

Isaiah 66:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came,
she was delivered of a man child.

Analysis

Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

This remarkable verse presents a supernatural birth - delivery without labor pains, defying natural order. The Hebrew word terem ("before") emphasizes the unprecedented timing. Chul ("travailed") refers to the writhing pains of childbirth, while yalad ("brought forth") means to give birth. The zachar ("man child") is literally "a male," significant in Hebrew culture as the continuation of covenant promises.

This prophetic passage speaks of Zion's miraculous restoration - Israel giving birth to a nation "in one day" (v. 8) without the prolonged agony typically associated with national rebirth. Historically fulfilled in 1948 when Israel became a nation remarkably swiftly, it also has eschatological implications for the Messianic age. The reversal of Genesis 3:16's curse (pain in childbirth) points to redemptive restoration.

Theologically, this verse illustrates God's power to accomplish the impossible, bypassing normal processes. It echoes the Virgin Birth of Christ - supernatural conception and delivery that confounds natural expectations, demonstrating that God's redemptive work transcends human limitations and operates according to divine rather than natural law.

Historical Context

Isaiah 66 concludes Isaiah's prophecy (circa 740-680 BCE) with dramatic visions of judgment and restoration. The "man child" and sudden birth imagery would have astounded original readers familiar with the dangerous, painful reality of ancient childbirth, where maternal and infant mortality rates were extremely high.

In Israel's Babylonian exile context (586-538 BCE), this prophecy offered hope for rapid, miraculous restoration rather than gradual rebuilding. The metaphor of Zion as a mother giving birth appears throughout prophetic literature (Isaiah 54:1, 66:8; Micah 4:10), drawing on ancient Near Eastern imagery of cities as feminine entities. Unlike pagan birth goddesses who struggled in labor, Yahweh enables effortless delivery.

Early Christian interpretation connected this to the Church's sudden birth at Pentecost and Christ's supernatural birth. Jewish tradition linked it to the Messianic age when Israel would be miraculously gathered. The 1948 establishment of modern Israel after millennia of diaspora remarkably fulfilled the "nation born in a day" imagery, though theological debate continues regarding prophetic fulfillment versus spiritual application to the Church as the New Jerusalem.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does this miraculous birth imagery challenge our understanding of God's power to accomplish the impossible in redemptive history?
2. What connections can we trace between this passage and the Virgin Birth of Christ, and what theological significance does this parallel hold?

3. In what ways does this reversal of the Genesis 3:16 curse point toward ultimate restoration in the New Creation?
4. How should this prophecy shape our perspective on Israel's modern rebirth and its relationship to biblical eschatology?
5. What does painless delivery symbolize about God's redemptive work - does He always remove suffering, or does this represent a unique eschatological reality?

Interlinear Text

בָּרָם	פְּתַח	יְלִלְתָּה	יָבָא	בָּרָם
H2962	Before	she travailed	she brought forth	H2962
	H2342		H3205	H935
בְּלִי	וְהַמְּלִילָה	לְהַ	זָכָר:	
before	her	H0	she was delivered	of a man child
H2256			H4422	H2145

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 54:1 (Parallel theme): Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

Galatians 4:26 (Parallel theme): But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.