

The Quotations Bible Study: Series I: The Person of Jesus

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Appendix: Suggestions as to answers to the study questions

Week 1. Beginnings: the origins of Jesus' earthly life

- Q1: What did God promise Ahaz in Isa. 7:1-9?** The LORD implicitly promises to preserve Ahaz as king if he will return to faith. But if not, then the logical outcome of all the LORD's observations about the political situation will come to pass.
- Q2: What did Ahaz have to do in return for safety? (Isa. 7:9)** Stand firm in his faith.
- Q3: Why did Ahaz not want a sign?** This is a bit of a trick question. We don't actually know why Ahaz did not want a sign, but from the context it is pretty clear. Ahaz had no intention of following the LORD, and so he did not want a sign because if the sign were publicly visible, it would compel him to address it. He would be obliged to recognize the sign and to submit to God. Instead, he offers a lame excuse about not wanting to put the LORD to the test, a reference to Deut. 6:16.
- Q4: What does "put the LORD to the test" mean? (AV: tempt the LORD) (Deut. 6:16; the word for "test" in Isa. 7:12 is the same word used in Deut. 6:16.)** The example of "testing the LORD" given in Deut. 6:16 is the story of the murmuring of the children of Israel in the desert, recounted in Exodus 17:1-7.
- Q5: How did the LORD take Ahaz' refusal? (Isa. 7:13)** Not well. The LORD has Isaiah chide not just Ahaz, but the whole "house of David."
- Q6: The virgin birth is characterized as a sign. Whom is the sign for? (Hint: the "you" in Isa. 7:13 is plural) What is it a sign of?** The virgin birth is a sign for the whole "house of David" probably meaning the Davidic dynasty. It is a sign that the time of the chastisement is over.
- Q7: What is promised to happen before the child is old enough to make moral choices? (Isa. 7:16)** The kings that will have been afflicting Israel and Judah will be gone. The Assyrians will have taken the people captive and emptied the land, so that the productive parts of the land lie unmanaged.
- Q8: The prophecy in Isa. 7:13,14 is addressed to the "house of David." Who is the house of David in Matthew's time?** If, by the "house of David," the prophecy referred to the whole people of Israel, then the house of David in Matthew's time was the Jews. If it meant the royal family, it is unclear who that would be in Matthew's time, in any widely recognized way. The Davidic throne had been empty for hundreds of years by that time, though doubtless many still hoped for a return of the Davidic Kingdom.
- Q9: What does Matthew establish with the genealogy of Matt. 1:1-17?** Perhaps this answers the question of who was the house of David in Matthew's time. The genealogy establishes Jesus' legal standing as an heir of David and a legitimate contender for a reconstituted throne.
- Q10: No one ever calls Jesus "Immanuel" in the New Testament. Is this a problem?** Interesting question, since we are examining prophecy. Three possibilities exist: (1) some called Him Immanuel, but that fact was not recorded in the Gospels; (2) he was not called Immanuel then but will be in the future (and is now); or (3) He was called (or described as) one who was what Immanuel means, God with us. The last two of these are certainly true, and may fit the prophecy well enough to satisfy (or not). Matthew evidently thought so.
- Q11: Can Old Testament prophecies take on unexpected significance at the time of their ultimate fulfillment?** Yes.
- Q12: Even if Isa. 7:14 was not considered to be Messianic at the time, Matthew's audience was sufficiently interested in the fulfillment of prophecy and could be persuaded, under the right**

circumstances, to believe in Jesus on the grounds that His mission and ministry were foretold. How did Isa. 7:14 qualify for this purpose? It *was* a sign, hence a prophecy, and it had not been otherwise completely fulfilled.

- Q13: What does fulfillment of prophecy accomplish for Jesus?** Possibly, it establishes Jesus' identity as the Messiah, which is the ground for His claim of the Kingship of Israel.
- Q14: Matthew's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 as applying to Jesus affirms a continuum of God's authority throughout the entire span of Scripture (including the Gospel). What is the significance virgin birth of Jesus?** The virgin birth was not merely a miracle, but the defining miracle associated with God's decisive intervention in human history.
- Q15: What will this leader be? Where does he come from? (Micah 5:2)** He is to be the ruler of Israel. His origins are from "ancient times" or eternity. In other words, the one long foretold, the Messiah.
- Q16: What will happen until he comes? (Micah 5:3)** Israel will be abandoned until the time of the birth, the Messiah's birth. Then the remnant will be invited back and return to Israel.
- Q17: How is the metaphor of pregnancy and delivery used? Is it a metaphor? (Micah 5:3)** I think the image of a pregnant mother giving birth is a metaphor, often used in Scripture, for the emergence of a new age "in the fullness of time."
- Q18: What will the leader do? (Micah 5:4)** He will be strong and have the reputation of strength the world over.
- Q19: How will the people live, as a result? (Micah 5:4)** The people will be able to live in their homeland.
- Q20: How will the leader defend the land? (Micah 5:5)** Through the force of His person, He will be the peace.
- Q21: Given that the entire passage in Micah is clearly Messianic, is it surprising that some in Jesus' time expected a political leader?** Well, yes and no. Some of the material is so elliptical that it is unclear what is metaphorical and what is to be understood as literal fact. There seem to have been different schools of thought in Jesus' time, but it is uncertain whether anyone, apart from a few select people, was looking for the kind of Messiah that Jesus was. This no doubt contributed to his lack of faithful followers.
- Q22: Do the priests and scribes believe the prophecy? (Matt. 2:5,6)** This is not clear. As scholars and priests, they are bound to take note of the prophecy, and so advise the king.
- Q23: Does Herod believe the prophecy? (Matt. 2:7)** This also is not clear. Herod believes enough of the story to suppose that something must be done in order to preserve his throne.
- Q24: What are Herod's instructions? (Matt. 2:8)** A deceit. Herod instructs the wise men to search for the child, and when they have found him, to report his location, putatively so that Herod can worship the child.
- Q25: Do the wise men believe Herod's intentions? (Matt. 2:12)** They might have, but they were warned off by the angel.
- Q26: Does the prophecy and its application support Matthew's case?** Matthew's case is that the child is the Messiah and the one who is to inherit the restored throne of Israel. For Jesus to be the Messiah, He must be born in Bethlehem, according to the prophecy. Matthew does not say why the holy family was in Bethlehem, but Luke supplies that information (Luke 2:1-4). So, yes, Jesus' claim to be the Messiah is supported by the story.
- Q27: In retrospect, is the passage from Micah about the Messiah?** Without doubt.
- Q28: How do the predictions about the Messiah match Jesus' actions and life? (Micah 5:3-5)** Some of this is not clear yet, I think, awaiting Jesus' return. But certainly, Jesus stood "in the strength of the Lord," and He is the peace.
- Q29: Was the prophecy of Micah believed to be Messianic in Jesus' time?** Clearly, the prophecy of Micah was believed to be a reference to the Messiah at the time and regarded as authoritative.
- Q30: How does belief in the prophecy of Micah explain the actions of Herod, the priests, and the scribes?** Old Testament prophecies can bear different explanations at the time of fulfillment. True,

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the king is Davidic, but also, the most obvious inference to be made from the passage is that the rightful king is going to exert political and possibly military force. Undoubtedly, the priests and scribes thought this, and evidently Herod, too, considering the measures he took to suppress the coming king. The passage quoting Micah is a critical part of the story, because it clarifies the rationale for all the participants' subsequent acts.

- Q31: Is the prophecy of Micah borne out in the subsequent life, death and resurrection of Jesus?** If Jesus is the great ruler to come from Bethlehem, then the other things Micah says about that ruler must also be true about Jesus. We must ultimately expect that Jesus will rule, that His rule will be irresistible, as He foretold that He will (Matt. 24:27,37, Luke 21:27, etc.), and that the force of His person will institute peace, as indeed it does.
- Q32: What is the age of Israel at the time of calling? (Hosea 11:1)** A child. Speaking poetically, the people of Israel are seen as a young nation, only a few generations old.
- Q33: How did God feel towards Israel? (Hosea 11:1)** God loves His people.
- Q34: Does the passage correspond well to the Exodus story?** Alas, yes, it does. Hosea is recounting the behavior of Israel from the time of the Exodus, and laying beside it the LORD's witness as to what and why things happened and will happen to Israel.
- Q35: What was Israel's response to the calling? (Hosea 11:2)** Israel abandoned the worship of God for idols.
- Q36: How does God feel specifically about Ephraim? (Hosea 11:3,4)** God's bonds with Ephraim were strong. Ephraim was special. Hence when the bonds were abused, God's wrath was even worse.
- Q37: What will happen to Israel as a result of their faithlessness? (Hosea 11:5,6)** They will be destroyed by the sword.
- Q38: What is the purpose connected with the flight to Egypt? (Matt. 2:14,15)** There are two: to save the Messiah from Herod's plot, and to fulfill prophecy.
- Q39: Why is the Evangelist pointing out the fulfillment of prophecy?** The Evangelist emphasized the fulfillment of prophecy to support his view that Jesus was the Messiah, foretold in Scripture.
- Q40: Is "my son" Israel, or Jesus, or both?** Both. In Hosea, "my son" is a metaphor for the children of Israel. In Matthew, "my son" means Jesus. For Matthew, Israel with all its history and promises and prophecy has boiled down to one person, the Messiah. He inherits it all.
- Q41: Did the prophecy of Hosea take on an entirely different meaning in Matthew's hands than it likely had for Hosea's original readers?** Yes, but the Evangelist regarded the case as compelling, in his claim that Jesus fulfills prophecy.
- Q42: There is a clue to the possible Messianic interpretation of Hosea 11:1: the reference to "my son." Consider Psalm 2:7, part of a tableau that is clearly Messianic. Who is "my son," according to Acts 4:25,26?** In Acts 4:25,26, "my son" from Psalm 2:7 was definitely understood by the disciples to be Jesus.
- Q43: What is Matthew's attitude about the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy?** It establishes the identity of Jesus as the Messiah.
- Q44: How does the Evangelist interpret the God's continuing authority and purpose?** Under God's sovereignty, even the broadest strokes of Israel's story prefigure the Christ.
- Q45: What was Jeremiah describing in the preceding passage? (Jer. 31:1-14)** The restoration of Israel.
- Q46: Who is speaking? (Jer. 31:15)** The LORD, through Jeremiah.
- Q47: Who was Rachel? (Gen. 29-33, and Gen. 35:16-20)** Rachel was the daughter of Laban, second wife of Jacob, and mother of Joseph and Benjamin, who died in the childbirth of the latter.
- Q48: Whom does Rachel stand for? (Jer. 31:15)** Rachel is a poetical picture of Israel or Israel's mothers, mourning for the disaster that has overtaken Israel.
- Q49: What has happened to the children? (Jer. 31:15)** They have been killed or carried away.
- Q50: What is the LORD's counsel to Rachel? (Jer. 31:16)** To cease mourning, for those who were carried away will return.

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- Q51: Is the LORD's counsel encouraging? What is to follow? (Jer. 31:16,17)** The LORD specifically speaks of hope. The restoration will come.
- Q52: What caused Herod's wrath? (Matt. 2:12,16)** Herod was enraged by the fact that the wise men had seen through his deceit, in Matt. 2:8, namely, that Herod intended to go to worship the new king.
- Q53: What was Herod trying to accomplish? (Matt. 2:13)** Herod was trying to destroy the new king, in order to avoid being displaced. Probably, he did not believe the prophecy (if he had, he might have believed other Scripture), but he was afraid that others would believe it.
- Q54: What was the Lord's response? (Matt. 2:13-15)** The Lord brushed aside Herod's plan with a plan of His own. That plan would work; it could not fail. He sent the holy family to Egypt for safety until Herod was dead. He managed the details of this plan through angels, his messengers, and saw to it that the people involved believed Him.
- Q55: What is the LORD's attitude towards earthly rulers and their plots? (Ps. 2:4)** The LORD laughs at man's attempts to rule history and determine his own fate. He defeated Herod's plan with a better plan of His own. That plan would work and did work; it could not fail.
- Q56: How was the situation resolved? (Matt. 2:18)** Herod died and the threat to the Messiah, in the years of His vulnerability, vanished.
- Q57: One of the prophecies is clearly Messianic in the original context, one is possibly so, and the other two are not obviously Messianic at all. What does this say about the Evangelist's interpretive rule?** That Matthew was indifferent to then-current scholarly opinion as to which passages were or were not messianic, consulting only the Spirit to determine such questions.