revealed the grand salvific plan to Abraham. Isaac became the symbolic sacrifice offered to God. Jacob fathered the twelve sons, who are the basic structure of a great nation. In the era of Moses, Jacob's twelve sons developed into the twelve tribes of the Israelites. In light of God's grand salvific plan, Moses' calling was related to forming the shape of the Israelites with a spiritual identity. As the human agent, Moses shows all three typical features: faith, revelation, and preservation. Moses was a man of faith (Heb. 11:24–29) and a faithful servant in God's house (3:5). Above all, Moses served God for the deliverance of the Israelites and the delivery of the law.

## The Birth Narrative of Moses

Moses' birth narrative does not include the birth announcement or oracle but only deals with the historical background of his birth. Exodus 1:1–22 describes the background behind the birth of Moses, and Exodus 2:1–10 describes the birth and protection of Moses. Also, Moses's birth narrative does not include typical themes such as domestic conflict and women's barrenness. Instead, the domestic conflict is replaced by the ethnic conflict between the Israelites and Pharaoh, and the barrenness, which is the threat against the preservation of the godly line, is replaced by mass infanticide. Mass infanticide and ethnic conflict are the expanded version of the existing themes of barrenness and domestic conflict. Exodus 1:7 portrays the initial reason for the conflict and threat: "But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them." However, this multiplication was the state that God commanded and promised in Genesis. Duane A. Garrett observed that the Hebrew terms in Exodus 1:7 echo the cultural mandate in Genesis 1:28.<sup>339</sup> Three verbs, פָּרָה (to bear fruit, to be fruitful), רָבָה (to become numerous, to increase), מָלֵא (to be full, to fill up), are used in Genesis 1:28 and Exodus 1:7. In addition, Childs observed the allusion to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in Exodus 1:7 as follows: "God, the creator, has fulfilled his promise to the fathers. Verse 7 now functions as a transitional verse by pointing in both directions. It serves as a fulfillment of the patriarchal promise of the past, but now forms the background for the events which initiate the Exodus (cf. 1:9)."<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus: Commentary*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2014), 150.

<sup>340</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, ed. Peter Ackroyd et al., The Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 2–3.

For a new Egyptian king who did not know Joseph (Exod. 1:8), the increasing number of Israelites was a potential threat against Egypt (1:10). Thus, Pharaoh established two policies: enslavement and mass infanticide. He was determined to oppress the Israelites with heavy burdens (Exod.1:11) and to kill newborn male babies (1:16; 22). The infanticide theme repeats in the birth of Jesus (Matt. 2:16). However, God thwarted the Egyptian policy and preserved the Israelites by accelerating the population growth and letting the midwives fear God (Exod. 1:12; 17). Moses was born of a Levite woman in this background of Egyptian persecution and divine preservation.

Garrett focuses on the decisive roles of three women, Moses' mother, Jochebed (Exod. 6:20), Moses' sister, Miriam (Num. 26:59), and Pharaoh's daughter, in protecting the newborn Moses. Jochebed decided to protect the child through the papyrus basket among the reeds by the river, and Pharaoh's daughter had pity on the child in the basket. The name Moses originated from this background. Exodus 2:10 explains the name Moses as follows: "I drew him out of the water." Miriam connected the two women to nurture Moses. Garrett provides the literary structure of Moses' birth narrative in Exodus 2:1–10 in light of the three women as follows: "The mother protects Moses (Exod. 2:2–3)," "the sister protects Moses (2:4)," "the princess protects Moses (2:5–6)," "the sister protects Moses (2:7–8)," "the princess protects Moses (2:9abcd)," "the mother protects Moses (2:9ef–10ab)," and "the princess protects Moses (2:10cdef)."<sup>341</sup> In conclusion, the birth narrative of Moses includes a conflict between Pharaoh and the Israelites, the mass infanticide, and God's sovereign preservation. These themes connect the previous birth motif passages to the future birth of

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<sup>341</sup> Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus: Commentary*, 166.

Jesus Christ. In addition, the growth of the population signals that God's promise to Abraham was being fulfilled at the time of Moses' birth.

### **Deliverance and Revelation**

The book of Exodus describes a new generation of Abrahamic descendants in Egypt, and Moses is the first eyewitness to the theophany in this generation and is described as the one God sent in this book. The commissioned works, given to Moses as the human agent, consist of two parts: deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt (Exod. 3:10) and revelation of the divine power (14:26–31) and the divine kingdom law (19:7; 20:19, 22, etc.). Even though God Himself could reveal His power and word without Moses' involvement, God intentionally called Moses to be involved in His salvific process (Exod. 3:9–10) and used him as God's communicator (3:14–15). Deliverance and revelation cannot be strictly divided into two separate things in Exodus. When God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, God simultaneously revealed His omnipotent power in Egypt. After God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, God revealed the kingdom law at Mount Sinai and commanded them to keep the law based on the grace of deliverance. The two are intricately intertwined with each other. With this regard, it is necessary to consider the two scenes: the call narrative of Moses in Exodus 3–4 and the revelation at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19–20.

#### The call narrative in Exodus 3–4

In Exodus 3–4, God manifested Himself to Moses and commissioned him as the human agent to deliver the Israelites. God's motive in calling Moses can be understood in light of Exodus 2:23–25, which describes the groaning and cry of the Israelites due to their bondage, God's hearing of it, and God's remembrance of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob. Exodus 2:24 says, “God heard their groaning; and God remembered (וַיִּזְכֹּר) His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” As mentioned in the cases of Noah and Joseph, the phrase “God remembered (זָכַר) ...” is a literary signal to mark the reversal of the situation (Gen. 8:1; 19:29; Pss. 106:44–46).<sup>342</sup> God’s purpose in calling Moses is described in Exodus 3:10: “And now come, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.” God called Moses to be the human agent, and thus, God revealed Himself to Moses. There are four points of God’s revelation given to Moses in Exodus 3–4: the burning bush (Exod. 3:2), the holy ground (3:5), the name of God (3:14), and the powerful signs (4:1–8).

First, when it comes to the burning bush (Exod. 3:2), Eugene Carpenter says that the term bush (סִבְיָה) foreshadows Sinai (סִינַי).<sup>343</sup> Exodus 19:18 also describes the descent of the Lord on Sinai in the fire. Carpenter said as follows: “This incident illustrates well the subordination of natural phenomena in order to stress its theological significance. God will continue to use his rulership over natural phenomena to get the attention not only of Moses but all of Israel and Egypt.”<sup>344</sup> However, Ryken and Hughes gave a different explanation: “The miraculous sign pointed as well to God’s eternity and self-sufficiency. Like the burning bush, God never runs out of fuel. His glory never dims; his beauty never fades. He always keeps burning bright. This is because God does not get his energy from anyone or anything outside himself.”<sup>345</sup> Even though Carpenter and Ryken provided a different view in detail, at

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<sup>342</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 490. See also, Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 248.

<sup>343</sup> Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 1, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 194–195.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 81.



least they agreed that the burning bush is a way of revealing God's certain divine aspects. This is Moses' first eyewitness of God's character, and later, the Israelites also see the theophany from afar (Exod. 20:21).

The second point of God's revelation given to Moses is the holy ground. Exodus 3:5 says as follows: "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Specifically, this instruction on the prohibition of access is related to "holiness," which is revealed through the divine presence. Exodus 3:1 designated the place as Horeb, the mountain of God. Carpenter understood the most crucial feature of the mountain of God as God's presence.<sup>346</sup> He says as follows: "The phrase 'the mountain of God' is a theological *Leitmotiv* [a key thematic element] of this verse and remains so through 4:28, overshadowed only by the revelation of Yahweh's name; but even that occurs in the sacred area of Yahweh's presence."<sup>347</sup> John L. Mackay focused on the use of the term "holy" (קֹדֶשׁ) in 3:5, saying as follows: "'Holiness' in the Old Testament always conveys the idea of someone or something 'set apart.' God is holy because as the infinite and pure one he stands apart from his sinful creation. The ground at Sinai had not previously been holy, marked off in some way as specially sacred. It is the presence of God that conveys this status to the site."<sup>348</sup> Exodus 3:5 describes Moses' vivid experience of God's holiness and presence; it does not describe Moses simply standing on the clean ground. Moses was supposed to proclaim the holy law of God to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, and thus, God

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<sup>346</sup> Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 1, 193.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> John L. Mackay, *Exodus*, Mentor Commentaries (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2001), 69.

allowed Moses to experience and learn God’s holiness vividly and directly on the mountain of God in advance.

The third point of God’s revelation given to Moses is the name of God (Exod. 3:14–15). When Moses asked the name of God, God first answered as follows: אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה. אֶהְיֶה is the imperfect verb (qal), first person, the singular form of הִיָּה, and הִיָּה means “to come to pass, occur,” “to happen,” “to be, become,” etc.<sup>349</sup> NASB 2020, ESV, NIV, and CSB translate it into “I am who I am.” Carpenter summarized possible interpretations that scholars suggested of אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה as follows: “I am here with you,” “I will be with you,” “I am he who causes to be all that is,” and “I will be who I will be.”<sup>350</sup> The Septuagint translates it into Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν. This Greek rendering means that “I am the one who is,” which “denotes the personality, the self-existence, and immutability of the Divine Being.”<sup>351</sup> Calvin says as follows: “God attributes to himself alone divine glory, because he is self-existent and therefore eternal; and thus gives being and existence to every creature. Nor does he predicate of himself anything common, or shared by others; but he claims for himself eternity as peculiar to God alone, in order that he may be honoured according to his dignity.”<sup>352</sup> Regarding the description of the burning bush in Exodus 3:2, Ryken and Hughes observed God’s eternity and self-sufficiency.<sup>353</sup> אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה can be understood in light of the phenomenon of the burning bush that Ryken and Hughes interpreted. Through the

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<sup>349</sup> Koehler, et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 243–244.

<sup>350</sup> Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 1, 235–236.

<sup>351</sup> David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis–Deuteronomy*, vol. I (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 286.

<sup>352</sup> John Calvin and Charles William Bingham, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 73.

<sup>353</sup> Ryken and Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory*, 81.

supernatural phenomenon and אֱלֹהֵי אֲשֶׁר אֱלֹהֵי, God revealed His unique nature. אֱלֹהֵי אֲשֶׁר אֱלֹהֵי is not used as the actual name to call God, but it is close to a brief explanation of God Himself. Garrett says as follows: “The question, ‘What is his name?’ suggests a pagan outlook. In Egypt, every god had a name that identified the deity by gender, cult location, powers, specialized tasks, and rank within the hierarchy of deities.”<sup>354</sup> Since God is the existence that transcends the ordinary concept of deity at that time, God first gave a quick and proper answer to Moses’ question.

When it comes to God’s name, the explanation is added as follows: “God furthermore said to Moses, This is what you shall say to the sons of Israel: ‘The Lord (יְהוָה), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is the name for all generations to use to call upon Me (3:15).” Carpenter explained as follows: “Yahweh ties his name, his present work, and his future work together with the past as the God of the fathers.”<sup>355</sup> The name is a brief title that explains someone’s existence. Thus יְהוָה is enough as a name, but God added the explanation of the patriarchs. What God referred to the names of the patriarchs could make the Israelites recall the history of their patriarchs. In particular, the Israelites, who knew the history of the patriarchs, could remember what God said to Abraham in the past, which is the promise of a great nation (Gen. 12:2), the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:5–7), the growth of population (Gen. 13:16), the escape with great possessions after sojourning for four hundred years (Gen. 15:13–14), and the identity as keeping the way of the Lord (Gen. 18:19). In conclusion, God’s brief explanations of His name in Exodus 3:14–15 must have made the

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<sup>354</sup> Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus: Commentary*, 206.

<sup>355</sup> Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 1, 238.

Israelites remember God's promise, blessings, and their identity revealed in the past, in addition to the revelation of God's nature.

The fourth point of God's revelation given to Moses is the powerful signs (Exod. 4:1–8). Revelation of two miracles in Exodus 4:3–7 is related to the stubbornness of Pharaoh (Exod. 3:20). Moses had to confront Pharaoh and demand that he free the Israelites. God predicted that Pharaoh would not allow the liberation of the Israelites until Egypt was struck with God's mighty hand and wonders (Exod. 3:19–20). God's powerful signs were the specific method to liberate the Israelites out of the hands of Pharaoh. However, God had to persuade Moses before Pharaoh. Moses was not sure of the success of the commission given by God (Exod. 4:1). Thus, God Himself showed two miracles for Moses: the rod becoming a snake (4:3) and the hand becoming leprous (4:6). God demonstrated His power through Moses' belongings and body. Through the palpable experiences, God was convincing Moses of God's presence and power. For the deliverance of the Israelites, God did not command Pharaoh to liberate the Israelites Himself but commanded Moses to persuade Pharaoh to do it. Thus, God revealed His powerful signs to Moses so that he could be confident enough to convince the Pharaoh. To sum up, God convinced Moses, and Moses had to convince Pharaoh.

The reception of the law in Exodus 19–20

The Mosaic covenant and law given at Mount Sinai are related to the purpose of deliverance (Exod. 19:4–6), and it is the specific progress of the fulfillment of Genesis 18:19, which is “For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.” Through the Mosaic law, the Israelites could gain specific guidelines to form a unique spiritual identity. Carpenter says as follows: “Yahweh, through a tremendous display of power and glory before

his people in his theophanic presence, creates a covenant with them and gives them Torah, ‘instruction,’ as a part of his covenant, to guide them and cause them to know his will and his character.”<sup>356</sup> The kingdom laws ultimately function to improve the status and quality of the Israelites in the dimensions of morality and spirituality, maintaining a close relationship with God (Exod. 19:5–6).<sup>357</sup>

The call narrative of Moses in Exodus 3–4 is the incident that occurred at Mount Horeb before the exodus, while the reception of the Decalogue in Exodus 19–20 is the incident that occurred at Mount Sinai after the exodus. The former is an individual experience of theophany, while the latter is a collective experience of theophany. There are four parallel points between Exodus 3–4 and Exodus 19–20. First, the burning bush at Horeb is parallel to the visual and audible theophany at Sinai. Exodus 19:1–25 portrays the scene to prepare the reception of the law, and Exodus 20:1–17 is about the Decalogue. Exodus 19:16–19 describes the theophany with thunders, lightning, a thick cloud, a trumpet blast (Exod. 19:16), smoke, fire, trembling (19:18), and God’s voice (19:19). The dramatic theophany has two purposes based on Exodus 19:9 and 20:20. Exodus 19:9 says, “Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also trust in you forever.” Garrett focused on Moses’ special status that God intended as follows: “He was the lawgiver, and by submitting to him and his laws, the people submitted to God. The dense cloud on the mountain was part of the process of exalting Moses before the people. Being within the cloud, he could see something of the presence of God that they could not.”<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 2, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 1.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus: Commentary*, 461.

In addition, Moses says in Exodus 20:20 as follows: “Do not be afraid (תִּירָאוּ); for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear (יִרְאֵתוֹ) of Him may remain with you, so that you will not sin.” תִּירָאוּ is a verb, and יִרְאֵתוֹ is a noun. Both mean “fear.” Moses meant that the Israelites should fear God rather than fear the dramatic phenomena. Calvin provided an interesting insight as follows: “This terrible spectacle was partly to set the presence of God before their eyes, that His majesty might urge the beholders to obedience, and vindicate His doctrine from contempt, and partly to express the nature of the Law, which in itself produces nothing but mere terror.”<sup>359</sup> The dramatic theophany must have been necessary for the Israelites to fear God and to be led to obedience to God. The fear of God was one of the motives of obedience to God, and Calvin explained that the nature of the law is related to that kind of fear. However, the Israelites already had another powerful motive to obey God. It was the grace of deliverance (Exod. 20:2). When thinking of the grace of God, the Israelites could be led to love God with their heart (Deut. 6:5) and could follow God with joy and gratitude, not with fear.

Second, the holiness motif in Exodus 3:5 reappeared in Exodus 19–20. Moses was required to take sandals off his feet and not to come near God in 3:5. Likewise, the Israelites were required to consecrate themselves and to wash their garments (Exod. 19:10), not to approach the mountain of God (19:12), and not to go near a woman (19:15). Moses and Aaron could draw near to thick darkness of God’s presence, but the priests and people had to stand far off it (19:24; 20:21). However, Exodus 19:22 implies that some priests were allowed to come near to God. Regarding these degrees of access, Carpenter says as follows: “In all of this the goal is that Israel is to receive a holy calling and a holy status, which is

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<sup>359</sup> Calvin and Bingham, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, 326–327.

being created for them by Yahweh, the source of their holiness (cf. Lev 21:8).”<sup>360</sup> He argued that Sinai is an archetype of the tabernacle and the temple of Israel.<sup>361</sup>

Holy God first encountered Moses at Mount Horeb, and then he revealed His holy presence to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. Following the accumulated experiences of holiness, God demanded them to construct artificial places of holy presence. The requirements to prepare for the encounter with the holy God provided the knowledge of God’s character and proper attitude toward God that the Israelites had to have. In addition, Calvin related these requirements to the law that is given in the next chapter as follows: “Therefore, in the injunction that they should be sanctified, two things were pointed out,—that the sacred doctrine of God was not to be handled by unwashed hands, and that the whole human race is impure and polluted, and, consequently, that none can duly enter God’s school save those who are cleansed from their filthiness.”<sup>362</sup> The holiness motif throughout Exodus emphasizes the identity of the Israelites as the consecrated people.

Lastly, the third and fourth points parallel between Exodus 3–4 and Exodus 19–20 can be found in one verse, 20:2. In Exodus 20:2, God revealed His name as יהוה your God who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. In Exodus 3:15, God explained Himself by referring to the history of the patriarchs. In Exodus 20:2, God explained Himself by referring to the recent history of deliverance that the Israelites experienced. God’s name is not simply explained through a literal name but specifically explained through vivid history. In addition, the Israelites were delivered through the

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<sup>360</sup> Carpenter, *Exodus*, vol. 2, 20.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Calvin and Bingham, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, 322.

powerful signs of God in Egypt and the Red Sea, and the signs were the expanded version of Moses' experience of the powerful signs at Mount Horeb (Exod. 4:1–8).

In conclusion, God preserved the Israelites from the persecution of Pharaoh and delivered the Israelites through Moses. The deliverance incident was to progress the grand salvific plan of God. The era of Moses saw the second-best culmination of the divine revelation following the incarnation of Jesus. The law was given to the Israelites, and the divine power and signs were revealed to the Israelites. These revelatory incidents in the era of Moses ultimately converge on the fulfillment of God's salvation plan. Through the increase of revelation, the Israelites developed into a great nation that had a spiritual identity and formed the specific shape of the womb nation for the birth of Jesus Christ.

### Samson

The era of judges is the “period between the conquest and the monarchy, when Israel was led by charismatic military figures known as judges.”<sup>363</sup> Even though the twelve tribes of Israel entered the land of Canaan, they did not gain complete dominance over the land. God used this security condition to refine the faith of Israel. Evil and suffering were repeated in this era. In particular, when they did evil before God, the suffering was given through the oppression of the neighboring nations. When Israel repented their evils, God used the judges to save them. Samson was one of the judges, and his birth narrative contains the common features of the human agent. However, compared to other human agents, he showed totally different characteristics and life. Interestingly, nevertheless, the Bible focuses on his birth and

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<sup>363</sup> Steven L. McKenzie, *Introduction to the Historical Books: Strategies for Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 57.



portrays God’s calling of him as the human agent. It is necessary to see the uniqueness of the spiritual conditions of Israel in this era to understand God’s unique calling and providence.

### **The Birth Announcement of Samson**

It is necessary to note Israel’s unique background behind the birth of Samson. Judges 13:1 describes, “The sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord handed them over to the Philistines for forty years.” When it comes to the “evil” that Israel did, the Bible specifically does not describe it. Barry G. Webb thinks that it is idolatry based on Judges 10:6–7 and 16:23–24.<sup>364</sup> Interestingly, however, the episode of Samson does not include the typical pattern that appeared in Judges as a following reaction to the judgment of God, “and the Israelites cried out to the Lord.”<sup>365</sup> Daniel Block says as follows: “Israel’s attitude toward the oppressors has changed. Far from crying out from under the burden of oppression, coexistence with the Philistines has become the norm.”<sup>366</sup> Younger Jr. also says as follows: “The Israelites would have been satisfied to continue to coexist with the Philistines.”<sup>367</sup> The Israelites did not cry out for the Lord, and thus, they also could not be liberated from the oppression of the Philistines. Both phenomena are presented for the first time in the book of Judges.<sup>368</sup> Samson, in this era, could not bring salvation to Israel as other

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<sup>364</sup> Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, ed. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 350.

<sup>365</sup> K. Lawson Younger Jr., *Judges and Ruth*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 286.

<sup>366</sup> Daniel Isaac Block, *Judges, Ruth*, vol. 6, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 392.

<sup>367</sup> Younger Jr., *Judges and Ruth*, 302.

<sup>368</sup> Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 350.

Judges did, but he just “began” to save Israel from the Philistines (Judg. 13:5). This is the reason why Samson may be called the human agent. Specifically, Samson played a role in causing conflict and enmity between the Israelites and the Philistines, breaking their coexistence. For this unique role, God used the untypical character as the human agent. Samson did the intermarriage with one of the daughters of the Philistines. Trent C. Butler argued that “theological freedom” is necessary to understand the narrative of Samson, saying as follows: “God retains the freedom to accomplish his purposes through the people and means he chooses.”<sup>369</sup>

The theme of the barrenness repeats in Judges 13:2–3. The angel of the Lord appeared twice before Manoah’s wife, who was barren, and announced in advance the birth of a son and revealed the son’s identity as the human agent. The angel’s two visitations to Manoah’s wife echo the two birth announcements to Abraham (Gen. 17:19, 18:10). Manoah’s prayer between the two visits recalls Isaac’s prayer (Gen. 25:21). Compared to the previous birth accounts before the reception of the Mosaic law, Samson’s birth additionally includes the requirement as the Nazirite (Gen. 13:4–5). The Naziriteship described in Numbers 6:2–21 has a voluntary nature and requires one to take a vow to separate to God, observing diverse rules for a limited period. However, Samson was required to be a Nazirite from birth to death, regardless of his will. Samuel was a similar case to Samson. Webb says as follows: “Like Samuel, Samson was a special case. No vow is taken; Samson’s Naziriteship is divinely determined rather than voluntarily assumed, and for his whole life rather than a limited

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<sup>369</sup> Trent C. Butler, *Judges*, vol. 8, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville; Dallas; Mexico City; Rio De Janeiro; Beijing: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 333.

period.”<sup>370</sup> This shows that the call of the human agent is not based on the voluntary will but on the sovereign election of God.

### **Samson as Israel’s Epitomization and God’s Special Design**

When it comes to the narrative of Samson’s marriage in Judges 14:1–20, Younger pointed out the faults of Samson, such as reckless betting and murder driven by anger and vengeance.<sup>371</sup> Samson was called to be a Nazirite and to serve the Lord as a human agent, but he did not show faithful obedience and excellent leadership in Israel during his life. Samson was not the military leader. He did not summon and lead the army for the liberation of Israel. His fight against the Philistines occurred purely due to private conflicts. He was very vulnerable to women’s temptations and was foolishly careless of his safety. When considering the image of the woman’s descendant in Genesis 3:15, Samson could fit with it because he alone struck the blow to the numerous Philistines with his gifted power. However, in fact, due to his life of debauchery and boisterousness, it is difficult to give him the title of human agent. With this regard, Edward L. Greenstein says as follows: “The Samson story, as a kind of allegory, is not a prefiguration but an epitomization of Israel.”<sup>372</sup>

Webb suggested more diverse facets of Samson. First, he agreed with Samson as an epitomization of Israel as follows: “For Samson is not just Samson; he is also Israel. He is separated from other men, but he longs to be like them, just as Israel is separated from other nations but is continually drawn to them. He goes after foreign women, as Israel goes after

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<sup>370</sup> Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 352.

<sup>371</sup> Younger Jr., *Judges and Ruth*, 304.

<sup>372</sup> Edward L. Greenstein, “The Riddle of Samson,” *Prooftexts* 1, no. 3 (1981): 254.

foreign gods. He suffers for his willfulness, as Israel does for its [willfulness].”<sup>373</sup> Second, Samson also showed a different facet from the Israelites at that time. Webb said as follows: “And in his extremity he cries out to Yahweh, as Israel has repeatedly done. But now it is Samson alone who does so; he is remnant Israel; Israel reduced to a single man.”<sup>374</sup> Samson’s crying out to the Lord is the same as the preceding pattern of the Israelites but different from the Israelites in Samson’s era, who compromised with the Philistines. Third, Webb’s observation about the same last moment of Samson and Zedekiah shows the prophetic features of Samson’s life.<sup>375</sup> Despite the miserable last moment, the author of Hebrews evidently evaluates that Samson belongs to the men of faith (Heb. 11:32). Butler says as follows: “God works through one who operates in a totally different sphere from all his predecessors. God consistently overlooks the hero’s ignorance of or lack of seriousness about the vow his parents made for him. God accomplishes the purpose for which the hero was called only through the hero’s death.”<sup>376</sup>

In Judges 14:1–4, which describes Samson trying to get a Timnite woman as his wife, his parents could not allow him to marry a woman among the uncircumcised Philistines, based on Exodus 34:12–16 and Deuteronomy 7:3–4. Interestingly, the narrator adds the explanation of Samson’s behavior and the spiritual ignorance of the parents as follows: “However, his father and mother did not know that this was of the Lord for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. And at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.” Starting with this, everything that happened in Samson’s life after that was under God’s

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<sup>373</sup> Webb, *The Book of Judges*, 416–417.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Butler, *Judges*, 358.

initiative, and the purpose was to cause conflict between Israel and its enemies, which was Samson's mission as a human agent in his era. It is necessary to note the repetitive expressions, "The Spirit of the Lord began to stir him (Judg. 13:25)" and "The Spirit of the Lord rushed (וַתִּצְלַח) upon him (14:6; 19, 15:14)." צלח means "to force entry into."<sup>377</sup> The Hebrew term צלח gives an image that Samson's life was strongly led by God's initiative. However, 3,000 men of Judah, who could not understand God's wisdom and providence, rather arrested Samson, who caused the conflict and commotion, and handed him over to the hand of the Philistines (Judg. 15:9–13). In Judges 15:11, the Judahites said to Samson: "Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us?" The Judahites sought compromise and coexist with the Philistines, admitting their domination and showing a submissive attitude to the oppressors. The attitude of Judahites was not simply pusillanimous to the strong oppressors but essentially showed faithlessness in God's promise of the land (Gen. 12:7; Josh. 1:3–4). Block says as follows: "Judahites would rather deliver their countrymen into the hands of the enemy and live under that enemy's domination than fulfill the mandate Yahweh had given them to occupy the land and drive out the enemy."<sup>378</sup> However, Samson confessed that his fight against the Philistines was part of God's salvific plan (Judg. 15:18). The Bible declared him as one who began to save Israel (Judg. 13:5), the judge who served Israel for twenty years (Judg. 15:20), and one of the men of faith (Heb. 11:32). These are enough evidence to support Samson as the human agent to progress the salvation history.

It is necessary to understand Samson's unique calling. Specifically, Samson's resistant activities led to the death of a considerable number of Philistines (Judg. 13:19;

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<sup>377</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1026.

<sup>378</sup> Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 443.

15:15; 16:30). It is evident that the occurrence of the numerous casualties led to the break of the peaceful relationship between the two nations. What God commissioned Samson to do was the beginning mission or preparatory stage for the deliverance. It is necessary to note the typical cycle of the Judges, “apostasy-oppression-appeal-deliverance.”<sup>379</sup> In this light, Samson’s prayer in his last moment, “GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes (Judg. 16:28),” corresponds to the third step, “appeal.” As a result, in Samuel’s era, after the death of Samson, confrontation and war between the two nations occurred, and they recognized each other as enemies (1 Sam. 4:1), and Israel could be liberated from the oppression of the Philistines (7:13–14). Samson’s role should be understood in the facet of paving the way for Samuel’s era when the full-scale war broke out between the two nations and their territory was recovered.

In conclusion, Samson’s life, as the epitomization of the Israelites, may function as the mirror to show themselves, and it also can function as the prophetic message that shows God’s wisdom and mysterious providence beyond the common sense of humans. Furthermore, God used Samson to begin to save Israel by breaking the complacent status quo and by allowing them to discern their enemies. The division is essentially God’s preserving work for the Israelites, letting them remain in a spiritually pure identity, avoiding syncretism. This underlying goal is overlapped with the calling of a Nazirite in Judges 13:4–5, which is the early part of this episode. In terms of the typical features of the human agent, God’s calling as a Nazirite is the revelation given to Samson, and Samson had faith that God

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 419.

granted great salvation through his hands (Judg. 15:18). Finally, Samson's resistance to the Philistines ultimately has the purpose of the preservation of the Israelites as the godly line.

### Samuel

Samson and Samuel share several common features, such as the barrenness of their mother, their distinction as Nazirites, and the historical background of the Philistines. Judges 13:1 says that the oppression of the Philistines lasted forty years, and Judges 16:31 says that Samson had judged Israel for twenty years. The book of Judges does not record the liberation of the Israelites from the Philistines before and after the death of Samson but only records the beginning of salvation, which was the partial mission of the overall salvation plan given to Samson. Butler says as follows: "The rest of that mission would be left to Saul and Samuel and David."<sup>380</sup> In the forty years of oppression by the Philistines, Samson killed numerous Philistines, arousing enmity between the Israelites and the Philistines, and Samuel contributed to driving them back and recovering the land (1 Sam. 7:13–14). Samson and Samuel were both judges but were not typical military leaders. Samson fought alone against the enemies, not summoning the army, and Samuel summoned people but prayed to drive the enemies away. The descriptions of their growth are also similar. Judges 13:24 says, "The child (Samson) grew up, and the Lord blessed him." 1 Samuel 3:19 says, "Now Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him." That being said, Samuel was a different type of leader from Samson, who was a warrior. Samuel was a prophet, priest, and judge who urged the repentance of the Israelites and finally brought a visible reversal in the political and spiritual aspects. In this respect, Samuel shows the unique features of a human agent.

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<sup>380</sup> Butler, *Judges*, 355.

## The Birth Narrative of Samuel

When seeing the background of Samuel's birth, three things should be mentioned: the war against the Philistines, the spiritual darkness, and the barrenness of Hannah. First, there was the ongoing war between the Israelites and the Philistines (1 Sam. 4–7). In the era of Samson, the Israelites were under the oppression of the Philistines, and no national war had been described yet. However, in the era of Samuel, the Israelites arose with enmity against the Philistines, not submitting to them despite the Philistines' military superiority with iron weapons (13:19–22).

Second, the author of Samuel describes several examples in succession that show the spiritual darkness of the era. 1 Samuel 2:12–17 and 2:22–25 explicitly portray the evil behaviors and unrepentant hearts of Eli's sons, and 1 Samuel 2:22–25 and 3:13 describe Eli's spiritual ineptness. Eli rebuked his worthless sons, but his efforts yielded no results. Eli, as the parent and spiritual leader, was inept rather than evil.<sup>381</sup> Eli's ineptness could not restrain his sons' evil (1 Sam. 3:13). Consequentially, the two announcements of God's judgment on Eli's house were given to Eli (2:27–36, 3:13–14). Eli's ineptness shows the present lack of spiritual leadership, and the evil of Eli's sons, who will be the priests, shows hopelessness in the future. These two aspects describe the spiritual darkness of the era and explain the reason for the coming judgment.

When it comes to the birth of Samuel, there is no divine announcement. However, the author of Samuel deals with the divine announcement of the demise of Eli's house. The birth of Ichabod (יִחָבֹד) is a symbolic scene that implies this unfortunate ending (1 Sam. 4:19–

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<sup>381</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 23.



22). אִי־כְבוֹד has two meanings: “dishonour” and “Where is the honour?”<sup>382</sup> The syllable אִי has two senses: “not” and “where.”<sup>383</sup> When seeing the name Ichabod (אִי־כְבוֹד) in Ethiopic usage, the syllable אִי, which is akin to אִי, has a negative sense,<sup>384</sup> and thus it can be translated as the “absence of glory.” That being said, P. Kyle McCarter says as follows: “But despite Ethiopic and Phoenician negatives the most instructive comparison is with Ugaritic *’iy*, ‘where is?’ or ‘alas!’”<sup>385</sup> He explains his argument through the common context of lamentation as follows:

Thus the name means, “Where is (the) Glory?” or “Alas (for the) Glory!” It belongs to a distinctive group of names referring to lamentation for an absent deity. Similar is the biblical name “Jezebel” (MT *’i-zebel*, perhaps erroneously for *’i-zēbūl*), meaning, “Where is (the) Prince? / Alas (for the) Prince!” where “Prince” is the Phoenician version of a familiar epithet of the old storm god Ba‘l-Haddu, the mourning for whose (ritual) absence is well known in both cult and epic.<sup>386</sup>

When seeing McCarter’s explanation, the senses of “absence” and “where” in the context of lamentation seem to be intricately linked. 1 Samuel 4:19–22 describes Phinehas’ wife hearing a series of unfortunate events, such as the loss of the ark, Eli’s death, and Phinehas’s death. It meant the loss of glory in Israel. The name Ichabod reflected the miserable reality due to the absence of glory. However, the author of Samuel emphatically describes the young Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1–21), who contrasts with Eli’s sons, in addition to the negative reports of Eli’s sons in the near context. In this respect, rather than “no glory,”

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<sup>382</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 39.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>384</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, 2d English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 481.

<sup>385</sup> P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, vol. 8, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 115.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

“where is the glory?” reflects the movement of God’s glory from the current corrupt leadership to the next spiritual leader and is more consistent with the contextual flow.

Third, the repetitive themes connected to the birth motif, including the barren womb and the domestic conflict, appear in Samuel’s birth narrative. Hannah was a barren woman, and her barrenness became the reason why she was provoked by her rival, Peninnah, who was another wife of Elkanah. ׀, a particle of association and emphasis,<sup>387</sup> is in the Hebrew text. Even though the Hebrew term is translated into “grievously (ESV)” or “bitterly (NASB 2020),” McCarter says, “The force of ׀ is to suggest that this is an additional hardship (cf. Gen. 31:15; 46:4; Num. 16:13).”<sup>388</sup> Hannah felt the double pain due to her barrenness and rival. The increase of the affliction is explicitly expressed, and the fundamental reason is attributed to God’s non-permission of the pregnancy. 1 Samuel 1:6 says, “... because the Lord had closed her womb.” McCarter paraphrased colloquially as follows: “Yahweh had closed her womb, and, to make matters worse, her rival used to provoke her spitefully....”<sup>389</sup> This short verse includes repetitive themes such as God’s sovereignty, barrenness, and family conflict. Even in this painful situation, Hannah responded correctly by praying to God and vowed to present her son to God as a Nazarite. Hannah’s prayer recalls Isaac’s prayer. Both prayed for the birth. However, the difference is that this is the woman’s prayer with a vow. Finally, as a response to Hannah’s prayer, God gave her a son.

When it comes to three Nazirites, such as Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, Peter J. Leithart observed that they were born to barren women and gave an interesting insight as follows: “Samuel typifies the ministry of John: As Samuel prepared the people for

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<sup>387</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 195.

<sup>388</sup> McCarter Jr., *I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, 52.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

the reign of David, so John turned the hearts of the fathers to the children and prepared a people for the coming of the Davidic King.”<sup>390</sup> This is the pattern of God’s providence.

Miraculous birth and distinction became a kind of formula in the birth narrative. God shows His sovereignty and power through this pattern, and the Bible makes an effect by letting the readers focus on the people He uses. In conclusion, the combination of diverse problematic factors, such as military threat, spiritual recession, and the unfortunate life of a barren woman, led to the birth of Samuel.

### **Israel’s Repentance and Defeating the Philistines**

The birth of Samuel became a crucial turning point in that it stopped Hannah’s sorrow and changed the spiritual-political situation of Israel. 1 Samuel 2:1–10 is Hannah’s prayer after the birth of Samuel, and it includes praise for God, who turned the situation around. The reversal begins with Chapter 5. In 1 Samuel 4:19–22, the wife of Phinehas named her son Ichabod. However, in chapter 5, the ark captured by the Philistines rather destroyed their gods and judged the Philistines with tumors. Finally, in Chapter 6, the Philistines determined to send the ark to Israel with the guilt offering, which is the five golden tumors and five golden mice. Interestingly, the Philistine priests and diviners, who understood the history of Israel, mentioned the escape of Israel from Egypt and identified their situation with Egypt in the past (1 Sam. 6:6). Indeed, the chopped-off statue of Dagon and tumors recall the disasters in Egypt, the ten golden images recall the ten plagues in Egypt, and the escape of the ark with the golden images recalls the escape of the Israelites with great possessions.

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<sup>390</sup> Peter J. Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 40.

In 1 Samuel 7:2, NASB 2020 renders, “From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel mourned (וַיִּנְהוּ) after (אַחֲרָי) the Lord.” When it comes to the combination of וַיִּנְהוּ and אַחֲרָי, NIV translates it into “... turned back to (the Lord).” They show a slight difference in nuance. NASB 2020 reflects remorse for the unfaithfulness in the past, and NIV focuses on the active will to shift the attitude. McCarter observed both of the nuances but denied the translation of the former, saying as follows: “The expression *nāhā`ahārē* ... does not mean ‘mourn for, lament after’ (RSV), which elsewhere is *nāhā`al* (Ezek. 32:18), and in any case such a statement would be pointless in the present context, since Yahweh has already returned.”<sup>391</sup> Instead, he argued that it should be interpreted as a “pregnant construction with approximately the force of *wayyinnāhū wayyippenū`ahārē* ...,” “they lamented and turned after ...,” or *wayyinnāhū wayyēlēkū`ahārē* ...,” “they lamented and went after (Yahweh).”<sup>392</sup>

However, Arnold sees it as the preliminary step for genuine repentance.<sup>393</sup> 1 Samuel 7:2 describes the ark was lodged for twenty years at Kiriath Jearim, and the Israelites during this period might have gradually experienced spiritual change. Samuel must have considered it the readiness of heart for “genuine repentance.”<sup>394</sup> Arnold’s explanations appear to be accurate because the next descriptions are about Samuel’s message urging repentance and the subsequential repentance of Israel. 1 Samuel 7:3 is Samuel’s message for Israel, which consists of 1) “removing the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth,” 2) “directing the heart to the

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<sup>391</sup> McCarter Jr., *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, 141.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 130.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

Lord and serving Him alone,” and as a result of repentance, 3) “being saved from the hand of the Philistines.” 1 Samuel 7:4 records the result of genuine repentance as follows: “So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroath, and served the Lord alone.” This shows the reversal of the spiritual darkness of Israel. In addition, Israel was liberated from the military threat. When the Israelites fasted and repented at Mizpah, the Philistines heard it and invaded Israel. At that time, God showed miraculous power and brought a miraculous victory to Israel. The Philistines were defeated by the supernatural power of God, not by the military power of Israel. This victory was the fulfillment of Samuel’s third message.

In conclusion, with the rise of Samuel, Israel went through a radical reversal in spiritual and military-political aspects. The earlier biblical description of the unfortunate life of Hannah symbolizes the miserable state of Israel. Likewise, the dramatic reversal of Hannah’s state symbolizes the reversal of Israel’s state. In the center of both reversals is Samuel’s birth and proclamation. In light of God’s salvation plan, God used Samuel to make the foundation of the coming kingdom era. Despite the wrong expectations and unfaithful motives of the Israelites, the kingdom system was in God’s plan (Deut. 17:14–20). Moses’ era saw the formation of a great nation that had a spiritual identity, and Samuel’s era saw the formation of a kingdom that had a spiritual identity. In this respect, God used Samuel to progress the grand salvific plan.

#### Conclusion of Chapters 3–4

Genesis 3:15 is the root of the birth motif. *יָרֵעַ* in Genesis 3:15 has dual meanings of the Descendant as the singular meaning and the descendants as the collective meaning. The singular Descendant has the identity of the Savior, and the multiple descendants correspond to the human agents who pave the way for the coming of the Savior. Genesis 3:15

compressively portrays the conquering imagery with the dualistic implications of  $\text{עָרַע}$ . The duality implied in Genesis 3:15 is the key to understanding the interwoven relationship and even mysterious union between the Savior and the human agents in the birth motif passages. God used the human agents to progress the salvific plan of God, achieving the commissions in each era, being situated between the revelation of Genesis 3:15 and the coming Savior. In this respect, Genesis 3:15 is the compressive message that implies both the Savior and the human agents.

This chapter dealt with the births of the nine figures: Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samson, and Samuel. They share the features of revelation, faith, and preservation. God revealed to them His plan, will, character, power, law, etc. Then, the human agents believed in God and faithfully responded to God's callings. God continued to preserve the godly line, consisting of the human agents, the bearers of the salvific revelation, and the godly line was the way the Savior would come. The accounts of the births of the human agents show several common features.

First, the barren woman is the repetitive theme in their birth narratives. The births of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, and Samuel include the theme of barrenness and miraculous births. Even though Moses' birth narrative does not include the barrenness theme, Moses was threatened by mass infanticide, which is more threatening. These threats reflect the imagery of the bruised heel in Genesis 3:15. Second, conflicts that include enmity, such as domestic or ethnic conflicts, appear. Abel was killed by his brother Cain. Isaac-Sarah and Ishmael-Hagar conflicted with each other. Jacob and Esau were in rivalry. Joseph's brothers tried to kill Joseph. Samson's wives deceived Samson. Samuel's mother, Hannah, had her rival Peninnah. Moses' birth narrative does not include the domestic conflict, but Moses was born in the background of Egyptian persecution, which is ethnic conflict. These conflicts reflect the

theme of enmity in Genesis 3:15. Nevertheless, there were crucial achievements. God used human agents to achieve them by accompanying His grand design and overcoming obstacles.

On the root of Genesis 3:15, these achievements accumulate over generations, forming a specific structure for God's grand design, moving forward to the final fulfillment through the coming of Jesus Christ. In Abel's era, God saw faith and righteousness, which had been lost due to the fall, through the successful offering. In Noah's era, God revealed the sovereign grace of preservation from the judgment and made a covenant with Noah. In Abraham's era, God revealed the grand plan of a great nation to Abraham. According to God's plan for a great nation, Isaac was offered to God as the sacrifice, which symbolized the dedication of the whole nation of potential Israel, and Jacob fathered the twelve sons, who were ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph was the guide who led his family into Egypt, avoiding the famine. In this land, Jacob's family could grow into the shape of the Israelites, according to the grand salvific plan given to Abraham. Moses was the guide who began to lead the Israelites into the promised land and received the law necessary for the spiritual identity as the priest kingdom and holy nation. When the twelve tribes settled in the promised land, Samson was used to begin to save the Israelites from the oppression of the Philistines, and Samuel was used to finalize the liberation of Israel from the oppression of the Philistines and spiritual darkness.

In each era, there were superficial symptoms such as suffering and evil that resulted from the fundamental fallen status, but all these were finally overcome, and the divine salvific history progressed. The Bible focuses on the biographies of selected human agents who had faith in God, bore the salvific plan of God, and were called into the godly line that God preserved. This whole history can be compressively summarized in the conflicting and conquering imageries of Genesis 3:15. In this respect, the birth motif contains the derivative implications of dramatic reversal and final victory. In conclusion, the research of the biblical

birth motif brings out the result that the birth motif has comprehensive salvific implications: the ultimate salvation through the coming of the Savior and the impending appearance of the human agent to bring reversal and spiritual victory in a given era.



## Chapter 5. An Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14

The purpose of this dissertation is to interpret Isaiah 7:14, and thus, this chapter is the main part of this research. This chapter consists of two sections: Isaiah 7:1–13 and Isaiah 7:14. The first section provides the contextual understanding of Isaiah 7:14, and the accumulated knowledge of the birth motif through Chapters 3–4 is the critical key to interpreting Isaiah 7:14 in the second section. Conclusively, this chapter demonstrates the historical and Christological implications of Isaiah 7:14 based on the birth motif.

### Exegesis of Isaiah 7:1–13

Before beginning the exegesis of Isaiah 7:1–13, it is necessary to understand the historical background and the figures that appeared in the text. Isaiah 7:14 is the revelation of God given during the dialogue between Isaiah and Ahaz. In Isaiah 7:1–13, God, Isaiah, and Ahaz are the only speakers involved in the dialogue. However, the name of Isaiah's son is mentioned once in Isaiah 7:3, and the names and appellations of Rezin and Pekah are repeatedly mentioned in Isaiah 7:1–9.

Isaiah 7 and 36–39 specifically describe how he played a prophetic role for the kings of Judah. The range of Isaiah's prophecy was not only limited to contemporary Judah but also reached the neighboring nations and the coming of the Messiah in the distant future. He was called at a time of world upheaval, and God revealed the destinies of the nations as well as Judah. In the days of Isaiah, the Levantine area was going through a change to break the status quo, and the initial factor was the expansionism of Assyria. The Assyrian kings sought geographical expansion through military campaigns.

The annal of Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.) shows that the Assyrian expansionism had a religious nature as follows: "With the support of Assur, the great lord, my lord, and the

god Ninurta, who loves my priesthood, I always acted (and) they placed firmly in my hands all lands (and) mountains. Shalmaneser, strong king, sun(god) of all people: I overwhelmed like the Deluge.”<sup>395</sup> This shows the Assyrian king Shalmaneser’s claim that his military campaigns were divine war. Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 B.C.) sought the same spirit. A part of the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III is as follows: “Tutammu, king of the Unqi, violated his covenant, solemnly sworn before the divine assembly, making him rightly subject to execution.... In my righteous anger I marched against him and captured his royal city of Kinalia.”<sup>396</sup> “The divine assembly” reflects that the motive of the military campaign was religious. Like Shalmaneser III, Tiglath-Pileser III also had the consciousness of the divine war. Tiglath-Pileser, as the agent sent by the divine assembly III, executed Tutammu.

In addition, the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III specifically record how much tribute Assyria could gain economic benefits through military campaigns as follows: “gold, silver, tin, iron, elephant-hides and ivory tusks, linen garments embroidered with different colors, blue wool, purple wool, ebony, boxwood, luxury items like ... wild birds mounted with their wings extended and tinted blue, as well as horses, mules, large cattle, small cattle, and camels, some already bred along with their young.”<sup>397</sup> Conversely, due to the expansion of the Assyrian border, the Levantine states could not avoid economic loss. The last king of Aram, Rezin (Isa. 7:1; 2 Kgs. 16:5–9; 2 Chr. 28:5), appeared to enthrone before 738 B.C. In that year, Aram belonged to the vassal countries of Assyria and had to pay tribute to Tiglath-Pileser. The Assyrian royal inscriptions record that the king received tribute from “Rezon

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<sup>395</sup> A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of Early First Millenniu* (University of Toronto Press, 1996), 28.

<sup>396</sup> Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, 4th ed. (New York; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2016), 192–193.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 193–194.

(Rezin) of Damascus.”<sup>398</sup> However, Rezin tried to form an anti-Assyria coalition with some Levantine nations. Israel was included in this coalition.<sup>399</sup> The expansion of Assyria resulted in reducing the economic benefits of the Levantine nations, and the purpose of the anti-Assyrian coalition was to “create a bloc of states capable of wresting back control of nodal points in the trade.”<sup>400</sup>

Pekah (Isa. 7–8; 2 Kgs. 15:27–31; 16:5; 2 Chr. 28:5) is the shortened name of Pekahiah. He is evaluated as an evil king who continued in the sin of Jeroboam. He was the eighteenth king of the northern kingdom of Israel. He reigned from 751–731 B.C. His predecessor was king Pekahiah, and Pekah was one of the king’s chief officers. However, Pekah assassinated his king and took the throne for himself (2 Kgs. 15:23–25). The recorded achievement of Pekah was to be involved in forming an anti-Assyria coalition with Aram. Then, they invaded Judah and killed 120,000 from Judah in one day. All of them were men of valor (2 Chr. 28:6).<sup>401</sup>

The Bible evaluates Ahaz as an evil king. According to 2 Kings 16:1–20 and 2 Chronicles 28:1–27, Ahaz promoted the Baal worship and the abominable custom of child sacrifice and burned incense in high places. As a result, the kingdom of Judah faced a national crisis. The Aram-Israel coalition (or the Syro-Ephraimite league) invaded Judah, and 2 Kings 16:5 says as follows: “Then Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem for war; and they besieged Ahaz, but were not capable of

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<sup>398</sup> James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton Univ Press, 1969), 283.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>400</sup> Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East ca. 3000–330 B.C.* vol. 2. (London: Routledge, 1998), 467.

<sup>401</sup> Norwood E. Thames III, “Pekah, King of Israel,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

fighting him.” Even though they could not eradicate Ahaz, the Arameans captured Elath and settled there (2 Kgs. 16:6). They brought a great number of captives from Judah to Damascus (2 Chr. 28:5). Edom and Philistine also invaded Judah (2 Chr. 28:17–18). This crisis was the crucial moment when Ahaz had to decide whether he relied on the power of people or God. Finally, Ahaz did not rely on God in this crisis but relied on Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria. There is a difference between Chronicles and Kings concerning the description of Assyria. 2 Chronicles 28:20 says, “Tilgath-Pileser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him,” while 2 Kings 16:9 says, “The king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it, and led the people of it into exile to Kir, and put Rezin to death.” Even though the descriptions seem to be different, the author of Kings includes the humiliating statement of Ahaz: “I am your servant and your son (עַבְדְּךָ וְבִנְךָ)” and includes Ahaz’s giving the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasuries of the king’s house to the Assyrian king (2 Kgs. 16:7–8). The author of Kings focuses on the process of how they could avoid the immediate threat through Assyria (2 Kgs. 16:7–9), but the author of Chronicles focuses on the result of Assyria’s military aid (2 Chr. 28:20–21). Cyril J. Barber says that the price of military aid was more than the price of treasures because Judah gave their national independence and sovereignty to Assyria.<sup>402</sup> Judah was demoted to the status of vassal of Assyria.<sup>403</sup> In this respect, the biblical descriptions show how Ahaz’s political decision is unwise and faithless.

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<sup>402</sup> Cyril J. Barber, *The Books of Kings: The Righteousness of God Illustrated in the Lives of the People of Israel and Judah*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 407.

<sup>403</sup> Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey*, ed. Walter A. Elwell and Eugene H. Merrill, *Encountering Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 30.

## Isaiah 7:1

A brief background description is given in Isaiah 7:1. Ahaz is introduced as a descendant of the preceding kings of Judah, Jotham and Uzziah. When it comes to the chronology of the reign of the Judean Kings, Watts says that it is difficult to fix the exact date, and he summarizes the four different dates that scholars have suggested so far. Among them, Watts thinks John Bright's suggestion is proper.<sup>404</sup> Bright suggests the chronology of the five kings of Judah in the times of Isaiah as follows:<sup>405</sup> Uzziah (783–742 B.C.) (cf. Jotham co-regent ca. 750 B.C.), Jotham (742–735 B.C.), Ahaz (735–715 B.C.), Hezekiah (715–687/6 B.C.), and Manasseh (687/6–642 B.C.).<sup>406</sup>

Uzziah, mentioned in 2 Chronicles 26:1 and referred to as Azariah in 2 Kings 15:1, is the son of Amaziah. He ascended to the throne at the age of sixteen and ruled for fifty-two years in Jerusalem. Despite the Scripture's evaluation of Uzziah as a good king, he did not completely eradicate the high places, and the people still sacrificed and burned incense in the high places. The king suffered from leprosy until he passed away, residing in a separate house. Uzziah's son, Jotham, took charge of the kingdom's affairs and judged the people. A more detailed account of Uzziah's reign is found in 2 Chronicles 26:1–23 compared to 2

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<sup>404</sup> Watts summarizes as follows. "Bright (*HI*) dates Ahaz's reign 735–15 B.C.E., while Aharoni (*MBA*) dates it 742–26 B.C.E. E. R. Thiele (*The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 3d ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983] 139–92) uses the years 735–16 B.C.E., while Jepson (A. Jepson and R. Hanhart, *Untersuchungen zur israelitisch-jüdischen Chronologie*, BZAW 88 [Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964]) has 741–725 B.C.E." Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 120.

<sup>405</sup> John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3d ed., Westminster Aids to the Study of the Scriptures (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), Chronological Chart-Ca. Mid-Eight to Mid Sixth Centuries.

<sup>406</sup> Thiele suggests a chronology as follows: Uzziah (792–740 B.C.), Jotham (750–735 B.C.), Ahaz (735–715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.) Edwin Richard Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1977), 75.

Kings 15:1–7. During the time of Zechariah, who is considered the royal mentor,<sup>407</sup> Uzziah sought God and was granted success, fortifying Jerusalem, developing the land for agriculture and livestock, and excelling in military and international affairs. However, he attempted to assume the role of a priest by offering incense in the temple, resulting in God afflicting him with leprosy (2 Chr. 26:1–23). Consequently, his son Jotham ruled as co-regent until Uzziah’s death. Isaiah 6 depicts a vision from God that occurred in the year of Uzziah’s demise.

Jotham was twenty-five years old when he ascended to the throne and reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He was also evaluated as a good king, and his kingdom was potent due to his faithfulness. Since his father’s time, Judah could remain strong in the military facet and take tribute from the Ammonites. However, he did not eliminate the high places as his father, and the people continued acting corruptly. As a result, 2 Kings 15:37 reports, “In those days the Lord began (הֵלֵל) to send Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah.” It is necessary to note the use of the Hebrew verb הֵלֵל. This verb means “to begin” in the Hifil form.<sup>408</sup> In Judges 13:5, it was used to describe the calling of Samson, which was to begin (הֵלֵל) to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines. The usage of the Hebrew verb הֵלֵל suggests that something is implicitly unfolding. Aram and Israel formed an anti-Assyrian coalition because of Tiglath-Pileser III’s westward expansion, and the coalition began to pressure Judah into joining their coalition group.<sup>409</sup> 2 Kings 15:35 describes that Jotham did not eradicate the high places, and 2 Kings 15:37 describes that the

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<sup>407</sup> William Johnstone, *1 and 2 Chronicles: 2 Chronicles 10-36, Guilt and Atonement*, vol. 254, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 164.

<sup>408</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 320.

<sup>409</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 29.

Lord moved the two kings. The two passages imply the causality between the continued tradition of the high places and the threat to the security of Judah.

These biblical descriptions should be understood in light of the Deuteronomistic etiology. Steven McKenzie says as follows: “The Bible’s ‘Historical Books’ are etiological in the sense that they seek to ‘render an account’ of the past—to provide an explanation for circumstances or conditions in the historian’s day.”<sup>410</sup> Predictive prophecies unveil God’s concealed intentions, whereas historical records include introspection regarding prior errors of human beings. When the Israelite historians wrote their history in the time of exile, they found the critical etiology of their captivity from Deuteronomy 28:36–37, which is the curse of disobedience. Due to the covenantal relationship between the Lord and the Israelites, the covenantal curse is given to the disobedient Israelites (cf. 2 Kgs. 17:7–23).<sup>411</sup>

The record in Isaiah 7 does not focus on the high places that Ahaz’s forefathers did not eradicate in the past, but it only focuses on God’s sovereign protection to encourage Ahaz’s faith through God’s future promise. However, the present crisis is closely related to past disobedience, as seen from the perspective of covenantal duty. The prophecy of Isaiah also reflects the same etiological view in Isaiah 39:1–8. When Hezekiah shows off the possessions in his house to the envoys of Babylon, Isaiah prophesies that Babylon will take away Hezekiah’s descendants, and they will be eunuchs for the king of Babylon (Isa. 39:6–

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<sup>410</sup> Steven L. McKenzie, *Introduction to the Historical Books: Strategies for Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 12.

<sup>411</sup> McKenzie does not say that the Historical Books are fictional, but he emphasizes a different purpose and view that the Historical Books reflect as follows: “This is because the main concern of the Bible’s ‘Historical Books’ is not to describe exactly what happened in the past but to provide explanations from the past for Israel’s self-understanding. Key to that self-understanding is Israel’s perception of its relationship to its God, Yahweh, in whom ancient Israelite historians found the ultimate explanation for their people’s origin and present state. Thus, in the Bible, as in ancient Greek literature, history was written for an ideological purpose. History writing was theology.” Ibid.

7). It shows that the disastrous future events of the dynasty are due to Hezekiah's current wrongdoings. The forefathers of Ahaz committed wrong in that they did not eradicate the high places at best, but Ahaz did worse. He was the one who actively promoted idol worship and evils (2 Chr. 28:1–4). 2 Chronicles 28:5–7 describes its results as follows:

Therefore the LORD his God handed him over to the king of Aram; and they defeated him and carried from him a great number of captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also handed over to the king of Israel, who struck him with heavy casualties. For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed 120,000 in Judah in one day, all valiant men, because they had abandoned the LORD God of their fathers. And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king's son, Azrikam the ruler of the house, and Elkanah the second to the king.

When it comes to the invasion of the coalition of Aram and Israel (the Syro-Ephraimite league), Isaiah 7:1 describes that the coalition could not yet mount an attack against Jerusalem. This reflects the assurance of the prophet that is based on God's covenant of the Davidic dynasty (2 Sam. 7). However, the author of Chronicles sees the Deuteronomistic etiology, which emphasizes the result of sin. Isaiah 7:1 omits the considerable damages from the Syro-Ephraimite War, but 2 Chronicles 28:5–7 includes a detailed description concerning the destructive results of Judah's abandonment of God. To sum up, in a balanced view, Jerusalem was divinely preserved based on the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:16), but Judah was considerably damaged by the war based on the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 28:52–53).<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> The fall of Jerusalem is not an exception of these two conflicting covenants. On the one hand, Jerusalem was demised, and people became captives based on the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 28:36–37). On the other hand, Judah was preserved based on the Davidic covenant (Sam. 7:16) until the coming of Jesus Christ. This is still the case today. It is an amazing grace and providence of God that Judah was conquered by Babylon who had the policy of preserving the ethnic group, not by Assyria who had the mass deportation policy.



## Isaiah 7:2

When it comes to the structure of Isaiah 7:1–9, Gary Smith says as follows: “In 7:1 the narrator summarizes the first segment of this war; then he goes back in 7:2–9 to provide details of what happened in the first few months before the initial attack.”<sup>413</sup> The first verse of chapter seven is the result of the Syro-Ephraimite War, and the following eight verses are the description of Ahaz’s response to the coalition of two nations and God’s word that was given to Isaiah before the Syro-Ephraimite War broke.

J. Alec Motyer suggests a different view as follows: “When diplomacy failed to entice Judah, the northern powers invaded to force Ahaz’s hand (2 Chr. 28:5–8), but they could not overpower Jerusalem. A second invasion followed (2 Chr. 28:17–18), purposing now to replace Ahaz with a puppet king (Isa. 7:6). For this reason, Ahaz is described as the house of David, for it is a time of dynastic threat.”<sup>414</sup> According to Motyer, Isaiah 7:1 and 7:6 imply that two consecutive wars existed between Judah and the anti-Assyrian coalition. The second invasion in 2 Chr. 28:17–18 is described as the war initiated by the Edomites and the Philistines, not the Aramites and the Israelites. However, when assuming that the anti-Assyrian league could have included diverse states with the same anti-Assyrian policy, it is plausible to understand the different descriptions in Isaiah and 2 Chronicles.

Nevertheless, Smith’s explanation appears to be more reasonable in that Isaiah 7:1 is about the invasion of the coalition of two nations, and Isaiah 7:2 is about the news of the alliance of the two nations. Motyer’s argument, which is the two wars are distinct,

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<sup>413</sup> Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and Brandon D. Smith, Christian Standard Commentary (Holman Reference, 2021), 228.

<sup>414</sup> J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 86.

presupposes the forward flow of time in Isaiah 7:1–9, compared to the reverse flow of time that Smith argues. However, from a logical perspective, the alliance between the two nations should be earlier than their joint military operation. It seems unnatural to describe the joint operation without the establishment of the relationship between the two different nations. Thus, the reverse flow of time between Isaiah 7:1 and 7:2 is a more reasonable explanation.

Given the reverse flow from Isaiah 7:1 to 7:2–9, it is noteworthy that this structure begins by giving the readers an emphatic nuance of God’s reliable protection. Isaiah 7:1 is a compressive message of divine preservation for Jerusalem and a consequence of the war. In Isaiah 7:4–25, Isaiah elaborates on the prophetic message of trusting in God despite the national crisis before the outbreak of war, while the brief historical report in Isaiah 7:1 effectively proves that God’s protection for Jerusalem is real.

Isaiah 7:2 portrays the beginning of this whole event, and it starts with news concerning the political and military alliance between Aram and Ephraim.<sup>415</sup> Someone delivered this news to the “house of David.” The term may be explained as synecdoche, which indicates Ahaz, who was the representative of the house of David. Furthermore, Brueggemann says as follows: “This appellation, the house of David, suggests that our narrative is concerned not only with this specific military crisis, but also with the long-term reality of the Davidic dynasty, with all of the theological freight that is carried by that dynasty.”<sup>416</sup> The “house of David” reminds the readers of the Davidic covenant, which

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<sup>415</sup> “Ephraim” does not only indicate a particular tribe among the Israelites, but it indicates a “metonym for the north, or for any of the 10 northern tribes.” This metonym is originated from the fact that Jereboam, who established the northern kingdom of Israel, was an Ephraimite (2 Kgs. 11:26; cf. 2 Chr 15:8–11, 30:1–18; 34:6–9; Isa 7:2–5, 8; Hos 5:3–9). Charles Meeks, “Ephraim, Son of Joseph,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

<sup>416</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett, *Westminster Bible Companion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 65.

guarantees the security of the dynasty in 2 Samuel 7:8–16.<sup>417</sup> In this respect, this short expression implies God’s promise concerning security conflicts with the actual crisis in Jerusalem, in addition to introducing Ahaz, who is closely related to the promise.

The initial political-military movement of Aram and Ephraim is reported in 2 Kings 15:37 in the old days of Ahaz’s father, and it says that the Lord “began” to send them against Judah. It is not certain that Aram and Ephraim made a concrete political-military alliance in the time of Jotham. However, it is evident that they needed to press Judah, which sought the pro-Assyrian policy, because of the westward expansion of Assyria.

The military alliance between Aram and Ephraim was a serious and actual threat to Judah. The territory of the Benjamin tribe was located right below Ephraim, and if Aram and Ephraim occupied the Central Benjamin Plateau, Judah should give up a proper way to the international coastal highway to the west. In addition, the enemies of Judah will be located virtually on Judah’s border, close to Jerusalem.<sup>418</sup> This was a critical threat to Judah in the military and economic aspects. These might be specific reasons for the feeling of fear.

There is the providence of God behind all these political and military movements. From the fundamental-spiritual perspective, it became a spiritual test for Ahaz to reveal whether he could rely on God or not.<sup>419</sup> Isaiah 7:2 vividly describes the emotion of Ahaz and his people, saying that their hearts shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. This

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<sup>417</sup> Psalms 89:19–52 presents that the Davidic covenant appears to be conditional. However, the conditional aspect is based on the Mosaic covenant, rather than the Davidic covenant. As Robertson says, the Davidic covenant is related to the coming of God’s kingdom and the revelation of the Immanuel principle. All these converge on paving the way for the coming of Christ. It is the purpose of preservation of Judah and Jerusalem. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), 229–231.

<sup>418</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah*, 71.

<sup>419</sup> Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: 1 Samuel–2 Kings (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 889.

description reflects how Ahaz was faithless. The authors of Kings and Chronicles evaluate Ahaz as a serious idol worshipper. Arthur P. Stanley points out Ahaz's evils in that he promoted religious corruption by introducing idolatry, superstitions, and statutes (Isa. 2:6, 8, 20; 8:19, 2 Kgs. 23:5, 11, 12).<sup>420</sup> In the national crisis, Ahaz did not show his faith in God, and this contrasts with Hezekiah during the same crisis (Isa. 37:1).

### Isaiah 7:3

After the description of Ahaz's psychological condition in Isaiah 7:2, Isaiah 7:3 reports that the word of God came to Isaiah. God specifically commanded Isaiah to meet fearful Ahaz with Isaiah's son Shear-yashub at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller's field. There are two things to deal with in this verse, which are the symbolic significance of the name and the place. First, the book of Isaiah contains three important names: Isaiah, Shear-yashub, and Maher-shalal-hash-baz.<sup>421</sup> Watts says, "Isaiah means Yahweh will save, and it reflects an unconditional belief in salvation."<sup>422</sup> Similarly, Allen C. Myers says that the name Isaiah means that "Yahweh is salvation,"<sup>423</sup> and Donald E. Hartley says that the name means the "salvation of Yahweh."<sup>424</sup> The book of Isaiah includes

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<sup>420</sup> Arthur P. Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church*, vol. 2 (London: Murray, 1875), 387–388.

<sup>421</sup> Isaiah 8:18 says how the appearance of Isaiah and his children function in this context as follows: "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of armies, who dwells on Mount Zion."

<sup>422</sup> John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, Revised Edition., vol. 24, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2005), 127.

<sup>423</sup> Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 530.

<sup>424</sup> Donald E. Hartley, "Isaiah the Prophet," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

the two narratives in which Isaiah delivers the divine oracle to the kings, which are Ahaz in Isaiah 7 and Hezekiah in Isaiah 36–37. The two messages have in common the salvation of Judah. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz,<sup>425</sup> Isaiah's second son, literally means "The spoil speeds, the prey hastes,"<sup>426</sup> or "Swift is booty, speedy is prey."<sup>427</sup> Isaiah 8:4 explains the reason for the name of Isaiah's son, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, as follows: "For before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria." Damascus and Samaria are the cities of Aram and Israel that threatened Judah. The name of Isaiah's second son signifies the salvation of Judah from these two enemies. In this respect, the names of Isaiah's two sons have a sense of salvation.<sup>428</sup> Shear-yashub, who is considered Isaiah's first son in Isaiah 7:3, also has a similar nuance. Shear-yashub can be defined as follows: 1) "A remainder turns back, or alternatively becomes converted," 2) "A remainder will turn back," 3) "A remainder will be converted," 4) "The remainder which returns," 5) "But there will be some who remain," and 6) "There will be only some that remain."<sup>429</sup> Beyer opted for the second interpretation ("A

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<sup>425</sup> According to *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, מָהֵר means "to hasten somewhere," שָׁלַל means "booty, spoil, goods that have been plundered," and בָּז means "plunder, spoil." When it comes to שָׂרַשׁב, ("be about to") may be assumed.

<sup>426</sup> John N. Oswalt, "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, Shear-Jashub," Willem VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 925.

<sup>427</sup> Richard Whitaker et al., *The Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament: From A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles Briggs, Based on the Lexicon of Wilhelm Gesenius* (Boston; New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906).

<sup>428</sup> In that respect, Isaiah 8:18 is worth reference: "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of armies, who dwells on Mount Zion." Smith explained this verse as follows: "Isaiah perceived himself and his children as "signs" (*'ōtôt*) and "wonders/portents" (*môptîm*) sent by God. Although Isaiah, Shear-jashub, and Maher-shalal-hash-baz were never called signs earlier in the narrative, Isaiah can now look back and perceive that each of them symbolized a message sent from God." Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 258.

<sup>429</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1379.

remainder will turn back.”) and thought that it showed God’s intention to give Ahaz an optimistic message,<sup>430</sup> and Smith also said, “His name means “a remnant will return,” which probably complemented Isaiah’s positive message of hope.”<sup>431</sup> Similarly, Calvin saw Shear-yashub as a “witness of the prediction” and an “engraven seal, both of the approaching captivity and of the return.”<sup>432</sup>

However, Watts said that it can be a positive or negative implication because it can be translated as “There will be only some that remain” as the sixth definition.<sup>433</sup> In this sense, Motyer said that it is an ambiguous name.<sup>434</sup> Brueggemann focused on the negative nuance of the name as follows: “It alludes to the conviction of the Isaiah tradition that Jerusalem will be destroyed and its inhabitants will be deported into exile, which is tantamount to death. And from the death of exile only a small portion of the population will eventually be returned to Jerusalem in order to resume life.”<sup>435</sup> The concept of “remainder” evidently presupposes the negative situation that cannot help but leave only some remnants, and it is naturally consistent with Isaiah 6 that deals with the judgment of God and the remnants.<sup>436</sup> Nevertheless, when considering the overall tone, Isaiah tries to focus on the ultimate salvation of God more than the upcoming judgment of God in this chapter.

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<sup>430</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 71.

<sup>431</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 230.

<sup>432</sup> John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 231.

<sup>433</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 128.

<sup>434</sup> Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, 86.

<sup>435</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 65.

<sup>436</sup> Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 271.

Given an event in the near future, there are two plausible interpretations. First, “a remainder” might be some people who returned after the short captivity by Israel in 2 Chronicles 28:8–15. The prophet Oded rebuked the Israelite army that came back to Samaria, and thus, they brought the captives back to Judah. Second, it might mean that Jerusalem will not be captured despite the considerable loss of other cities in Judah. If it is right, the city of Jerusalem itself may mean a remainder. Also, when considering an event in the far future, it might be Babylonian captivity and return, as Calvin says. The captives in the future could have noticed the name of Isaiah’s son in this chapter, and they could have found hope in it. Conclusively, there are multiple possibilities for the interpretation of the meaning of Shear-yashub because it is implicit, not explicit, and it may be applied to audiences in diverse contexts in order to suggest the message of salvation.

In addition to the symbolic significance of the name, there is the symbolic significance of the place in this verse. The Lord specifically gives the information about the place where Ahaz is now and commands Isaiah to meet him there. Ahaz was at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller’s field. Watts explains that Ahaz might have been inspecting the construction of the waterworks.<sup>437</sup> Even though it is not explained why Ahaz was there and what he did, it might be the preparation for the upcoming war. 2 Chronicles 32:3–4 describes that Hezekiah stopped the water of the springs that were outside the city when preparing for the war against Assyria. The symbolic significance of this place is related to Hezekiah, who is the descendant of Ahaz. In the book of Isaiah, there are royal narratives of Ahaz and Hezekiah in Isaiah 7 and 36–39. These two narratives show both the similarity and the contrast. Edgar W. Conrad explains how the two narratives share common

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<sup>437</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 128.

features and motifs in several ways. First, the two narratives start by describing the arrival of an invading army that poses a danger to the city of Jerusalem (Isa. 7:1; 36:2). Second, the two narratives include the description of the same place: the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller's field (Isa. 7:3; 36:2). Third, the two narratives suggest that upon receiving news about the invading army, the kings were immensely troubled (Isa. 7:2; 37:1). Fourth, in the two narratives, Isaiah consoles the king in the face of the military danger looming over Jerusalem and the king's distress, employing typical war-related language, which is "fear not" (Isa. 7:4–9; 37:6–7). Fifth, the sign is presented to the king as assurance that Yahweh's promise will be fulfilled (Isa. 7:10–16; 37:30–32; 38:7, 22). Lastly, even though both narratives result in the king and the city being spared, each narrative concludes with a foreboding tone. At the end of each narrative, Isaiah foretells the looming arrival of a more significant disaster brought by another invading king (Isa. 7:15–17, 20; 39:6–7).<sup>438</sup>

However, Ahaz is explicitly different from Hezekiah. Hezekiah confronted the Assyrian army, whom Ahaz feared and relied on, and gained a miraculous victory over them. Hezekiah could overcome the crisis through the help of the angel of the Lord, not through diplomatic strategy or military power. Hezekiah was different from Ahaz in that he relied on the Lord and believed in the prophecy of Isaiah. The two kings show different attitudes in the same place, the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller's field. Brueggemann said as follows: "Ahaz is a metaphor for the refusal of Jerusalem to trust Yahweh, whereby Israel comes to failure and exile; conversely, Hezekiah is a metaphor for the trust that Israel may have in Yahweh, which makes possible an enduring communal existence into and

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<sup>438</sup> Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 187–188.



beyond exile.”<sup>439</sup> In this respect, the fuller’s field is an important place for the preparation for the upcoming war, and it is also a symbolic place that shows an evident contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah.

### **Isaiah 7:4**

Isaiah 7:1 is about the conclusion of the war, Isaiah 7:2 is about the emotional response of Ahaz when he heard the news of the alliance of the two enemies before the outbreak of the war, and Isaiah 7:3 is about the commandment of the Lord for Isaiah to meet Ahaz when Ahaz was preparing the war. Isaiah 7:4–9 is about the divine oracle given to Ahaz through Isaiah. Brueggeman finds the connection between verses 4 and 9 from a literary aspect. Verse 4 begins, and verse 9 completes it.<sup>440</sup> Based on this, Isaiah 7:4–9 shows the chiasmatic structure as follows:

A: Do not fear. (7:4)

B: God reveals the evil conspiracy of Aram and Israel. (7:5–6)

B’: God reveals the coming destruction of Aram and Israel. (7:7–8)

A’: Stand firm in the faith. (7:9)

The structure of Isaiah 7:4–9 is about the message of God that Ahaz should not fear people but stand firm in the faith because the evil scheme of the two enemies is powerless, and they will be destroyed by the Lord. When it comes to Ahaz, the authors of Kings and Chronicles focus on the national crisis from the perspective of cause and effect. (2 Kgs. 16:2–5; 2 Chr. 28:1–7) They emphasize two aspects: Ahaz’s unfaithfulness and the resulting

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<sup>439</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 12.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

punishment of God. However, the book of Isaiah focuses on the discouragement of Ahaz and the prophetic message from the Lord concerning this crisis. The first message from God was an encouragement to Ahaz, who feared the coalition of enemies. Rather than rebuking Ahaz's lack of faith, the Lord gave him assurance and encouragement, repeating similar four words, "Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint." This is the repetition of similar terms for the emphasis. The Lord emphasizes that it is unnecessary to overestimate the enemies through the expression "smoldering stumps of firebrands" because there is more smoke than fire.<sup>441</sup> It is a prophetic metaphor that implies that the military attempt of the Syro-Ephraimite alliance will end fruitlessly.

Ahaz could be determined to seek the pro-Assyrian policy and did not intend to cooperate with the anti-Assyrian league. John N. Oswalt says as follows: "It is also possible that Ahaz has already allied himself with the Assyrians, and the kings of Syria and Israel are seeking to punish him for this."<sup>442</sup> Regarding the expression "I am your servant and your son" in 2 Kings 16:7 that Ahaz used when asking for military help from Tiglath-pileser III, Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor say that the term "son" could not be used by vassals, but it was used only in the family connection.<sup>443</sup> Stephanie Dalley provides archaeological evidence to show that there was a diplomatic marriage between Assyria and Judah.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 130.

<sup>442</sup> John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2003), 137.

<sup>443</sup> Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings*, A New Translation, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1988), 191.

<sup>444</sup> Stephanie Dalley, "Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources for Judaeon History from Uzziah to Manasseh," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28, no. 4 (June 2004): 388–394.

The strong connection between Judah and Assyria means that Ahaz's diplomatic determination is not affected by the message of Isaiah. Also, the divine oracle is not related to changing Ahaz's policy, but it is related to encouraging him not to be fearful of the anti-Assyrian coalition. Nevertheless, Ahaz's psychological stability was not a minor issue, and there was a crucial reason why Isaiah focused on his emotions. Since Ahaz was not stable in his heart (Isa. 7:2), he tried to rely on the power of Assyria (2 Chr. 28:16) and find the vain idols (2 Chr. 28:23–25) instead of the Lord. Ahaz feared the coalition of Aram and Israel, but the more fearful thing for Ahaz was the power of Assyria. His fear of Assyria was the reason why he refused to join the anti-Assyrian coalition (2 Kgs. 16:7–9).<sup>445</sup> Fear must have been the driving force behind Ahaz's decision, considering the psychological description of Isaiah 7:2, the encouragement in 7:4, and the prophetic message in 7:7–9, which encourages Ahaz's faith and prophesies the demise of the Syro-Ephraimite league. During the reign of Ahaz, he promoted idol worship and evil practices considerably (2 Kgs. 16:3–4; 2 Chr. 28:1–4), and he showed a humiliating attitude toward Assyria because he thought that Assyria was the only nation that could protect him (2 Kgs. 16:7–8; 2 Chr. 28:16; 20–21). It is evident that Assyria was the nation that God used as the rod of anger (Isa. 7:18; 8:7; 10:5), but it was not the will of God that Judah relied on Assyria as their God because Assyria is also the object of God's judgment (Isa. 10:25). The fearful mind related to the security of the nation made Ahaz depend on the wrong objects, and thus, the Lord kept encouraging Ahaz to stand firm in the faith.

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<sup>445</sup> Barry Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles' Wings*, ed. J. A. Motyer and Derek Tidball, *The Bible Speaks Today* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 61–62.

### Isaiah 7:5–6

These two verses are about the evil conspiracy of the two enemies. The evil plan of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition consists of two stages. The first plan is to conquer Judah with a joint military operation, and the second is to set up the son of Tabeel as the puppet king of Judah. Their ultimate goal was not to dominate some cities of Judah but to overthrow the Davidic dynasty and establish a new dynasty that they could easily control. The Bible does not provide specific information about Tabeel, but there is an assumption that he might be an Aramaean.<sup>446</sup> The reckless attempt of the two enemies essentially conflicts with the covenant God established with David.

In 2 Samuel 7:8–16, the Lord gives several promises to David, who finally ascended the throne: a great name, a dwelling place, rest from enemies, a house, a descendant, a kingdom for the descendant, eternal security of the kingdom throne, the parent-child relationship between the Lord and the descendant, and the discipline and steadfast love. Robertson summarizes them as the two crucial points in the following way: “The provisions of the Davidic covenant center on two promises. One promise concerns the line of David, and one promise concerns the locality of Jerusalem. The purposes of God in redeeming a people to himself center on these two points: David’s line and Jerusalem’s throne.”<sup>447</sup> From the perspective of the Davidic covenant, Aram and Ephraim tried to stand against the covenantal will of the Lord that was firmly determined concerning the Davidic dynasty and Jerusalem. Due to the ignorance of the Davidic covenant, the two enemies tried to do a reckless

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<sup>446</sup> Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 144–145.

<sup>447</sup> Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 236.

challenge against Judah, and Ahaz also feared the alliance and joint military operation of the two nations.

### **Isaiah 7:7–9**

It is not certain if the prophet Isaiah revealed the content of Isaiah 7:5–6 early or if Ahaz had already been informed of it. However, it is evident that the rest of the chapter is about the new revelation of God that is given to Ahaz. Isaiah 7:7–8 is not the past information but the prophecy through Isaiah about the future of the two enemies. First, Isaiah says that the evil scheme of the two enemies will not stand and will not come to pass. The failure of the evil scheme against Judah is because it violates the Davidic covenant. They cannot change the fixed will of God. Second, Isaiah says that Ephraim will be shattered from being a people within sixty-five years. In the near future, the northern kingdom of Israel will be broken to pieces throughout the empire by the Assyrian policy of mass deportation. The Davidic covenant is the reason for the security of Jerusalem, but the Mosaic covenant is the reason for the destruction of Ephraim. Ephraim has become sufficiently corrupt to be punished by the Lord. When it comes to the destruction of the two enemies, only Ephraim is mentioned in Isaiah 7:7–9, even though Aram was also destroyed by Assyria.<sup>448</sup> Presumably, it appears to emphasize the destruction of Ephraim under the Mosaic covenant. Aram is not applied by the covenantal law of the Lord.

The reference to “within sixty-five years” is somewhat ambiguous. According to Oswalt, it likely signifies that within a single individual’s lifetime, the intermixing of the

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<sup>448</sup> K. Lawson Younger Jr., “Aram and the Arameans,” *The World around the Old Testament: The People and Places of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and Brent A. Strawn (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 256.

Israelites through mass deportations and the influx of various groups from other parts of the empire will likely have significantly diluted the ancestral genetic lineage of those who remain in the original territory of the northern kingdom.<sup>449</sup> The resultant state of judgment that God expects is not the state that will happen right away but a state that takes a certain amount of time to complete. The deportation of Ephraim for sixty-five years is different from the captivity of Judah for seventy years in that Ephraim was unable to restore their nation, but the captives of Judah may finally return to their homeland. The upcoming destruction of Ephraim is not the political anticipation of Isaiah, and the ultimate failure of the evil plan that the anti-Assyrian league devised is not the military calculation of Isaiah. These futuristic expectations are purely the revelation of the Lord. It shows that God first reveals what He will do on the earth to His prophet, and then God reveals it to kings and people through His prophet.

Verse 9 is an interesting expression in the Hebrew text. It is translated into “If you will not believe (אָמַן), you certainly shall not last (אָמַן),” but the same verb אָמַן (trustworthy, faithful, to be permanent, to endure, to believe in)<sup>450</sup> is repeated twice in the form of the Hiphil (the former) and the Niphal (the latter). It is a literary skill to emphasize the intention of the divine author. Brueggemann finds theological importance in this wordplay because this same word is used in the center of Davidic theology on which the Jerusalem regime is dependent as follows:<sup>451</sup>

“Your house and your kingdom shall endure (אָמַן) before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Sam. 7:16)

“My faithfulness (אָמַן) and My favor will be with him, And in My name his horn will

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<sup>449</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 138.

<sup>450</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 63.

<sup>451</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 66–67.

be exalted.” (Ps. 89:24)

“But I will not withhold My favor from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness (אֱמֶנֶת).” (Ps. 89:33)<sup>452</sup>

These examples show that the permanence (אֱמֶנֶת) of the Jerusalem regime is related to the faithfulness (אֱמֶנֶת) of the Lord. The message of Isaiah adds the faithfulness that is required of the human participants of the covenant to the promise above. In addition to the faithfulness of the Lord, the covenantal participants should also be faithful to the Lord. To sum up, the security of Jerusalem and the dynasty of David is secured by the faithfulness of the Lord and the faithful response of human beings to it.

Lastly, “you,” the subject in verse 9, is written in plural forms (תְּאָמְרוּ, תְּאָמְרוּ). This means that the Lord’s message is not only given to Ahaz but also to all people around him, and it implies that the king, all the bureaucrats, and the people of Judah are together responsible for this national crisis.<sup>453</sup> Moreover, it may indicate the “house of David” (7:2; 13). This shows that covenantal blessings and curses are not only dependent on the faith of an individual king but also on all people in the nation. Deuteronomy 28 demonstrates that communal, not individual, blessings or curses are based on the law. The covenant of the Lord presupposes the spiritual connection of the chosen people.

### **Isaiah 7:10–13**

The structure of discourse in Isaiah 7:10–13 is as follows.

A: The Lord says to Ahaz: “Ask a sign of the Lord.” (7:10–11)

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<sup>452</sup> Psalms 89:38–51 appears to show the abandoned the psalmist, the abandoned covenant, and the absence of faithfulness. However, it was what the psalmist felt, not what God really did.

<sup>453</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 131.

B: Ahaz rejects the word of the Lord: “I will not ask.” (7:12)

A’: Isaiah says to Ahaz: “Is it too little for you to weary men and God.” (7:13)

Even though the three personalities seem to communicate with each other, real communication occurs between two personalities: Ahaz and God. Johannes Lindblom suggests that a shared realm of ideas and aspirations exists between God and His chosen prophet.<sup>454</sup> This is the reason why we identify the prophecy of Isaiah with the word of God. The passage indicates the Lord in verses 10–11 as the subject of the sentence, but Isaiah in verse 13 as the subject of the sentence. This interchangeable use shows the divine inspiration of the prophet.<sup>455</sup>

Isaiah 7:10 says, “Then the Lord spoke again to Ahaz.” Oswalt suggests two possible implications of “again.” First, it might imply a change of place. This conversation might occur in a different place and time from verses 1–9. Second, it might merely indicate the second part of the conversation.<sup>456</sup> Brueggemann focuses on the continuation. He understands that Isaiah 7:10–17 shows the “confrontation of prophet and king continues” and a continuation of ‘faith versus fear.’<sup>457</sup> There is no evidence of a change of place in the passage, but the content of the conversation shows consistency with the former verses. The background information provided in verses 1–3 is still effective in this paragraph. Ahaz still confronts Isaiah, who was sent by God. Tension exists in the conversation. When considering

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<sup>454</sup> Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 178–179.

<sup>455</sup> The identification of Isaiah’s prophecy and God’s word does not argue for the identical status of the two. God is the initiator of revelation, and Isaiah plays a instrumental role. Here, Isaiah is like a glass that allows light pass through.

<sup>456</sup> John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1–39* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 204.

<sup>457</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 69.



the following content of the conversation, “again” implies not only a continuation of the previous conversation but also a development of the previous conversation. In addition, it shows the patience of God, who does not give up persuading Ahaz.

In Isaiah 7:11, God lets Ahaz ask for a sign from God Himself. Even though there are diverse biblical examples in which God provided His people with signs, this is the only case in which God first lets a human ask for a sign.<sup>458</sup> Childs says, “Within the prophetic corpus, as distinct from the Priestly source of the Pentateuch (e.g., Gen. 9:12), a sign is a special event, either ordinary or miraculous, that serves as a pledge by which to confirm the prophetic word.”<sup>459</sup> Oswalt similarly says that Ahaz is being challenged to give God an opportunity to prove His faithfulness.<sup>460</sup> When considering the overall context of Ahaz, the request seems to include a tone of rebuke because Ahaz did not try to move forward with God to understand and confirm the will of God. The covenantal relationship between God and His people is not one-sided but reciprocal, but Ahaz refused to be involved in the communication with God.

As a result, in Isaiah 7:12, Ahaz refused to ask the sign of God, saying, “I will not ask, nor will I put the Lord to the test!” Ahaz’s refusal to ask the sign might have been based on some biblical passages: Exodus 7:1–7 and Deuteronomy 6:16. However, Beyer explains the response of Ahaz as an “attempt to hide behind false piety.”<sup>461</sup> Calvin also says, “When Ahaz refuses the sign offered to him, by doing so he displays both his obstinacy and his

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<sup>458</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 73.

<sup>459</sup> Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, 65.

<sup>460</sup> Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1–39*, 204.

<sup>461</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 73.

ingratitude; for he despises what God had offered for the highest advantage.”<sup>462</sup> Ahaz’s refusal shows he did not have enough faith to rely on God with all his heart. In contrast, Ahaz’s son, Hezekiah, shows a different attitude toward the word of God that is given to him. 2 Kings 20:1–11 deals with an episode of Hezekiah’s illness and recovery. At that time, Hezekiah boldly asked for an evident sign, responding positively to Isaiah’s prophecy of divine healing (20:8–10). Hezekiah’s willingness when asking for the sign of the Lord contrasts with Ahaz’s refusal of the request for the sign of the Lord (Isa. 7:12).

In Isaiah 7:13, the “house of David” is mentioned again. As mentioned in Isaiah 7:2, this term is used in the context of the destiny of the Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem.<sup>463</sup> Here, Isaiah does not speak only to Ahaz but to all people in the royal house. This shows that the preceding prophecy is the process of persuading an individual Ahaz (Isa. 7:4, “And say to him,” 7:10, “the Lord spoke to Ahaz.”), while the following prophecy is the process of persuading the people in David’s house. The audience of the message continues to expand from Ahaz to the “house of David” to “this people (Judah)” in Isaiah 8:6 and “your peoples (neighboring nations) in 8:9.” There is the tone of rebuke in common in Isaiah 7:13, 8:6 and 8:9. In addition to the extension of the audience, Thomas Aquinas understood the “house of David” as abiding.<sup>464</sup> He observed the timeless aspect of the “house of David,” not limited to Ahaz’s era, and this viewpoint is easily connected to the interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 as the birth of Christ in the distant future.

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<sup>462</sup> Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 241.

<sup>463</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 134.

<sup>464</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Isaiah*, trans. Louis St. Hilaire (Steubenville, OH; Green Bay, WI: Emmaus Academic; Aquinas Institute, 2021), 142.

Beyer points out the transition from “your God” (Isa. 7:11) to “my God” (Isa. 7:13) when Isaiah calls God. He explains, “The prophet (Isaiah) was suggesting that by its unbelief, the house of David had shown itself unfit for a relationship with the living God.”<sup>465</sup> The transition from “your God” to “my God” has an important meaning because it presents that Ahaz rejected the Lord who established Ahaz as the king of Judah, and furthermore, it might mean the Lord rejected Ahaz. Instead, Isaiah decided to begin to persuade Ahaz based on his belief in God, who is with him. Oswalt suggests a similar example from Saul’s experience in 1 Samuel 15:26, “I [Samuel] will not return with you [Saul]; for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.”<sup>466</sup> When the army of the Philistines invaded Israel, Saul sought a medium instead of God. Similarly, Ahaz sought aid from Assyria instead of God.

Isaiah says, “Is it too trivial a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?” לֵאמֹר, which is translated into “try the patience,” has the meanings of “to make weary”; “to take to be powerless, helpless.”<sup>467</sup> Smith explains as follows: “Isaiah’s response is one of condemnation for the “house of David,” the royal court that was led by Ahaz (Isa. 7:13, 17). Their response frustrated the patience of Isaiah and God. When patience runs out and one is wearied by useless excuses and indecision, usually something negative will happen next.”<sup>468</sup> Ahaz’s refusal to ask for the sign of the Lord will negatively affect his people and the Lord God within the covenantal relationship. The determination of Ahaz, who is the representative of the house of David, is powerful in the

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<sup>465</sup> Beyer, *Encountering the Book of Isaiah: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 73.

<sup>466</sup> Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1–39*, 209.

<sup>467</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 512.

<sup>468</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 236.

aspect of influence. According to his decision, the whole nation can follow the way of curses or blessings. Robertson emphasizes the importance of kingship in the covenant with the Lord as follows: “The king of Israel maintains a unique role in relation to the covenant. To be king in Israel is to be in covenant relation to Yahweh. The two positions are related inseparably. Still further, the king in his position as national head mediates the covenant to the people. By virtue of his office, he functions as a mediator of the covenant.”<sup>469</sup> Ahaz was the mediator of the covenant between the Lord and Judah, and that is the reason why the Lord specially sent the prophet Isaiah to Ahaz and advised him, not having ignored him despite his unbelief. Nevertheless, Ahaz was not a good mediator between the Lord and the people. Smith says that Isaiah 7:14–17 seems to be “another solution to the problem.”<sup>470</sup>

#### Isaiah 7:14

God refused the refusal by Ahaz. Even though Ahaz explicitly spoke that he would not ask for a sign and put the Lord to the test, God did not give up revealing the sign. However, it is noteworthy that the target audience of the sign prophecy shifted from Ahaz to a broader group. Also, Isaiah 7:14 should not be read plainly because of its genre as a vision and its symbolic usage of the birth. There are five sub-sections in this section: 1) the five Hebrew terms *אֹת*, *עֲלֶמָה*, *הָרָה*, *יִלְדֶת*, and *עִמָּנוּ אֵל* in Isaiah 7:14, 2) the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23, 3) the birth motif in Isaiah 7:14, 4) the link between Isaiah 7:14 and the following two verses, and 5) Hezekiah as the human agent.

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<sup>469</sup> Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 235.

<sup>470</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 236.

## Five Hebrew Terms

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Isaiah 7:14 should not be understood as the whole content of a sign. Brueggemann says that Isaiah 7:14–17 includes crucial issues related to the sign,<sup>471</sup> and Smith sees Isaiah 7:14–15 as a sign of a child in Isaiah 7:14.<sup>472</sup> However, the better option is to see Isaiah 7:14–16 as a sign unit related to the son in Isaiah 7:14 because the three verses have in common that they describe certain aspects related to the son in Isaiah 7:14: the birth of the son (v.14), the growth of the son (v.15), and the relation between the son's growth and the enemies' destruction (v.16). In this respect, the birth in Isaiah 7:14 is the first part of the whole sign prophecy.

Oswalt understands that the sign confirms faith, not that it creates faith. He says concerning the most signs in Isaiah and the Old Testament as follows: “They [the signs] were not some supernatural act that made unbelieving people believe on the spot. Rather, they were typically events occurring in the future that would confirm that the faith exercised in the past was correct.”<sup>473</sup> Similarly, Childs says that the sign “serves as a pledge by which to confirm the prophetic word,” adding, “The sign precedes in time the impending threat or promise, and prefigures the fulfillment by the affinity in content between the sign and its execution.”<sup>474</sup> Oswalt and Childs agree that the sign has the function of confirming.

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<sup>471</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 69–70.

<sup>472</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 236.

<sup>473</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 142.

<sup>474</sup> Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, 65.

However, Oswalt refers to the confirmation of faith, while Childs refers to the confirmation of prophetic words.

If the sign is effective as the confirming function for those who believe in God's word, it is evident that the sign mentioned in Isaiah 7:14 is ineffective for unfaithful Ahaz, who refused to ask God's sign, committed the idolatry and relied on Assyria in the national crisis. However, it is effective for the remnants of Judah who trust in the Lord. This is the reason why לָקֵץ (לָקֵץ: second person, masculine, plural) is used in Isaiah 7:14. When Ahaz declined to request a sign in Isaiah 7:12, the target audience of the prophecy shifted from Ahaz to a broader group of people: the house of David in Isaiah 7:13 and לָקֵץ in 7:14. H. G. M. Williamson argues that the son in Isaiah 7:14 means the judgment for unfaithful Ahaz by his being replaced, in addition to the promise of God's presence for those faithful.<sup>475</sup> Horst Dietrich Preuss suggested the same view that Isaiah 7:14 is a "word of judgment against Ahaz, who has refused the sign."<sup>476</sup> Gary Smith gives a similar view: "Control of the situation is usually removed from the person causing the frustration, and someone else sets a new direction. In this case, God seems to give up on the present Davidic dynasty run by Ahaz and looks forward to another solution to the problem in 7:14–17."<sup>477</sup> Helmer Ringgren and C. Dohmen also say as follows:

In form and content, the passage [Isa. 7:14] is a threat against Ahaz. The putative basic meaning of *'almâ* established above ("alien woman") makes the nature of the threat particularly clear: if a non-Israelite is expecting a child by King Ahaz and is to give it the programmatic name Immanuel, the oracle is directed primarily against

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<sup>475</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 6-12: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018), 160–163.

<sup>476</sup> Horst Dietrich Preuss, "לָקֵץ," ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 461.

<sup>477</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 236.

Ahaz, since the “we” of the name refers in the first instance to the woman and her child. For the Davidic dynasty, this spells continuity and discontinuity at the same time. The dynasty will not continue linearly but will be given a new beginning by God (cf. also the later interpretation of 11:1). This conclusion is confirmed by the juxtaposed and related statements of the motivation in 7:16 and 17.<sup>478</sup>

In this respect, the audience of the sign prophecy should not be limited to Ahaz but should be shifted to the remnants. The reason why Ahaz stood before the prophet Isaiah, who delivered God’s revelation, was simply that he was the covenantal representative of Judah, regardless of his faithlessness.

In addition, if the sign confirms the prophetic word that was previously revealed, it is necessary to clarify the content of the prophetic word. Watts explains it as follows: “The sign is simple. It has to do with a period by which time the present crisis will no longer be acute or relevant. This parallels the statement in v 8*b* but indicates a much shorter period.”<sup>479</sup> In the previous context, God, through Isaiah, already foretold the ineffectiveness of the Syro-Ephraimite league. In this respect, the sign of Isaiah 7:14 may confirm the immediate revelation in Isaiah 7:4–8. That conclusion is natural in terms of the contextual flow, and indeed, the coalition of the two nations could not threaten the actual security of Judah. However, Matthew applied Isaiah 7:14 to the birth of Christ in Matthew 1:23. The Old Testament does not report the actual birth of Immanuel, and Matthew 1:23 only refers to the fulfillment of the Immanuel sign when describing the birth of Jesus. To sum up, the sign in Isaiah 7:14, Immanuel born of עֶלְמָה, was given in the context of a national crisis. Still, it is connected with the coming of the Savior in the aspect of the fulfillment description.

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<sup>478</sup> Helmer Ringgren and C. Dohmen, “עֶלְמָה,” ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 161–162.

<sup>479</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 135.

## עַלְמָה

עַלְמָה as a singular form has definitions as follows: a “marriageable girl,” a “girl who is able to be married,” and a “young woman until the birth of her first child.” Also, it was the name of a goddess.<sup>480</sup> Most English versions, such as NASB, ESV, NIV, LEB, translate עַלְמָה in Isaiah 7:14 into virgin, while NRSV translates it into young woman. Considering the semantic analysis with Ugaritic, Ringgren and Dohmen say as follows: “A wide range in meanings is usually posited for Ugar. *ǵlm/ǵlmt*: “youth, child, male offspring, servant, messenger, girl, maid, etc.”<sup>481</sup>

Among the nine biblical usages of עַלְמָה,<sup>482</sup> there are two biblical usages of עַלְמָה to indicate specific pre-marital women in the narratives: Rebekah in Genesis 24:43 and Miriam in Exodus 2:8. Ringgren and Dohmen say as follows: “Both texts refer to Israelite women living abroad: the first to Moses’ sister in Egypt, the second to Rebekah in Mesopotamia, Abraham’s homeland.”<sup>483</sup> In Ugaritic texts, the term “fem. *ǵlmt*” consistently refers to a woman of foreign origin who has formed a relationship with a man from a different background.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>480</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 836.

<sup>481</sup> Ringgren and Dohmen, “עַלְמָה,” 157.

<sup>482</sup> Singular: Gen. 24:43, Exod. 2:8, Isa. 7:14, Prov. 30:19. Plural (עַלְמוֹת): Ps. 46:1, Ps. 68:26, So. 1:3, So. 6:8, 1 Chr. 15:20.

<sup>483</sup> Ringgren and Dohmen, “עַלְמָה,” 162.

<sup>484</sup> Ringgren and Dohmen say as follows: “In interpreting the form *ǵlmt*, we note that the text in question deals with the marriage of the Sumerian and Hurrian moon goddess Nkl to the West Semitic moon god Yrḥ. The context suggests that *ǵlmt* here marks the ethnic difference of the woman, not her juridical or physical status. This theory is confirmed by the two other Ugaritic occurrences of *ǵlmt*, which are found in the so-called Krt Epic and refer to Ḥry, the daughter of the king of Udm, whom Krt demands as tribute after the siege of the city.” Ibid., 157.



From the view of the Old Testament readers, the pregnancy of עַלְמָה as a virgin in Isaiah 7:14 may not have been read as a miraculous pregnancy because Isaiah 7:14 could be considered to have “poetic omission.” This omission in the brief verse may function as a variable when the readers understand the verse. Even if it was read as the “virgin will conceive,” the marriage and natural intercourse could have been assumed to be omitted. Thus, it could not be controversial that the Septuagint rendered עַלְמָה into παρθένος, a more specific term that focuses on virginity.<sup>485</sup> However, the debate was triggered after the birth of Christ. Greg Rhodea says that a virginal conception in Isaiah 7:14 was not an interpretive issue in the pre-Christian writings but is a “notorious crux interpretum” now, saying as follows: “It seems that a majority of scholars believe that Isa 7:14 was not considered messianic by Jews and that—even if considered messianic—a virginal conception was not expected. ‘No other Jewish sources reflect any virginal conception motif.’”<sup>486</sup> Church tradition has shown a different view from the Jewish view, and a miraculous pregnancy in Isaiah 7:14 has been established as a significant interpretation in the church tradition because Matthew applied Isaiah 7:14 to the birth of Jesus, who was born of the virgin Mary in Matthew 1:23.

However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, since Gesenius suggested the non-Christological interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 based on the definition of עַלְמָה as a marriageable girl (*mannbares Mädchen*) specifically, referring only to the girl as marriageable, neither as a virgin nor as married (*bezeichnet lediglich das Mädchen als mannbares, nicht als Jungfrau*

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<sup>485</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 777.

<sup>486</sup> Greg Rhodea, “Did Matthew Conceive a Virgin? Isaiah 7:14 and the Birth of Jesus.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 1 (2013): 69.

[בְּתוּלָה], *auch nicht als verehelicht od. nicht verehelicht*),<sup>487</sup> the interpretations of Isaiah 7:14 in the Christian writings have become broadly divided into two groups: a miraculous pregnancy of a virgin connected to the embedded Christological view and a normal pregnancy of a young woman connected to the non-embedded Christological view. The difference between the two conclusions has to do with where the perspective begins: the Old Testament or the New Testament. The miraculous pregnancy that implies virgin Mary's pregnancy in Isaiah 7:14 is not evident from the view of the Old Testament readers who do not know Christ's birth but is noticeable from the view of the New Testament readers who know it. With this regard, reading Isaiah 7:14 from the view of the birth motif is meaningful in that the birth motif may suggest the Christological conclusion based on the Old Testament history.

The article הַ is added before עַלְמָהּ. It may imply that עַלְמָהּ is known to Ahaz and Isaiah. However, there is an exception. Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius says as follows: "Peculiar to Hebrew is the employment of the article to denote a single person or thing (primarily one which is as yet unknown, and therefore not capable of being defined) as being present to the mind under given circumstances. In such cases in English the indefinite article is mostly used."<sup>488</sup> In this respect, Smith says that הַעַלְמָהּ has the usage of the article for an unknown and unidentified woman.<sup>489</sup> Young also says as follows: "More natural is it to maintain that the definite article is used with the word *'almah* in a generic sense, and serves to designate some particular unknown person. Isaiah's purpose is to distinguish the *'almah*

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<sup>487</sup> Wilhelm Gesenius et al., *Hebräisches Und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch Über Das Alte Testament*, ed. Frants Buhl (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1915), 594.

<sup>488</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, 2d English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 407.

<sup>489</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 237.

from some other kind of woman.”<sup>490</sup> The hazon discussion in the next section will clarify the meaning of the article. Conclusively, the article was added because Isaiah was referring to עֲלֻמָּה in a vision.

In addition to the translations of עֲלֻמָּה, it is necessary to see the sophisticated nuance of עֲלֻמָּה presented in this verse. In this respect, Jerome provided a good insight into this term. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Jerome said, “Therefore *alma* is said not only of a “girl” or a “virgin,” but has an extension (*cum* επιτασει) of a “hidden” and “secret” virgin, who has never been exposed to the sight of men, but who has been guarded by her parents with great diligence.”<sup>491</sup> Genesis 19:8 and 24:51 imply a father’s control and protection over daughters in relating to other men. Based on the nuance of “hidden” in עֲלֻמָּה, Jerome argued that the Hebrew term עֲלֻמוֹת in Psalm 9:1 is translated into “for the hidden things,” and Aquila translated עֲלֻמָּה, who is Rebecca in Genesis 24:16, 43, into “hidden,” not girl or young girl.<sup>492</sup> Adam Kamesar evaluates Jerome as follows: “Jerome has applied a twofold argument based on comparative philology. On the one hand, he considers the possibility that *almah* is a Hebrew word, in which case it is the Punic usage that is relevant. On the other hand, he allows for the possibility that it is a loan-word, in which case it may be elucidated through the Latin.”<sup>493</sup> Kamesar also says as follows: “In classical Latin it [*alma*] is often connected with

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<sup>490</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, 287.

<sup>491</sup> St. Jerome, *St. Jerome: Commentary on Isaiah: Including St. Jerome’s Translation of Origen’s Homilies 1–9 on Isaiah*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, vol. 68, Ancient Christian Writers (New York; Mahwah, NJ: The Newman Press, 2015), 169.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Adam Kamesar, “The Virgin of Isaiah 7:14: The Philological Argument from the Second to the Fifth Century,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 41, no. 1 (1990): 71.

the notion of chastity, and is even used by Horace in *Carmina* 1. 2. 27 to describe the vestal virgins.”<sup>494</sup>

The following scholars agreed with Jerome’s insight. Calvin observed the nuance of “hidden” from עֲלֵמָה and opted for the virgin as the translation of עֲלֵמָה. Calvin said as follows: “Although the word עֲלֵמָה, *a virgin*, is derived from עָלַם, which signifies *to hide*, because the shame and modesty of *virgins* do not allow them to appear in public.”<sup>495</sup> עָלַם means “what is hidden,” “be concealed,” “to conceal,” and “to secrete.”<sup>496</sup> C. Locher said that the Hebrew verb עָלַם is used to denote “‘be hidden’ twenty-eight times in the protocanonical OT and there are five additional occurrences in Sirach and six in the Dead Sea Scrolls.”<sup>497</sup> Andrew E. Hill explained the usage of עָלַם as God’s hidden wisdom, which can be concealed or made known (Job 28:11; 1 Kgs. 10:3; 2 Chr. 9:2).<sup>498</sup> Calov also agreed with Jerome’s explanation, saying that עֲלֵמָה signifies a “hidden virgin.”<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid., 70–71. Kamesar says as follows: “The Latin adjective *almus-a-um*, which can connote ‘holy.’”

<sup>495</sup> “The shame and modesty of virgins do not allow them to appear in public” seems exaggerated when considering the two biblical examples of Rebecca and Miriam. However, לֹא־יָדְעוּ אִישׁ in Genesis 19:8 and אִישׁ לֹא יָדָעָה in 24:16 seem to be related to this Calvin’s utterance. Rebecca and Lot’s two daughters were typically under the control of their parents when it came to interacting with men in public. Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 247.

<sup>496</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 835.

<sup>497</sup> C. Locher, “עָלַם,” ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 147.

<sup>498</sup> Andrew E. Hill says as follows: “There was an episode in the life of Elisha when the Lord withheld knowledge from the prophet to encourage faith on the part of the Shunammite woman (2 Kgs. 4:27). Clearly, there is nothing hidden from God (Ps. 90:8), and he is free to reveal or conceal wisdom and knowledge according to his divine purposes.” Andrew E. Hill, “עָלַם,” ed. Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 426.

<sup>499</sup> Abraham Calov, *Biblia Testamenti Veteris Illustrata: In Quibus Emphases vocum ac mens dictorum genuina è fontibus, contextu, & analogia Scripturae eruuntur*, 2nd ed. vol. 2 (Dresdæ & Lipsiæ: Zimmermannus, 1719), 46.

The sophisticated nuance that Jerome, Calvin, and Calov focused on is applicable in interpreting Isaiah 7:14 from the two aspects. This is not for the sake of changing the translation of עֲלְמָה but considering the subtle nuance of the term in understanding Isaiah 7:14. Luther referred to the hidden nature of the sign to some extent, saying that it is a “hidden sign for the sake of the ungodly” but “given for the sake of the remnant” when he dealt with this sign prophecy.<sup>500</sup> It is known to only remnants that the preservation of Judah is related to the coming of the Messiah,<sup>501</sup> and they believe it and overcome the current crisis based on such faith. Considering the sign’s confirmation function of the faith, it is right that the meaningful sign of a son born through עֲלְמָה cannot function and is hidden for those unfaithful (Isa. 6:9–10). The sign, which includes the conditional hidden nature, fits subtly with עֲלְמָה, which includes the sophisticated nuance of hiddenness. In addition, when comparing עֲלְמָה in Isaiah 7:14 and the repetitive features of the birth passages in the Old Testament, the identity and family relations like husband and son of עֲלְמָה in Isaiah 7:14 are hidden and remain mysterious in the context. That is distinct from the passages of Adamic and Abrahamic descendants’ births, including the narratives that portray the son’s birth and life. This hiddenness of עֲלְמָה, who is nameless and unknown, gives a mysterious and symbolic nuance and provides a clue to approach Isaiah 7:14 in a symbolic and metaphorical way different from the explicit birth passages of the human agents, which can be read plainly.

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<sup>500</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 16: Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 16 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 85.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

יִלְדָת and הָרָה

The translations of the two Hebrew terms, הָרָה (adjective) and יִלְדָת (participle), should be noted, considering the feature of a verbless clause. When it comes to הָרָה, there are two feasible options for translation: an attributive adjective (the pregnant עֵלְמָה) or a predicative adjective (the עֵלְמָה is pregnant). Even though no version of the Bible provides the attributive usage, “the pregnant עֵלְמָה” is a feasible option because the article of the adjective in the attributive usage is sometimes omitted (cf. הַגּוֹיִם רַבִּים “many nations” in Ezek. 39:27).<sup>502</sup> Isaiah 7:14 describes a woman who is pregnant and is giving birth to a son. Joseph Blenkinsopp translates Isaiah 7:14 into “The young woman *is pregnant* and *about to give birth* to a son.”<sup>503</sup> LEB renders, “The virgin *is with child* and she *is about to give birth* to a son.”<sup>504</sup> YLT renders, “The Virgin *is conceiving*, And *is bringing forth* a son.”<sup>505</sup> TNK renders, “Assuredly, my Lord will give you a sign of His own accord! Look, the young woman is with child and about to give birth to a son. Let her name him Immanuel.”<sup>506</sup> These translations have in common the focus on the action now in progress or impending imagery from the adjective and participle forms by rendering הָרָה and יִלְדָת into the present or present

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<sup>502</sup> Christo Van der Merwe et al., *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, electronic ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 232.

<sup>503</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 19, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 227.

<sup>504</sup> W. Hall Harris III et al., eds., *The Lexham English Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Is 7:14.

<sup>505</sup> Robert Young, *Young’s Literal Translation* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997), Is 7:14.

<sup>506</sup> Jewish Publication Society, *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), Is 7:14.

progressive tense, compared to other translations.<sup>507</sup> John H. Walton says as follows:

“Verbless clauses in Hebrew are typically rendered into present or past tenses, the choice to be determined by the tense of the surrounding finite verbs. The only verb that can be called in to help in this context is the active participle [יִלְדֵת].”<sup>508</sup> This means that Isaiah 7:14 contains both the imperfect tense (יִתֵּן), which is translated into “will give,” and the participle (וְיִלְדֵת) and the adjective (הַרְרָה), which can be translated as different tenses. The change in the tense, not remaining consistent, reflects the genre of the utterance.

The progressive description in Isaiah 7:14 can be understood in light of the genre feature of Isaiah. The first word in the book of Isaiah is וְיִזֶּן. Isaiah 1:1 says as follows: “The vision (וְיִזֶּן) of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw (וְיִזֶּן) during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.” The heading of Isaiah 1:1 reflects the nature of the book of Isaiah.<sup>509</sup> Scholars disagree on the range of וְיִזֶּן and the temporal perspective of וְיִזֶּן in Isaiah. Brueggemann does not suggest a specific range of vision within the book but requires a “bifocal vision” on the whole book, saying as follows: “It is for that reason necessary (and demanding) to read Isaiah with a bifocal vision, focused both on near history and on far history, both viewed from a deeply committed Yahwistic perspective.”<sup>510</sup> Edgar W. Conrad recognized that Isaiah 6–39 is Isaiah’s vision,<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> NASB 2020: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son.” ESV: “The virgin shall conceive and bear a son.”

<sup>508</sup> John H. Walton, “ISA 7:14: WHAT’S IN A NAME?,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30, no. 3 (1987): 290.

<sup>509</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 6.

<sup>510</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 12.

<sup>511</sup> Conrad says concerning the rest of chapters in Isaiah as follows: “I understood Isaiah 1–5 and 40–66 as material depicting a community of survivors who had a speaking voice in the text as a recurring and often interruptive ‘we.’” Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism*, 196.

and he emphasized the future orientation of *חִזְוִן*, while John Watts assumed that Isaiah's vision is limited to Isaiah 6–8 and 36–39 and said that *חִזְוִן* is concerning present and future.<sup>512</sup> Even though they suggested different ranges and temporal views, they had in common that Isaiah 7 is included in Isaiah's vision.

Regarding the definition of the Hebrew verb *חָזַן*, A. Jepsen says as follows: “It has a wide range of meanings, referring both to the natural vision of the eyes and to supernatural visions of various kinds.”<sup>513</sup> The Hebrew noun *חִזְוִן* is more narrowly defined and has two meanings: “vision” and “word of revelation.”<sup>514</sup> In the context of Isaiah, *חִזְוִן* can indicate a visible image from God or indicate a general revelation from God. Young said as follows: “The word *ḥazon* indicates specific visions (e.g., Isa. 29:7; Hos. 12:10; Hab. 2:2; 1 Chr. 17:15, etc.) and also revelation in general (e.g., 1 Sam. 3:1; Ezek. 7:26; 12:22, 23; Prov. 29:18, etc.).”<sup>515</sup> He also explained that the vision is not an individual insight, intuition, and perception but “the ‘sight’ of what God had placed in the prophet’s mind or had revealed to him.”<sup>516</sup> Isaiah 7:14 does not describe an actual pregnancy and impending birth, but God allowed Isaiah to see the vivid vision, and Isaiah proclaimed what he was spiritually seeing or sensing. Young says as follows: “In vision Isaiah was allowed to see the virgin, and it is the

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<sup>512</sup> Watts says as follows: “Perhaps ‘the vision’ does not refer to the book, or even any of its literary units, but rather to the imparted message, the vision of the present and future that Isaiah son of Amoz envisioned and that has now become the central focus of this much larger literary work.” Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 7. However, Watts denies Isaian authorship of the whole book. I do not agree with this view. The parts distinguished as Isaiah's vision are necessary to read them symbolically, not to deny Isaian authorship.

<sup>513</sup> A. Jepsen, “חָזַן,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 281–282. Supernatural visions: Num. 24:4, 16; Ezk. 13:7; Isa. 1:1; Ezk. 12:27; 13:16; Isa. 2:1; Mic. 1:1; Isa. 13:1; Hab. 1:1; Jb. 27:12; Amo. 1:1.

<sup>514</sup> Koehler, et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 301.

<sup>515</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, 30.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*



announcement of what he is permitted to see in vision that he declared unto Ahaz and the nation.”<sup>517</sup> The progressive descriptions in Isaiah 7:14 should be understood in light of the vision, which is the genre of Isaiah<sup>518</sup> or the qualification of the message.<sup>519</sup>

Conrad recognized Isaiah as one of the prophets of *חזון*, including Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah,<sup>520</sup> and he explained one of the features of *חזון* in Isaiah as follows: “To understand a *חזון* to be about the future helps clarify the recurring feature of a *חזון* as ushering in a time of ‘waiting.’ The ‘vision’ [*חזון*] is for another time; it is not directed primarily to the present time of the prophet himself.”<sup>521</sup> Conrad says as follows: “*חזון* concerns a period of time in the future.”<sup>522</sup> Concerning the deafness and blindness in Isaiah 6:9–10, Conrad said as follows: “As we will see, it is a future community, alluded to in the *חזון* itself that will open its eyes and ears to see, hear and understand the ‘vision.’ Isaiah can only wait in expectation for that day.”<sup>523</sup> Conrad’s future-oriented *חזון* does not completely fit with the birth motif approach that contains the dual view of the current and ultimate salvation. However, the future orientation as one of the features of *חזון* is a clue so that the audience may understand the present tense description as the future tense.

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<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>518</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson suggest the vision report as one of the subgenres of prophecy. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*, 2nd Edition., Invitation to Theological Studies Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021), 281.

<sup>519</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 96.

<sup>520</sup> Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism*, 183.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid. 186.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid. The “future community” may be little exaggerated in that Ahaz will see Hezekiah in 7:15–16. However, it is right that the sign will occur at certain points in the future.

## עִמָּנוּ אֵל

Smith summarized the five plausible identities of עִמָּנוּ אֵל that have been argued by scholars. First, עִמָּנוּ אֵל is the name of a son of an unidentified woman.<sup>524</sup> It appears to presuppose an unknown birth story outside the Bible. Second, עִמָּנוּ אֵל indicates Maher-shalal-hash-baz in 8:1–4,<sup>525</sup> who is a son of Isaiah. Third, עִמָּנוּ אֵל indicates Hezekiah,<sup>526</sup> who is a son of Ahaz. Fourth, עִמָּנוּ אֵל indicates Jesus Christ.<sup>527</sup> The last one is “two fulfillments: both a local birth and the future birth of the Messiah.”<sup>528</sup>

Since the Old Testament does not record the birth of Immanuel, it may be easier to approach the implication of the name rather than clarify the identity of the son. Giving some message through the names of the sons is a repetitive pattern in this context, as Shear-jashub mentioned in Isaiah 7:3 and Maher-shalal-hash-baz mentioned in 8:1–4. The fact that Isaiah referred to the name of Immanuel is crucial because the meaning of Immanuel, “God being with us,” is God’s promise for the Israelites to remember in the war context, and thus, the recognition of God’s presence is a solution to the psychological anxiety from the problematic situation (Deut. 20:1–4). Thus, Immanuel is not a new revelation but a name reminiscent of the existing promise. The vivid description of a pregnant woman bearing a son in Isaiah 7:14 might be the process for the final sake of revealing the name Immanuel. Oswalt emphasizes God’s presence as the “heart of the Old Testament experience” (Garden of Eden in Gen. 3:8,

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<sup>524</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 222.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, 225–226.

Isaac in 26:28, Joseph in 39:2–3, the Tabernacle in Exod. 40:38, Gideon in Judg. 6:12–13, David in 1 Sam. 18:12, 14, Asa in 2 Chr. 15:9, Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18:7, and Ezra in Ezra 1:3).<sup>529</sup> In addition, 2 Samuel 7:9, 1 Kings 1:37, 11:38, Psalms 23:4, 89:21, 24 also include the theme of God’s presence. Interestingly, these passages are related to David, kings, and the Davidic descendants.<sup>530</sup> These passages show the divine promise, human wish, and a faithful confession of God’s presence. When God made the covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7, God first promised to be with David and preserve the Davidic house, kingdom, and throne (2 Sam. 7:16). David himself experienced and confessed God’s constant being with him (Ps. 23:4). Psalm 89 was written with the remembrance of the Davidic covenant (Pss. 89:3–4). Solomon’s people expressed their wish for God’s being with Solomon (1 Kgs. 1:37). God also promised Jeroboam to be with him with the condition of obedience to His word (1 Kgs. 11:38). For the kings, God’s presence is promised with the same description of the “enduring (נצח) house” (2 Sam. 7:9; 1 Kgs. 11:38). Considering all these biblical examples, God’s presence is one of the major themes in the Old Testament. The name Immanuel, with such biblical implications, symbolically represents something else rather than indicates Immanuel as a real figure with the name of Immanuel.

Malachi 4:5 prophesies the coming of the prophet Elijah. However, it does not mean the resurrection of Elijah literally. The coming of Elijah was applied to John the Baptist (Lk. 1:17; Mt. 17:12–13). The name Elijah in Malachi 4:5 was the symbolic term used to denote someone who has not yet been revealed, and the audience could see a glimpse into the identity of the one through the name Elijah based on the accumulated imagery concerning

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<sup>529</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 144.

<sup>530</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 138.

Elijah. Elijah is a real figure, but the name Elijah in Malachi 4:5 is a symbol to indicate John the Baptist as a substance. Likewise, the name Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 is a symbol to indicate someone else. In light of the birth motif approach, Immanuel is the promise of God's presence, and it will be specified through the coming of the Savior and the appearance of the human agent. In this respect, the name Immanuel has a multi-layer of symbolism: God's presence, the human agent, and the Savior.

There are two symbolic usages of the name Immanuel in the book of Isaiah in addition to Isaiah 7:14. First, Isaiah 8:8 says as follows: "Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, It will reach as far as the neck; And the spread of its wings will fill the expanse of your land, *Immanuel*." This verse means God's punishment over Judah with the Assyrian soldiers, who are described as the "strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates River." Smith explained "Immanuel" in the last word in the verse as follows: "'Immanuel' would be a brief exclamation of grief or a prayer asking, 'God be with us' during this Assyria flood."<sup>531</sup> Young understands it as the prayer addressed to the Messiah, saying as follows: "Immanuel! Uttering that blessed name, the prophet has become emboldened, and addresses the nations with fresh courage. He can well be bold, for God is with him."<sup>532</sup> Isaiah 8:8 refers to "your land" (אֶרֶץְךָ) before Immanuel. The possessive pronoun leads to two plausible interpretations of Immanuel: God, who is the ultimate owner of the land (Lev. 25:23; Isa. 14:25), and the actual users, who are the descendants of Abraham (Gen. 12:7). The possessive pronoun is singular, and thus, Immanuel is likely to

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<sup>531</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 251–252.

<sup>532</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Chapters 1–18, 307.

symbolize God/Christ or a king who is the representative of the descendants. However, Immanuel may be able to indicate both in the dualistic light.<sup>533</sup>

Second, Isaiah 8:10 says as follows: “Devise a plan, but it will fail; State a proposal, but it will not stand, For God is with us (כִּי עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים).” As in Isaiah 8:8, the last word is Immanuel. This verse states the definite failure of enemies due to Immanuel, employing Immanuel to denote “God’s presence.” Smith says as follows: “The appeal to Immanuel for protection seems to cause the prophet to remember what God promised about his plans for his people in Zion.”<sup>534</sup> In Isaiah 8:10, the name Immanuel does not indicate a real figure but is a symbolic term to denote the promise of God’s presence. Unfortunately, Ahaz, who was the representative of Judah, has no faith in this promise (Isa. 7:2, 4, 12–13).

The Immanuel message in Isaiah 7:14 has the purpose of encouraging plural audiences (לְרַבִּים) to believe in the presence of God, and the encouragement fits with the purpose of prophetic writings. First, within the historical context, the current issue is the security of Jerusalem and the dynasty. With this regard, the promise of God’s presence is an encouraging word that the audience may have faith in God. Also, the birth announcement in Isaiah 7:14 is the way to expect the impending appearance of the human agent who will bring the salvific work. Second, given the future orientation of הַיּוֹם, the Christological meaning also can be considered. The plausibility of the Christological meaning can be surely supported by Immanuel’s birth in Matthew 1:23, which is the birth of Jesus Christ. These two

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<sup>533</sup> Motyer argues that Immanuel is a “royal heir.” Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, 94. Calvin explains why Isaiah did not refer to the holy land of God but refers to Christ’s land (Immanuel’s land) as follows: “He therefore means, that that desolation would not prevent the coming of the Redeemer, of whom he had formerly spoken. As if he had said, ‘Nevertheless, the land shall be thine, O Immanuel; in it shalt thou have thy residence and abode.’” Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 270. Oswalt says that it is the land of “God-with-us.” Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 150.

<sup>534</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 252.

connections, the historical context and Matthew's fulfillment description, can be simultaneously considered for the dual meanings of Isaiah 7:14. The birth motif approach is the interpretive way that may contain these two connections. It is noteworthy that the sign of Immanuel is prophesied in the form of the birth announcement in Isaiah 7:14 after the negative background description of the national crisis. The birth motif is used in Isaiah 7:14 to arouse the compressive imagery of God's salvation history shown in Chapters 3–4, which are the Savior, the human agent, reversal, and victory. To be specific, Isaiah 7:14 "symbolically" represents the two implications: the coming of Christ<sup>535</sup> and the appearance of Hezekiah,<sup>536</sup> who will be the mark related to the two enemies' destruction in Isaiah 7:16. Isaiah 7:14 does not directly refer to Christ or Hezekiah, but the birth motif in Isaiah 7:14 provides a clue to interpret Isaiah 7:14 dualistically in light of the human agent and the Savior. Furthermore, the dualistic view fits with the above connections: the historical context and Matthew 1:23. There are four issues left to clarify the thesis: 1) the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23, 2) the birth motif in Isaiah 7:14, 3) the link between Isaiah 7:14 and 7:15–16, and 4) Hezekiah as the human agent. These issues will be further dealt with in the next sections.

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<sup>535</sup> Christ, the incarnated God, is the most proper one who fits with the meaning of Immanuel. Here, Immanuel is a symbol to indicate Christ, who is God Himself.

<sup>536</sup> Considering the human agents in the narratives, the birth passages functioned to announce the impending appearances of the human agents that God called and used in that era. In this respect, the birth announcement here function to announce the appearance of the human agent. Also, God's salvific work through the human agents means "God's being with us" in that era. There are evidences of God's presence in Hezekiah's life. Immanuel is a symbol to stand for such Hezekiah.

### Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23

Matthew 1:22 says as follows: “Now all this took place so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled (ἵνα πληρωθῆ).” This denotes the birth of Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. The recognition of the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 depends on the understanding of the sense of πληρόω. This section will deal with 1) the definition of πληρόω, 2) D. A. Carson’s five categories of diverse explanations of the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23, 3) Matthew 1:23 as the typological fulfillment, and 4) the comparison of these views.

#### Definition of πληρόω

Matthew 1:23 is the citation of Isaiah 7:14, and before referring to Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:22 connects the birth of Jesus Christ and Isaiah 7:14 through the introduction, “Now all this took place so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled (πληρωθῆ).” Πληρόω has the meanings as follows: Πληρόω means 1) to make full, fill, 2) to complete a period of time, fill (up), complete, 3) to bring to completion that which was already begun, complete, finish, 4) to bring to a designed end, fulfill a prophecy, an obligation, a promise, a law, a request, a purpose, a desire, a hope, a duty, a fate, a destiny, etc.<sup>537</sup> Gerhard Dellinger similarly explains the definition of πληρόω as follows: Πληρόω means 1) to fill with a content, 2) to fulfill a demand or claim, 3) to fill up completely a

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<sup>537</sup> Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 828–829.

specific measure, 4) to complete, to fulfill prophetic sayings which were spoken with divine authority and which can thus be called directly the words of God.<sup>538</sup>

Πληρώω may mean “to fulfill a prophecy or promise” in Matthew 1:23. If it is so, Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 are in the typical relationship of the prophecy and fulfillment. However, if πληρώω is understood as “to fill with a content,” this understanding may open a new plausibility of a different perspective from the typical prophecy-fulfillment relation regarding Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23. With this regard, Wegner says as follows: “Matthew employs the Greek word πληρώω meaning “to make full, fill, fill up, complete,” to indicate that he believes the OT passage is being “filled up” by Jesus. Matthew thus understands the OT passage as a pattern that is being filled up with more meaning.”<sup>539</sup> He also says, “This is not to say that OT passages [Isaiah 7:14] are prophesying Jesus, since they can be completely understood within their OT content.”<sup>540</sup> The six interpretations below are related to how they understand the meaning of πληρώω.

A normal birth in Isaiah 7:14 and the casual application in Matthew 1:23

The first view is that “Isaiah [in Isaiah 7:14] meant that a young woman named her child Immanuel as a tribute to God’s presence and deliverance and that the passage applies to Jesus because Immanuel fits his mission.”<sup>541</sup> This view has been argued by W. C. van

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<sup>538</sup> Gerhard Delling, “Πλήρης, Πληρώω, Πλήρωμα, Αναπληρώω, Ανταναπληρώω, Έκπληρώω, Έκπληρωσις, Συμπληρώω, Πληροφορέω, Πληροφορία,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 291–297.

<sup>539</sup> Paul D. Wegner, “How many virgin births are in the Bible? (Isaiah 7:14): A prophetic pattern approach,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54, no. 3 (2011): 481.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

<sup>541</sup> D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 78.



Unnik.<sup>542</sup> Carson pointed out Van Unnik’s neglect of the implication of the sign from God in Isaiah 7:11 and 7:14.<sup>543</sup> In the Scripture, the sign’s function is to confirm the prophetic word or individual’s faith.<sup>544</sup> However, Van Unnik did not reflect the function of the sign and simply perceived a “very casual link between Isaiah and Matthew”<sup>545</sup> and did not consider *πληρόω* to fulfill the prophecy.

### *Sensus plenior*

W. S. LaSor understood the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 from the perspective of *sensus plenior* (fuller sense), which includes both the contemporary fulfillment in the era of Ahaz and the later fulfillment in Jesus Christ.<sup>546</sup> According to Douglas J. Moo, *sensus plenior* reflects “the idea that there is in many scriptural texts a ‘fuller sense’ than that consciously intended by the human author—a sense intended by God, the ultimate author of Scripture.”<sup>547</sup> Also, Raymond E. Brown explains *sensus plenior* as “that additional deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the

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<sup>542</sup> W.C. van Unnik, “Dominus Vobiscum,” *New Testament Essays*, ed. A.J.B. Higgins (Manchester: University Press, 1959), 270–305.

<sup>543</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 78.

<sup>544</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 142. See also, Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, 65. The section, “The Link between Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 7:15–16,” in this chapter deals with how the sign functions.

<sup>545</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 78.

<sup>546</sup> W.S. LaSor, “The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation,” ed. W. Ward Gasque and William S. LaSor, *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 271–72.

<sup>547</sup> Douglas J. Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 201.

understanding of revelation.”<sup>548</sup> This view is based on a presupposition that the human author cannot know the deeper meaning that will be revealed in the future. Thus, this second view basically asserts Isaiah 7:14 as predicting the birth of a son by a young woman or a virgin and the deliverance of Ahaz from his enemies at the time of the prophecy. In addition, it argues that the second fulfillment, which is referred to as a “later fulfillment,” is realized in Jesus Christ.<sup>549</sup> When it comes to LaSor’s explanation, Carson assessed as follows: “In addition to several deficiencies in interpreting Isaiah 7:14–17 (e.g., the supernaturalness of the sign in 7:11 is not continued in 7:14), this position is intrinsically unstable, seeking either a deeper connection between Isaiah and Matthew or less reliance on Matthew’s authority.”<sup>550</sup> Moreover, there is a negative evaluation concerning *sensus plenior* itself. Moo pointed out the “lack of objective controls renders it liable to abuse.”<sup>551</sup> Moo also said that no biblical text clearly teaches *sensus plenior*, and no biblical text clearly refutes *sensus plenior*.<sup>552</sup>

Matthew 1:23 as the predictive fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14

The third view concerning Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 is the prophecy-fulfillment relationship. This view understands the Greek verb πληρώω as “to fulfill the prophecy or promise.” According to this view, Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 indicates Jesus Christ, and Matthew 1:23 describes the predictive fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. In this position, the translation of הַלְּמָוִי into virgin and παρθένοϋ is a shred of crucial evidence to support the

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<sup>548</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The ‘Sensus Plenior’ of Sacred Scripture* (Baltimore: St. Mary’s University, 1955), 92.

<sup>549</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 78.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” 202.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid., 203.

argument.<sup>553</sup> As it is dealt with in Chapter 2, the church traditionally has understood that Isaiah 7:14 includes the embedded Christological meaning and that *עַלְמָה* is a virgin until the appearance of Gesenius in the nineteenth century. That being said, Carson evaluates the predictive fulfillment view as follows: “But it puts more strain on the relation of a sign to Ahaz. It seems weak to say that before a period of time equivalent to the length of time between Jesus’ (Immanuel’s) conception and his reaching an age of discretion Ahaz’s enemies will be destroyed.”<sup>554</sup> The embedded Christological or the predictive fulfillment view of Isaiah 7:14 cannot provide proper explanations related to the historical situation in the era of Ahaz. However, since Isaiah 7:14 was cited in the birth of Jesus as its fulfillment in Matthew 1:23, it is difficult to deny the Christological meaning embedded within Isaiah 7:14. The relationship between the two passages cannot sufficiently be explained as Matthew’s observation of historical correspondences. Rather, the two passages are more desirable to be understood as a relationship between the Old Testament prophecy and the New Testament fulfillment. Leon Morris agreed with this view. He focused on the inspiration of the Isaian prophecy and Matthew’s serious acceptance of the prophecy.<sup>555</sup> At least, the citation of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23 provides the most evidence to connect the Immanuel prophecy with Christ.

#### Immanuel as the righteous remnant in Isaiah 7:14 and its application in Matthew 1:23

The fourth view of the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 is asserted by Gene Rice. Compared to other views, this view approaches the woman and her son in

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<sup>553</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 79.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 30–31.

Isaiah 7:14 from a more symbolic aspect, not a literal aspect. Rice considered that the remnant is Immanuel, and his mother or the maiden in Isaiah 7:14 is Zion or Jerusalem (1:8; 1:21; 10:32; 16:1; 22:4).<sup>556</sup> Also, Rice connected Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 in light of Jesus as the new remnant and the fulfillment of the symbolic prophecy. Rice argued that God's kingdom movement, which Jesus initiated, is to give birth new remnants, and thus, Jesus becomes the "ultimate fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy."<sup>557</sup>

Carson cast doubt on this view as follows: "Yet this sounds contrived. Would Ahaz have understood the words so metaphorically? And though Jesus sometimes appears to recapitulate Israel, it is doubtful that NT writers ever thought Mary recapitulates Zion."<sup>558</sup> Having said that, given the absence of the birth account of Immanuel as a real figure, the application of Isaiah 7:14 only to the birth of Jesus, and Isaiah's frequent metaphoric usages in this context,<sup>559</sup> the symbolic understanding of Immanuel might appear to be more reasonable than the literal application in the stance of the New Testament readers. For Ahaz, it might have been difficult to understand the words metaphorically. However, it is also challenging for the New Testament readers to understand Immanuel as the real name of a figure due to the fulfillment in Matthew 1:23.

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<sup>556</sup> Gene Rice, "A Neglected Interpretation of the Immanuel Prophecy," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90, no. 2 (1978): 222–223.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>558</sup> Carson, "Matthew," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 79.

<sup>559</sup> Even though I do not completely agree with Rice's position, the symbolic approach is noteworthy because Isaiah 7 is full of the metaphoric usages. Isaiah 7:4 refers to "stumps of smoldering logs" to indicate the fruitless alliance. Isaiah 7:15 refers to "curds and honey" to indicate "poverty" or "nomadic lifestyle." In addition to these, Isaiah 7:18–25 is full of the metaphoric expressions.

## Isaiah 7:14 for the future confirmation of Matthew 1:23

The last view that Carson summarized is the view of J. A. Motyer. Carson assessed it as the most plausible view and the modified version of the third view,<sup>560</sup> which understands Isaiah 7:14 as Christological and Matthew 1:23 as the predictive fulfillment. Motyer said as follows: “The biblical claim that the Immanuel prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ is not only and obviously justified, ... Clearly also in Him the full implications of Immanuel’s birth of the עִלְמָה are realized.”<sup>561</sup> When it comes to Motyer’s view, it is noteworthy how he understood the implication of the sign. He said, “The Immanuel prophecy is presented as a divinely given ‘sign,’” and he focused on the “ambivalence of the use of the ‘sign’ in the Old Testament.”<sup>562</sup> He suggested the two usages of the sign: the “present persuader” and the “future confirmation.” The former use can be explained by the case of Moses in Exodus 4:8–9, and the latter use can be explained by Exodus 3:12.<sup>563</sup> Unlike the present persuader, the future confirmation cannot be shown in the present situation. Isaiah 7:14 should be understood in light of the future confirmation.

Even though Motyer has the embedded Christological conclusion of Isaiah 7:14, he tried to understand the meaning of Isaiah 7:14 in light of the overall context. He says that the future confirmation includes a series of processes to confirm the divine origin.<sup>564</sup> He referred to three facts related to the birth of Immanuel as follows: “First, Immanuel’s birth follows at

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<sup>560</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, 79.

<sup>561</sup> J. A. Motyer, “Context and Content in the Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14,” *Tyndale bulletin*. 21, no. 1 (1970): 125.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*

least the presently coming events; second, he will be born at a time when the Davidic dynasty will be ‘disestablished’; and third, because he is called Immanuel, the situation cannot be devoid of hope.”<sup>565</sup> In addition, Motyer focused on the repetitive pattern in Isaiah 7–11. Isaiah 7:1–9:7 is about Judah, and Isaiah 9:8–11:16 is about Ephraim. Each tribe includes the descriptions of the same four factors: the moment of decision (7:1–17, 9:8–10:4), the judgment (7:18–8:8, 10:5–15), the remnant (8:9–22, 10:16–34), and the glorious hope (9:1–7, 11:1–16).<sup>566</sup> In this respect, Motyer understands Isaiah 7:14 as one of the pieces of the grand picture from a long-term perspective, recognizing Immanuel’s sign as the future confirmation.

Matthew 1:23 as the typological fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14

In addition to the five views of the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 that has been summarized by Carson, James M. Hamilton Jr. suggested a view to see the relation of the two verses in light of the typological fulfillment based on the parallelism between the two historical contexts. Hamilton observed the common features of the two historical contexts of Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 in the political-military and spiritual aspects. Judah in Ahaz’s era was threatened by Aram and Israel, while Judah in Matthew’s era was ruled by Rome. Also, Ahaz, the king of Jerusalem, was faithless, while the ruler of Jerusalem was a non-Jewish unbeliever.<sup>567</sup> Second, Hamilton Jr. argued for the aspect of escalation in typological fulfillment. He says as follows: “The meaning of these events is

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<sup>565</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 122–123.

<sup>567</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., “‘The Virgin Will Conceive’: Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18–23,” in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 240.

intensified by the coming of the Messiah and the period in salvation history that begins with his arrival.”<sup>568</sup>

The typological fulfillment view of Matthew 1:23 contrasts with the predictive fulfillment view of Matthew 1:23. The former understands Isaiah 7:14 thoroughly within the historical context and does not admit the predictive elements of the birth of Jesus Christ in the distant future. According to this view, the term “fulfill” mentioned in Matthew 1:23 is not about fulfilling the “prediction” but the “typology” in the aspect of the similarity between the two passages. Hamilton understood the typological fulfillment view as the “fullest expression of a significant pattern of events,” which is divinely designed.<sup>569</sup>

Moo explains typological fulfillment as follows: “Without attempting anything approaching a definitive definition, we suggest that typology is best viewed as a specific form of the larger ‘promise-fulfillment’ scheme that provides the essential framework within which the relationship of the Testaments must be understood.”<sup>570</sup> He also explains the intention of the prophet as follows: “If by ‘intended’ is meant that the participants in the Old Testament situation, or the author of the text that records it, were always cognizant of the typological significance, we would respond negatively.”<sup>571</sup> Moo referred to typological fulfillment as a “larger promise-fulfillment scheme,” but he was not sure of the prophet’s intention, which contains the prediction of the distant future. He specifically explained as follows: “The ‘anticipatory’ element in these typological experiences may sometimes have been more or less dimly perceived by the participants and human authors; but it is to be

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<sup>568</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid., 233–234.

<sup>570</sup> Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” 196.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

ascribed finally to God, who ordered these events in such a way that they would possess a ‘prophetic’ function.”<sup>572</sup> Hamilton explains the typological fulfillment in Matthew through the historical correspondences.<sup>573</sup> However, his explanation of the historical correspondences may be rather conducive to supporting the embedded meaning view because the historical situation itself can be prophetic. That is the same as Abraham’s sojourn in Egypt, which foreshadowed the future Israelites’ sojourn in Egypt.

The comparison of the views

The first view (a normal birth) is similar to the sixth view (typological fulfillment) in that neither view allows for the embedded Christological meaning of Isaiah 7:14. However, the third view (predictive) and the fifth view (future confirmation) share the commonality in that they agree with the embedded Christological meaning in Isaiah 7:14, which is recognized by the human author. The fourth view (righteous remnant) is also close to the third and fifth views because it accepts the evident prophecy-fulfillment relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23. The second view (*sensus plenior*) admits the embedded Christological meaning in Isaiah 7:14 but considers that Isaiah could not catch the Christological meaning in Isaiah 7:14. Thus, the above six specific categories can be largely summarized again into three broad categories: predictive, typological, and *sensus plenior*.

Comparing predictive fulfillment and typological fulfillment, the former tends to focus on the direct connection between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23, while the latter tends to focus on the historical context and the repetitive pattern. When it comes to the mind of Isaiah, predictive fulfillment proponents consider that Isaiah exactly predicted the birth of

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<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Hamilton Jr., “‘The Virgin Will Conceive’: Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18–23,” 242–246.



Messiah with clear knowledge, while typological fulfillment proponents are not sure of whether the prophet evidently recognized it or not.

When comparing the *sensus plenior* and the typological fulfillment, they share at least the same view of Isaiah's mind. Moreover, the "deeper meaning" that the *sensus plenior* proponents argue is similar to the "escalation" (or the fullest expression) that the typological fulfillment view proposes.<sup>574</sup> Hamilton explained as follows: "Whereas the deliverance guaranteed by the birth of a child in Isaiah has to do with the threat from Syria and Ephraim, the deliverance guaranteed by the birth of the child in Matthew goes deeper: he will save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21)."<sup>575</sup> However, *sensus plenior* admits continuous flow of Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23, while the typological view tends to focus on the temporal gap between the two passages. The former emphasizes that there was already a deeper meaning looking to the birth of Jesus in Isaiah 7:14 when the divine author God revealed it, whether the human author Isaiah intended it or not. However, the latter emphasizes Isaiah 7:14 should be primarily understood within the context of the days of Ahaz, and the human author Matthew also recognized the unique context of Isaiah 7:14. The citation of Matthew 1:23 was done by Matthew's observation of the historical correspondence of the two distinct but similar contexts. The predictive fulfillment view and *sensus plenior* view admit the predictive element embedded in Isaiah 7:14, but the typological fulfillment view tends to deny the predictive element embedded in Isaiah 7:14. At least Hamilton denied it, but Moo could accept its possibility.

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<sup>574</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid., 241.

For Hamilton Jr., Matthew 1:23 is understood in light of the typological fulfillment that employs the meaning of πληρώω as “to fill with a content,” not “to fulfill the prophecy.” He suggests Matthew 2:15 as the evidence of the typological fulfillment in Matthew’s usage of πληρώω. Matthew 2:15 cites Hosea 11:1: “When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.” Hamilton Jr. says as follows: “In its OT context, this verse is manifestly not a prediction that one day the Messiah will be summoned from Egypt. Rather, the reference in Hosea 11:1 to God’s son is a reference to the nation, as the statements preceding and following the words Matthew cites show.”<sup>576</sup> The plausibility of the “embedded Christological meaning” in Hosea 11:1 is the very point where the typological view and the embedded meaning views (the predictive fulfillment view and *sensus plenior*) may conflict. Based on the fulfillment in Matthew 2:15, the embedded meaning views can argue for the predictive element or deeper meaning in Hosea 11:1 that will be revealed and fulfilled in the future despite the seeming inconsistency with the surrounding context. However, the typological view may not allow for predictive fulfillment and only may see the historical-contextual connections limited to the narrow range when it comes to Hosea 11:1. Carson gives a crucial clue to refute Hamilton’s view as follows: “It is better to say that Hosea, building on existing revelation, grasped the messianic nuances of the ‘son’ language already applied to Israel and David’s promised heir in previous revelation so that had he been able to see Matthew’s use of [Hosea] 11:1, he would not have disapproved, even if messianic nuances were not in his mind when he wrote that verse.”<sup>577</sup> Willis Judson Beecher supports

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>577</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” 92.

this view as follows: “In the places in which Israel or David or David’s seed are designated as Yahaweh’s son, that word is to be regarded as a messianic term.”<sup>578</sup>

The most evident and comprehensive principle, which interpreters should consider, is that the whole Old Testament converges on Jesus Christ (Jn. 5:39). Therefore, Matthew’s usage of πληρῶω in the sense of “to fulfill the prophecy” is not excessive in interpreting Matthew 2:15. The whole Old Testament has gradually shed light on the shape of the woman’s Descendant through diverse events in the history since the revelation of Genesis 3:15. Also, it is not necessary to approach Matthew 1:23 in light of the typological fulfillment or *sensus plenior*, which assumes the fundamental absence or Isaiah’s possible ignorance of the Messianic implication in Isaiah 7:14 because Isaiah 7:14 contains an evident interpretive clue, which is the birth motif. The discussion on Isaiah’s mind, whether he was aware of the Christological implication embedded in Isaiah 7:14 or not, is the realm of assumption, but the birth motif in Isaiah 7:14 is the clear pattern repeated throughout the Old Testament. Also, the pattern is not coincidental but divinely designed for the ultimate salvation.

### **Birth Motif in Isaiah 7:14**

There are two facets to consider when interpreting Isaiah 7:14 from the perspective of the birth motif: the continuity with Adamic and Abrahamic descendants and the continuity with Genesis 3:15. The former is related to the human agents’ features, while the latter is related to the dualistic implications: the human agent and the Savior. First, the birth announcement in Isaiah 7:14 can be seen in the light of the birth announcements dealt with in

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<sup>578</sup> Willis Judson Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise: Being for Substance the Lectures for 1902–1903 on the L. P. Stone Foundation in the Princeton Theological Seminary* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1905), 331.

Chapters 3–4. In the previous chapter, there are birth announcements for Isaac and Samson before conception, and there is a prenatal oracle for Jacob. In these ways, God revealed the identities of the infants who would be born. Also, even though other birth passages dealt with in Chapters 3–4 do not employ the form of preannouncement, their birth records are introduced before describing the main narratives of their lives as human agents for God’s salvific works. Likewise, Isaiah 7:14 preannounces the symbolic birth of Immanuel, who is the symbolic figure,<sup>579</sup> and then Isaiah 7:16 predicts the upcoming crucial event related to the period while Immanuel grows. Isaiah 7:14–16 describes a vision filled with symbolic expressions, but this passage takes the typical structure of the birth passages.

The birth motif in the Adamic and Abrahamic descendants implies the victory and reversal imageries that conquer the serpent in Genesis 3:15. The descendants’ births are accompanied by overcoming the infanticide or the women’s barrenness, and their lives are described in the background of the conflict. Moreover, there are negative descriptions of the fallen and problematic background before or around their births: the fall of humankind before Abel’s birth, the pervasive evil in Noah’s era, the Babel story before the appearance of Abrahamic lineage, the Egyptian oppression during Moses’ era, the Israelites’ evil and the Philistine oppression during Samson’s era, and the spiritual and military crisis during Samuel’s era. Nevertheless, God achieved the salvific plan in each era through the godly descendants. God revealed what faith and righteousness are through Abel’s offering and death, which contrasts with the first disobedience of his parents. Noah’s life was used to reveal God’s sovereign grace to preserve humankind and creation despite corrupt human

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<sup>579</sup> As mentioned before, there are four evidence to support Immanuel as the symbolic figure: 1) the absent record of Immanuel’s birth, 2) the only application of Isaiah 7:14 to Christ’s birth (Nevertheless, Jesus was not called Immanuel), 3) the frequent metaphoric usages in Isaiah 7, and 4) symbolic usages of Immanuel in Isaiah 8. The symbolism of Immanuel is analogous to the symbolism of עֶרֶב in Genesis 3:15. Both are designed to be ambiguous.

nature. God revealed through the Abrahamic lineage His grand plan of a great nation, which is different from the human plan of the tower of Babel. God revealed through Moses the spiritual identity of a great nation, defeating Egypt. God revealed through Samson and Samuel the grace of salvation and restoration. Furthermore, these multiple human agents are closely related to the divine Savior because God's salvific works in their lives foreshadow salvation through Christ, and the godly line paves the way for Christ to come.

The symbolic birth of Immanuel, seen in a vision in Isaiah 7:14, arouses this accumulated hopeful imagery in that the birth theme has repeatedly been mentioned in the Old Testament. It is possible to trace the specific implications of Immanuel's symbolic birth through Isaiah 7:15–16, which is linked to Isaiah 7:14, and Matthew 1:23, in which Matthew cited Isaiah 7:14. The former means the appearance of a human agent who will achieve the current God's salvific work,<sup>580</sup> and the latter represents the coming of the Savior who will achieve the ultimate God's salvific purpose.

Isaiah 7:14 and its context contain hints to imply the upcoming salvation, including the birth announcement form and the crisis context with the name Immanuel mentioned above. These were repetitive patterns in the birth passages and crucial theology for the Israelites. In the historical background of Ahaz's era, a security issue originated from neighboring nations, and Judah was in an unstable situation. Unsecured Judah means that the crisis threatens to preserve the godly line. Isaiah 7:1–2 portrays the unstable conditions before the appearance of the human agent, and Isaiah 7:2 and 12–13 describe the unfaithfulness of

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<sup>580</sup> Hezekiah, who will be dealt with in the next section, does not match this birth announcement in terms of chronological calculation. However, the symbolic or metaphoric reading solves this problem. Isaiah 7:14 is not Hezekiah's birth announcement but symbolically indicates Hezekiah's impending appearance, who was already born. He will be proved as the one in Isaiah 7:14 as he grows (Isa. 7:15–16). Malachi 4:5 shows an opposite case that has the same principle. God did not "send Elijah" as God said, but "John the Baptist was born." In these cases, the symbolic or metaphoric reading is required, not the plain reading.

Ahaz and David's house. Describing this negative background, Isaiah 7:14 announces the appearance of the human agent God calls to use in that era. This pattern is similar to the one shown in the births of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samson, and Samuel.<sup>581</sup>

That being said, the birth announcement in Isaiah 7:14 is different from the birth passages of human agents dealt with in Chapters 3–4 in that there is no human agent called Immanuel in the Scripture. In Chapters 3–4, the births of Adamic and Abrahamic descendants are followed by the narratives of their actual lives, and the announcements or records of the births function to highlight the figures in the following narratives. However, there is no narrative of Immanuel in the following paragraphs. The accumulated understanding of Adamic and Abrahamic descendants is useful in understanding Isaiah 7:14 in light of the typical birth passage pattern: the negative background descriptions and the hopeful appearance of the human agent. However, it is not sufficient to explain the full meanings of Isaiah 7:14 only in light of the continuity with the Adamic-Abrahamic descendants' births because Isaiah 7:14 is characterized by the absence of the narrative that portrays the real life of the one born. With this regard, the continuity of Genesis 3:15, which initially refers to the Descendant or descendants, also should be considered when interpreting Isaiah 7:14.

The woman's זָרַע in Genesis 3:15 is analogous to the woman's son, Immanuel, in Isaiah 7:14 in terms of its symbolic description. The woman's זָרַע in Genesis 3:15 is not explicitly connected to any of the following births. Thus, scholars suggested different explanations of זָרַע. As shown in Chapter 3, some understand זָרַע as singular (individual), and others understand it as multiple (collective) because both meanings are included in the

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<sup>581</sup> This similarity can be explained by the term “historical correspondence,” which the typological fulfillment view argued for. However, I use this term with the “forward-looking,” not the backward-looking. God intelligently designed the primitive form in the previous events and repeatedly used it in the following events.

Hebrew term *אָרַע*.<sup>582</sup> As one of the readings, Derek Kidner suggested the dualistic interpretation regarding *אָרַע* in Genesis 3:15. *אָרַע* is individual and simultaneously collective because Jesus, as an individual, summed up mankind as collective in Himself.<sup>583</sup> Dualistic reading is different from the reading that recognizes the birth of an Adamic or Abrahamic descendant as only the birth of an individual. According to the dualistic view of *אָרַע*, Genesis 3:15 can be understood as the summary of the coming of the Savior, the appearance of the multiple human agents, and their fight against the serpent's side. The serpent in Genesis 3:15 does not literally indicate the kind of animal<sup>584</sup> but symbolically indicates the spiritual being who tempted the first humans and continued to bruise the heels of the descendants, even the heel of Christ on the cross.<sup>585</sup> In this respect, Genesis 3:15 provides a symbolic and compressive portrayal of the coming history. As in the case of the woman's *אָרַע* in Genesis 3:15, the birth of Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 should not be interpreted literally and fragmentarily but symbolically and dualistically. The birth of Immanuel denotes the dual implications that include the coming of the Savior and the appearance of the human agent. Thus, Isaiah 7:14 has the embedded Christological meaning connected to Matthew 1:23. Simultaneously, Isaiah 7:14 is related to God's impending salvation through the human agent in the crisis context.

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<sup>582</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 283.

<sup>583</sup> Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 75–76.

<sup>584</sup> It is evident that the serpent, as the kind of animal, tempted the woman. However, there was an evil spiritual being behind the serpent. The serpent is mortal, but the spiritual being behind the serpent remains throughout history. Thus, the serpent in Genesis 3:15 indicates the spiritual being.

<sup>585</sup> Revelation 12:1–17 also provides the symbolic portrayal of the woman, the son, and the dragon, which echoes Genesis 3:15. George Eldon Ladd summarizes the four methods of interpretation on Revelation: Preterist, Historical, Idealist, and Futurist. These four views have in common that the book of Revelation uses “symbolism.” George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 10–14.

In order to perceive the full meanings within Isaiah 7:14, it is required to understand the accumulated imagery of the birth motif through the history from Genesis 3:15 to the multiple human agents' births in the Old Testament because the history reflects the dualistic view based on the unity between human agents and the Savior. The unity between a human agent and the Savior is the reason why Genesis 3:15 employs the Hebrew term *נָרַע*, which includes both singular and collective meanings. Genesis 3:15 reveals two but unified implications through the term *נָרַע* that can be dualistically interpreted. Human agents are distinct from the divine Savior, but they are united for the salvific purpose. In light of the mysterious unity reflected in *נָרַע*, the Savior has always been with the human agents and His people throughout history. The introduction of the birth passages in the Old Testament highlighted the appearance of human agents. Some aspects of human agents' lives foreshadowed the coming Savior, and the godly line, which consists of the human agents, paved the way for His coming. That implies a strong connection between the human agent and the Savior. Also, their births and lives showed the imagery of reversal and victory through overcoming adversities. Thus, birth passages became a formula to imply a hopeful message to reverse the negative situation and make the readers expect the coming salvific events. However, Isaiah 7:14 functions more than this. The verse also reveals the ultimate dimension of salvation, the coming of the Messiah that will be referred to as a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23. The unidentifiable son, who is symbolically described without the biographic narrative, is evidence of the intentional design to denote the dual implications of the Savior and the human agent.



### The Link between Isaiah 7:14 and 7:15–16

After Isaiah 7:14, the rest of the chapter continues to portray the visual images given by God. If Isaiah 7:14 is understood in light of the purely Christological view, Isaiah 7:15–17 can be an obstacle that conflicts with it. Geoffrey W. Grogan said as follows: “If v.14 were not followed by vv.15–17, we could make a straightforward equation of Immanuel with the Messiah; but this context raises major problems. These verses certainly imply a close historical relationship between the child and the political situation of Isaiah’s day.”<sup>586</sup> Isaiah 7:14 provides a compressive and comprehensive picture that includes the dualistic implications of the Savior and a human agent. Then, Isaiah 7:15–16 goes into the specific and partial picture related to the historical meaning. In Isaiah 7:15, the Hebrew preposition  $\text{כִּי}$  can be a translative issue because it has diverse meanings as follows: 1) to, towards, 2) purpose, aim of a movement, 3) temporally: a. until, b. at, c. for a time, while, etc.<sup>587</sup> NASB 2020 renders as follows: “He will eat curds and honey at the time ( $\text{כִּי}$ ) He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.” NIV also translates the Hebrew preposition ( $\text{כִּי}$ ) as “when,” and LEB renders it into “until.” These indicate the temporal sense. However, Smith translates Isaiah 7:15 in the Hebrew text as follows: “Curds and honey he will eat in order that ( $\text{כִּי}$ ) he may know to reject what is bad and to choose what is good.”<sup>588</sup>

When it comes to “curds and honey,” there are different understandings, but scholars tend to understand curds and honey in a symbolic way and conclude that it means more than

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<sup>586</sup> Geoffrey W. Grogan, “Isaiah,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 64.

<sup>587</sup> Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 508–509.

<sup>588</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 238.

simple food. “Symbolic” means there is a substance that a symbol denotes. First, Young said that they are a “symbolic royal diet.”<sup>589</sup> Here, curds and honey denote the food of the king’s family. Second, Calvin explains that curds and honey are a normal Jewish custom for children.<sup>590</sup> This view seems a plain reading. However, Calvin, who interpreted Isaiah 7:14–16 in the purely Christological aspect, interpreted curds and honey as a way of showing the “true human nature of Christ.”<sup>591</sup> Third, Motyer says that curds and honey are used to mean that the child will grow up in poverty.<sup>592</sup> Smith also gives a similar explanation as Motyer: “Isaiah uses these terms to describe a return to a nomadic lifestyle, as opposed to a settled farming context. In light of the negative use of this same terminology in Isaiah 7:21–22, it is better to interpret curds and honey in Isaiah 7:15 as evidence that this son will live in a time of deprivation (a weak agricultural economy).”<sup>593</sup> These scholars tend to understand curds and honey metaphorically and symbolically. They did not stop to read the literal dimension of curds and honey but tried to search for the real meaning behind curds and honey. Smith provides the combined interpretation of curds and honey and the Hebrew proposition  $\text{ל}$  as follows: “This son will live in a difficult era ‘in order that/so that’ he will make good and just decisions and reject evil choices. This implies that this godly son will reject Ahaz’s wicked and faithless life and rule the nation following the ideal of justice.”<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, 291.

<sup>590</sup> Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 249.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, 89.

<sup>593</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 238.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid.

It is noteworthy that domestic and international affairs occurred while Hezekiah was growing. Hezekiah did not live the nomadic lifestyle in the literal sense, but he saw the harsh results that his father Ahaz caused, including idolatry and the humiliating domination of Assyria. The harsh environment spiritually and politically could let Hezekiah learn royal wisdom to reject Ahaz's evil and follow God's way. Isaiah 7:16 foretells the demise of the two enemies that Ahaz feared in Isaiah 7:2. The accurate time of their demise is "before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and to choose the good." If we assume that this prophecy had been given in 735 B.C., which is the first year of Ahaz's reign,<sup>595</sup> Hezekiah would have been around nine years old at that time (cf. 2 Kgs. 16:1–2; 18:1–2).<sup>596</sup> In 733–732 B.C., the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III campaigned against the Syro-Ephraimite league that had an anti-Assyrian policy. In 732 B.C., Damascus was captured by Tiglath-pileser III, and Rezin was put to death (2 Kgs. 16:9). The Israelite territory in Galilee and Transjordan was also captured, and the inhabitants were deported.<sup>597</sup> Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the immediate future when Ahaz could see. The demise of the two nations occurred in Hezekiah's childhood when he did not yet have a proper understanding of the times. It may be considered the time "before knowing how to refuse the evil and choose the good."

### **Hezekiah as the Human Agent**

Hezekiah can be recognized as a Davidic descendant who is narrower than the Abrahamic descendants. The distinction between the Davidic and Abrahamic descendants is

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<sup>595</sup> Bright, *A History of Israel*, Chronological Chart-Ca. Mid-Eight to Mid Sixth Centuries.

<sup>596</sup> St. Jerome, *St. Jerome: Commentary on Isaiah: Including St. Jerome's Translation of Origen's Homilies 1–9 on Isaiah*, 171.

<sup>597</sup> Younger Jr., "Aram and the Arameans," 255–256.

related to establishing the Davidic dynasty and covenant that includes a new promise of the descendant, house, and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12–16), and the ultimate Savior comes as the king of the Davidic line. Thus, it is important to preserve the Davidic line to pave the way for the coming of Christ (2 Sam. 7:16). The kingship of Judah, as the representative of the people, is supposed to be the office of the human agency between God and the people in the covenantal relationship (2 Kgs. 23:1–3; Jer. 34:8),<sup>598</sup> and the life of Hezekiah shows the features of the human agent.

First, Hezekiah contrasts with Ahaz, who committed idolatry, relied on the Assyrian army, and refused to ask God's sign. Hezekiah removed all the elements of idolatry (2 Kgs. 18:4), went into the house of the Lord and prayed to God when Jerusalem was threatened by Assyria (19:1, 15) and asked God's sign to confirm his recovery (20:8). The miraculous victory overnight against the Assyrian army (2 Kgs. 19:35) and miraculous healing (20:7) are examples of the reversal and victory that overcome lethal threats. All these show that Hezekiah was a man of faith. Second, there was God's revelation for Hezekiah and Judah through miracles (2 Kgs. 19:35; 20:7) and signs (19:29–33; 20:11). God frequently spoke to Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah (2 Kgs. 19:20–34; 20:1–11; 20:16–18). These show that God revealed His will and power to Hezekiah. Lastly, the miraculous victory overnight against Assyria (2 Kgs. 19:35) and the healing story (20:6) are examples of preserving the godly line. The godly line could be preserved by avoiding the Assyrian mass deportation policy, and Hezekiah's heir was born during the period of the prolonged fifteen years. In conclusion, the life of Hezekiah shows faith, revelation, and preservation, which are the features of the human agent.

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<sup>598</sup> Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, 235.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

This dissertation raised an interpretive issue of Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah 7:14 has been traditionally recognized as the Messianic prophecy, but the appearance of Gesenius brought about a new attempt at interpreting Isaiah 7:14 limited in the historical context. The historical view emphasizes the historical context of Isaiah 7:14, and the Christological view emphasizes the hints of the Messiah in Isaiah 7:14. The eclectic views are also divided into two groups depending on whether they admit the embedded meaning of Christ within Isaiah 7:14. With this regard, this dissertation pursued a new approach based on the birth motif characterized by Genesis 3:15 and the birth passages.

### An Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 Based on the Birth Motif

The Birth motif approach contains symbolic and dualistic reading based on the accumulated implications of Genesis 3:15 and the birth passages: the impending appearance of the human agent, the ultimate salvation through the divine Savior, and the derivative meanings of reversal and victory. In the dualistic light, Isaiah 7:14 announces the impending appearance of Hezekiah as the human agent and the coming of Christ as the ultimate Savior, and this dualism in the birth motif is fundamentally possible due to the unity between the multiple human agents and the singular Savior.

### **Isaiah 7:14 Utilizes the Birth Symbolically and Dualistically.**

Isaiah 7:14 takes the typical features of the birth passages, which are the negative background description and the birth announcement form. These features arouse the expectation of the upcoming salvific work. The birth motif has accumulated multi-layered imagery of birth from Genesis 3:15 to the Adamic-Abrahamic descendants: the Savior, the

multiple human agents, reversal, and victory. Genesis 3:15 dualistically revealed the singular Descendant and the collective descendants, who would bruise the serpent's head. Also, the descendants, as human agents, were used to bring reversal and victory in each era through revelation, faith, and preservation until the Savior's decisive victory was achieved. Isaiah 7:14 utilizes the birth motif to recall these imageries, not preannouncing a birth straightforwardly. Thus, it is possible to say that Isaiah 7:14 utilizes the birth motif symbolically. The symbolic employment of the birth motif means that Isaiah 7:14 should not be read plainly in the literal dimension. Isaiah 7:14 does not intend to announce the actual birth of a real figure but intends to arouse the accumulated implications of the birth. That is the reason why the child's birth in Isaiah 7:14 is chronologically unmatched with Hezekiah's birth and contextually unmatched with Christ's birth. In the symbolic light, Immanuel's birth basically represents the human agent and the Savior. These are evidence of Immanuel, God being with us.

### **Isaiah 7:14 Announces the Appearance of Hezekiah and the Coming of Christ.**

Isaiah 7:14 has two biblical connections: Isaiah 7:15–16 and Matthew 1:23. Isaiah 7:15–16 describes the growth of the symbolic figure Immanuel born in Isaiah 7:14, saying that the two enemies' land will be abandoned while Immanuel grows. In the historical light, Aram and Israel were destroyed by Tiglath-pileser III's military campaign in 733–732 B.C, which is the childhood of Hezekiah. Also, Matthew 1:23 is the restatement of Isaiah 7:14 in the situation of Christ's birth. Matthew evidently says that Christ's birth is a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. The sum of the two biblical connections corresponds to the whole register of the birth motif: the human agent and the Savior. The vague but comprehensive description of Isaiah 7:14 is fleshed out as the two distinct meanings in the two distinct passages: Isaiah

7:15–16 and Matthew 1:23. The root of the birth motif is Genesis 3:15. עֲרֵב in Genesis 3:15 is symbolic and compresses both the singular Savior and the multiple human agents. Likewise, Isaiah 7:14 symbolically compresses dual meanings: Hezekiah and Christ by employing the birth motif. Isaiah 7:14 does not explicitly refer to Hezekiah and chronologically unfits with Hezekiah's birth. However, Isaiah 7:14 is a symbolic vision that should not be read plainly. Moreover, Isaiah 7:15–16, which is part of the whole sign, implies Hezekiah. Hezekiah was the king of Judah who faithfully obeyed the will of God in that era. The life of Hezekiah shows the features of the human agent: faith, revelation, and preservation. Hezekiah followed God as other human agents did, and God achieved the salvific work in that era. In this respect, Hezekiah is worthy of being considered part of the godly line between Genesis 3:15 and Christ.

The typical features of the human agent foreshadow Christ, who came as the ultimate Savior. The birth of Christ was a miraculous birth from the virgin Mary (Mt. 1:18), and His birth and identity were preannounced by an angel of the Lord (Mt. 1:21), and the birth narrative had the background of infanticide (Mt. 2:16). The theme of conflict is also seen in various relationships with political leaders (Mt. 2:13; 27:2), religious leaders (Mt. 12:14; 26:3–4), people in the hometown (Mt. 13:57), the devil (Mt. 4:1; 16:23), and even disciples (Mt. 26:14–16, 56). Furthermore, Jesus said that all would hate the disciples for His name's sake (Mt. 10:22). However, Jesus has a solid faith in obeying the will of Father despite suffering (Mt. 26:39). In the aspect of revelation, Jesus Himself is the word of God (Jn. 1:14), and Jesus, as the one sent by God, delivered the word of God (Jn. 3:34). Lastly, the resurrection of Jesus is the best example of preservation. God raised Jesus from death (Acts 3:14). Immanuel, God's being with us, can be explained both in Hezekiah and Jesus. However, the degree of the manifestation is different. The life of Hezekiah partially showed

God's being with us, but Christ was God Himself and was among us indeed. In this respect, Isaiah 7:14 contains dual meanings: Hezekiah as the human agent and Christ as the Savior.

### **The Reason for Dualistic View: The Unity of the Savior and the Human Agents**

This research accepts the dualistic view in interpreting עִרְעָר in Genesis 3:15, which simultaneously considers both singular and collective meanings. Likewise, this research understands the birth of Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14 as dual meanings of the human agent and the Savior, based on the accumulated imagery of the birth motif. The plausibility of this dualism is due to the fundamental and spiritual unity of the ultimate Savior and the multiple human agents, and the united relationship between them corresponds to the term Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14, God's being with us. Even though the human agents are essentially distinct from the divine Savior, they, in the united relationship, move forward to the same purpose: God's salvation. The human agents' salvific work in each era foreshadows the culmination of salvation through Christ. Thus, Genesis 3:15 describes them as if they are one, and Isaiah 7:14 compresses them as the one birth.

#### **Contributions of This Research**

First, the birth motif approach is the concrete explanation model based on Old Testament history, and this concrete biblical model is a contribution that other dual fulfillment views could not provide in interpreting Isaiah 7:14. Second, the birth motif approach, which contains both the human agent and the divine Savior, provides sure evidence of the embedded Christological meaning in Isaiah 7:14 when it comes to the relationship issue between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23.



### Limitations of This Research

First, the interpretation history of Isaiah 7:14 only includes the Christian scholars' interpretations, not reviewing the Jewish scholars' documents. Second, the research on the birth motif ranged from the Adamic descendants to the Abrahamic descendants. The nine selected figures were examined to understand the concept of the birth motif. Third, only Isaiah 7:1–16 was dealt with for the contextual understanding of Isaiah 7:14.

### Recommendations For Further Study

First, the research of Isaiah 7:14 can be expanded by adding the Jewish scholars in the second chapter. If more Jewish sources are examined, a variety of views can be compared and analyzed in the fifth chapter. Second, the research on the birth motif in the Bible can be expanded by adding the Davidic descendants described in the historical books and the birth motif passages in the New Testament, such as the actual births of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and passages that symbolically employ the birth motif (Jn. 3:16; 1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19, etc.). Third, the contextual understanding of Isaiah 7:14 can be expanded by adding the exegesis of Isaiah 8–9 because Isaiah 8:3 and 9:6 also include the birth motif.

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