

**WHO IS THE SUFFERING SERVANT IN ISAIAH 53?**  
**PART II - THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION, VALID OR NOT?<sup>1</sup>**

**I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW**

In the previous essay, henceforth referred to as Part I, the *Scientific Method* was applied in testing the validity of the Jewish perspective on Isaiah's *Fourth Servant Song*.<sup>2</sup> The validation of the Jewish interpretation also identified the entity to which the prophet refers as אֲדָוָה, (avdi), **My servant**, and which is commonly referred to as the *suffering servant*.

A description of the *Scientific Method* is included in Part I. Therefore, it will not be repeated in this essay. However, the results obtained from each stage of the *Scientific Method*, as applied to the Jewish interpretation in Part I, are provided here in order to facilitate their comparison with the results obtained from the analysis of the Christian interpretation.

In Part I, the *Observation* stage of the *Scientific Method* yielded a sample of "data", which consisted of the following three data elements:

**Data Element #1:** “My servant” is a reference by God to one of His servants.

**Data Element #2:** Nine instances located within the part of the Book of Isaiah that includes the four Servant Songs – Isaiah 41:8,9, 43:10, 44:1,2,21(2x), 45:4, 49:3 – positively identify the servant as *Israel*.

**Data Element #3:** *Israel* is the subject of the two chapters which surround the Fourth Servant Song.

This sample of "data" was used in the *Generalization* stage to formulate the following hypothesis, which will be called, henceforth, the original *Hypothesis*:

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<sup>1</sup> Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ו is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ה is transliterated as “h”
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized שׁ (אֶשׁ אִשׁ אֵשׁ) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***dagesh*** (emphasis)

<sup>2</sup> *Who is the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53? Part I – The Jewish Interpretation, Valid or Not?* - <http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa53JP.pdf>

✧ **Hypothesis:** *Israel* is the servant in the Fourth Servant Song.

In the *Verification* stage, the validity of the original *Hypothesis* was tested, on a verse-by-verse basis, by subjecting the Hebrew text of the *Fourth Servant Song* to detailed grammatical analysis, demonstration of contextual consistency with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible, and validation against the historical record.

The results of this process confirmed the validity of the original *Hypothesis*, which led to the following definitive conclusion about the identity of the servant:

✧ **Conclusion:** The servant in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song is (the righteous remnant of) *Israel*.

The *Scientific Method* is next applied to the Christian interpretation of "Isaiah 53".<sup>3</sup>

## II. THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON "ISAIAH 53"

As a centerpiece of Christian theology, "Isaiah 53" is also one of the most widely used so-called "proof texts" in the portfolio of Christian missionaries. It is, therefore, necessary to subject the Christian interpretation of the passage to a rigorous analysis rather than simply dismiss it as being false, now that the Jewish perspective has been validated. The analytical process utilizes the *Scientific Method*, subject to some limitations, conditions, and restrictions, which are necessitated by the following special circumstances:

✧ Since the source text of "Isaiah 53" is the (Masoretic Text of the) Hebrew Bible, the "proof text" for the analysis is the Hebrew Bible. The English translations to be used remain the same as were used in the analysis of the Jewish perspective.

➤ Although the New Testament is not accepted as Scripture within Judaism, it is used, as needed, to validate claims by Christians. The KJV translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures is used for this purpose.

The predominant<sup>4</sup> Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53" can be summarized as follows:

- ✧ "Isaiah 53" is messianic Scripture, i.e., it speaks of the Messiah and of the messianic era
- ✧ "Isaiah 53" is a prophetic passage about the life, suffering, atoning sacrificial death, and eventual resurrection and triumph of Jesus, Christianity's Messiah
- ✧ "Isaiah 53" is a description of a humble deliverer and sin-bearer who, after being sacrificed as a guilt offering for the sins of others, sees the result of his atoning work and is satisfied

Much has been written by Christian commentators and apologists concerning this passage and how remarkably and unmistakably it describes Jesus. The following is

<sup>3</sup> Since Christians commonly refer to Isaiah's *Fourth Servant Song* as "Isaiah 53", this designation is used throughout the analysis of the Christian interpretation.

<sup>4</sup> Although many, perhaps most, Christian sources adhere to the view described herein, some prominent Christian scholarly sources, such as the *New Revised Standard Version Bible* (NRSV), *The New Jerusalem Bible*, and *The Oxford Study Bible*, identify the (people of) Israel as the *suffering servant* described in "Isaiah 53".

one such example, a quote from the commentary by Matthew Henry (18<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) on Isaiah 52:13-15 (unless stated otherwise, highlighting added for emphasis throughout this document):

**This prophecy, which begins here and is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it, and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who hence preached Christ to the eunuch, has put it past dispute that of him speaks the prophet this, of him and of no other man, Acts 8:34, 35.**

When these elaborate commentaries and other written materials are subjected to rigorous scrutiny, they all are found plagued by common flaws and shortcomings, such as the following:

- † **These descriptions are not based on the Hebrew text of the passage. Rather, they are based on (Christian) translations, which are often mistranslations, and which are generally replete with the Christological biases of the translators.**
- † **Their authors make assumptions that are inconsistent with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible, such as the divinity of Jesus (i.e., being "the only begotten son of God"), his having vicariously died for the sins of others, and that he is the Messiah who died and resurrected, and who will return in a "second coming".**
- † **They propagate certain false notions which, through their continuing repetition from Church pulpits and in written form, have become misperceived as if they were factual and "the truth". The highlighted portion in the above quote from the Matthew Henry commentary is a case-in-point, one which has been quoted by Christian missionaries as being factual. Modern versions of this deception contend that it was RASHI [Rabbi Shlomo Ben Yitzhak, the great Jewish Sage of the 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E.], or the generic "Rabbis", who invented the idea that Israel is the suffering servant in "Isaiah 53" as an attempt to deny that which is so obviously Jesus to Christians. Although ancient Jewish sources (such as the *Zohar* on Exodus and *Midrash Rabbah* on Numbers) can be used to refute this claim, perhaps the most effective way to expose the lie is to refer to the works of early Christian theologians. One such person, Origen, the late-second-early-third century C.E. Greek Church Father, quotes in his *Contra Celsum* the ancient Jewish understanding of "Isaiah 53" as referring to the Jewish people and their suffering:**

**1:55. I remember that once in a discussion with some whom the Jews regard as learned I used these prophecies [editorial note: referring to Isaiah 53]. At this the Jew said that these prophecies referred to the whole people as though of a single individual, since they were scattered in the dispersion and smitten, that as a result of the scattering of the Jews among the other nations many might become proselytes. [Henry Chadwick, Cambridge Press, Page 50]**

So, when Matthew Henry writes that "**... the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it ...**", he is guilty of perpetrating the very same act which he (falsely) charges "modern Jews" had done – an obvious perversion of the facts!

As was done in Part I, the analysis of "Isaiah 53" presented below is divided into four segments – Isaiah 52:13-15, Isaiah 53:1-4, Isaiah 53:5-8, and Isaiah 53:9-12 – each of which is processed separately, with the results cumulatively summarized in tabular form at the end of each respective segment.

### III. SEGMENT 1 - ISAIAH 52:13-15

An immediate problem is encountered when attempting to apply the *Scientific Method* to the Christian perspective. Namely, that such a systematic process (as was applied to the Jewish perspective) cannot be used with respect to Jesus, since the Hebrew Bible does not mention him, certainly not in any explicit form by naming him anywhere. The difficulty becomes particularly evident when attempting to collect a sample of "data" from which to formulate a hypothesis. As a result, the rigor used in connection with the Jewish perspective must be relaxed in order to facilitate a preliminary identification of the servant.

#### A. The Observation Stage – Collecting the "Data"

The problem noted above first becomes evident in the *Observation* stage, where a new set of data elements must be obtained, from which an alternative "starting point" is to be selected.

A review of the original set of data elements indicates that the original *Data Element #1* is sufficiently general and universally true, so that it is still valid here:

**Data Element #1: "My servant" is a reference by God to one of His servants.**

The previously obtained results from a search of the Hebrew Bible for all instances of the term עֶבְדִּי that apply specifically to a servant of God are also still valid. These are reproduced in Table III.A-1.

**Table III.A-1 – Identified instances of עֶבְדִּי, in the Hebrew Bible**

Book	#	Name of Servant	Reference
Genesis	1	Abraham	26:24
Numbers	2	Moses; Caleb*	12:7,8; 14:24*
Joshua	1	Moses	1:2,7
2 Samuel	1	David	3:18, 7:5,8
1 Kings	1	David	11:13,32,34,36,38, 14:8
2 Kings	2	Moses; David	21:8; 19:34, 20:6
Isaiah	4/"X"	Isaiah; Eliakim; David; Israel-Jacob-Jeshurun; "not explicitly named"	20:3; 22:20; 37:35; 41:8,9, 43:10**, 44:1,2,21(2x), 45:4, 49:3; "42:1,19, 52:13, 53:11"
Jeremiah	3	Nebuchadnezzar; Israel-Jacob; David	25:9, 27:6, 43:10; 30:10, 46:27,28; 33:21,22,26
Ezekiel	2	Israel/Jacob; David	28:25, 37:25; 34:23,24, 37:24,25
Haggai	1	Zerubbabel	2:23
Zechariah	1	Tsemah	3:8
Malachi	1	Moses	3:22
Psalms	1	David	89:4,21
Job	1	Job	1:8, 2:3, 42:7,8(3x)
1Chronicles	1	David	17:4,7

\* To facilitate correlation between **Name of Servant** and **Reference**, alternating highlighting is used when more than one name appears.

\*\* Though not explicitly named, the context unambiguously identifies Israel/Jacob as servant.

An iterative process applied to the data shown in Table III.A-1 provides clues that help identify an alternate candidate for the title **My servant** in "Isaiah 53".

**First iteration:** The name **Israel** (also called **Jacob** and **Jeshurun**) is excluded from the analysis since **Israel** was the candidate for this title in the analysis of the Jewish interpretation.

The results obtained from this iteration are shown Table III.A-2, which includes a column that indicates whether there is a possible "fit" with "Isaiah 53".

**Table III.A-2 – Search for alternate candidate for the title *My servant***

Book	Name of Servant	Reference	"Fit" with "Isaiah 53"?
Genesis	Abraham	26:24	No
Numbers	Moses; Caleb*	12:7,8; 14:24*	No
Joshua	Moses	1:2,7	No
2 Samuel	David	3:18, 7:5,8	No
1 Kings	David	11:13,32,34,36,38, 14:8	No
2 Kings	Moses; David	21:8; 19:34, 20:6	No
Isaiah	Isaiah	20:3	No
	Eliakim	22:20	No
	David	37:35	No
Jeremiah	Nebuchadnezzar	25:9, 27:6, 43:10	No
	David	33:21,22,26	No
Ezekiel	David	34:23,24, 37:24,25	Yes
Haggai	Zerubbabel	2:23	No
Zechariah	Tsemah	3:8	Yes (?)
Malachi	Moses	3:22	No
Psalms	David	89:4,21	Yes (?)
Job	Job	1:8, 2:3, 42:7,8(3x)	No
1Chronicles	David	17:4,7	No

\* To facilitate correlation between **Name of Servant** and **Reference**, alternating highlighting is used when more than one name appears.

**Second iteration:** The context of the respective passages from the Books of Genesis, Numbers, Joshua 2Samuel, 1Kings, 2Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, Malachi, Job, and 1Chronicles, indicates that none of the named individuals who were called **My servant** by God – Abraham, Moses, Caleb, David, Isaiah, Eliakim, Nebuchadnezzar, and Zerubbabel – “fit” into the context of "Isaiah 53".

The references to David as **My servant** (God's servant) in the Book of Ezekiel are unique among the entries in Table III.A-2 since they are allusions to **the Messiah** and, on this, both Christian and Jewish writers generally agree.

This produces another data element:

**Data Element #2: The prophet Ezekiel refers to *the Messiah* as “My Servant”.**

The Jewish writers are divided about the name *Tsemah* (תִּמְצָה), which literally means [a] **Sprout**, and which appears twice in the Book of Zechariah (Zechariah 3:8, 6:12), and is specifically referred to as *My servant*, at Zechariah 3:8. Some hold that the context of Zechariah 3:8 (& 6:12) is historical, not messianic, and that the reference is to Zerubbabel, as confirmed by Haggai 2:23. Others opine that תִּמְצָה is a reference to מָשִׁיחַ (*mashi'ah*), *the Jewish Messiah*. According to Christian writers, "The Branch", which is the common translation of the name תִּמְצָה in Christian bibles, points to *Jesus*, Christianity's Messiah. Similarly, Christian writers and some Jewish writers consider Psalms 89:4[3 in Christian bibles] as messianic. Although the opinions diverge, the "messianic" view is used here as the third data element:

**Data Element #3: Christian writers agree with some Jewish writers that the respective passages in the Book of Zechariah and in the Book of Psalms refer to *the Messiah*.**

A fourth data element is obtained from the fact that much of the material contained in Chapters 40-66 in the Book of Isaiah deals with the messianic era:

**Data Element #4: A significant portion of Chapters 40-66 in the Book of Isaiah concerns the messianic era.**

Together, these four data elements comprise the required sample of "data" to proceed with the analysis of the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53".

## B. Generalization Stage – Formulating A New Hypothesis

Data Elements 1, 2, 3, &4 form the sample "data" from which a *New Hypothesis* on the identity of the servant in "Isaiah 53" is formulated. Each of these data elements contains a "clue". By combining these "clues", the *New Hypothesis* is obtained, one that represents the substance of the Christian view of "Isaiah 53":

† **New Hypothesis: *The Messiah* is the servant in "Isaiah 53".**

The statement of this *New Hypothesis* is somewhat of a "stretch", since the rigor that is required for a valid application of the *Scientific Method* had to be mitigated in order to enable the process to get started. Yet, the fact that some Jewish commentators identify *the Messiah* as the servant in Isaiah's *First Servant Song*, Isaiah 42:1-4, can be used to lend some, albeit weak, support the *New Hypothesis*.<sup>5</sup> Given the limitations at hand, this is the best that can be done to affect a parallel analysis of the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53".

One final issue remains to be addressed and resolved before the *Verification* stage can be initiated: *How will *Jesus* be included in this process?* According to Christian theology, this is not a problem since, to Christians, *Jesus* is *the*

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that not all Jewish commentators agree on this, and as many as three other candidates for *My servant* in Isaiah 42:1 have been proposed; namely, Cyrus, Isaiah, and Israel

**Messiah.** The problem with respect to Judaism is that, while the concept of "**the Messiah**" is central to it, any attempt to identify this title with **Jesus** would be outside the boundaries of Judaism and is, therefore, unacceptable. After all, since Judaism predates Christianity, Judaism precludes **Jesus**. Consequently, in order to manage this problem, the *Verification* stage is designed in terms of two separate, but parallel, comparisons. In one comparison, the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53" is contrasted against what the Hebrew Bible teaches about **the** [promised Jewish] **Messiah** on a verse-by-verse basis. In the other comparison, the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53" is contrasted against what the New Testament teaches about **Jesus** (Christianity's Messiah), on a verse-by-verse basis.

### C. Verification Stage – Testing the New Hypothesis

The *New Hypothesis* is now tested using the two separate comparisons described above.

#### Isaiah 52:13

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:13	Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	הִנֵּה יַשְׁכִּיל עַבְדִּי יָרוֹם וְנִשְׂא וְנִבְּה :מְאֹד	נב, יג

The servant is called **My servant**, i.e., God's servant, in this verse. The verse describes a servant who will prosper (or, alternatively, acquire knowledge), one who will be in a prestigious leadership position, lauded and revered by many.

#### ☆ [Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 52:13 apply to **the Messiah**?

According to the Hebrew Bible, **the Messiah** will surely be one of God's servants. Do the other attributes mentioned here also apply to **the Messiah**? The Hebrew text of this verse includes the term, יַשְׁכִּיל (**yaskil**), which derives from the root verb שָׁכַל (**SIN-CHAF-Lamed**), [to] prosper, [to] acquire knowledge/wisdom. A similar term, וְהִשְׁכִּיל (**v<sup>e</sup>hiskil**), and [he shall] prosper, is used by the prophet Jeremiah in reference to **the Messiah** (Jeremiah 23:5). Although the remaining descriptions are not explicitly used in the Hebrew Bible with respect to **the Messiah**, terms such as **lifted up** and **high** refer to someone rising from among "the masses" to an important position of leadership. Similar terminology that alludes to a high and respected position of leadership is associated with **the Messiah** in other messianic passages within the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Daniel 7:14).

#### ☆ [Hebrew Bible] Answer: Yes!

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 52:13 apply to *Jesus*?**

The New Testament contains explicit references to several Biblical personalities who were God's servants – David (Luke 1:69), Moses (Revelation 15:3), and "the prophets" (Revelation 10:7). However, nowhere do the authors of the New Testament refer to *Jesus* as God's servant, nor does anyone ever explicitly call him *My servant*. The expression *My servant* appears only once in the New Testament (with several variations on the capitalization, depending on version and, at times, the phrase is also modified with an added adjective), at Matthew 12:18, where it is an allusion to *Jesus*, although it occurs there in a reference to Isaiah's *First Servant Song* (Isaiah 42:1-4).

According to Christian theology, *Jesus* is God manifest in the flesh, and is the Son "personage" in the triune godhead for most Christians, all of which components are claimed to be of "equal" status. *But, how can Jesus be God's servant if they are "equals"?* After all, a servant is lower in status, or "subservient", to his master. Complex, convoluted, and unconvincing answers to this question, which are often based on circular reasoning, are offered by missionaries. Contrary to those explanations, the authors of the New Testament state the "bottom line" on several occasions, such as:

**John 15:15(KJV) – Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. [See also Luke 7:8, 12:47.]**

Therefore, from a Trinitarian Christian perspective, it would not be appropriate to associate the title *My servant* with *Jesus* as being God's servant. *Are not the three components of the triune godhead co-equals in every way?*

A further search of the New Testament for indications that *Jesus* prospered, or acquired wisdom, yields the following passage:

**Luke 2:52(KJV) – And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**

Once again, one must question whether this can be an attribute of God. After all, the Hebrew Bible teaches that God does not change (Malachi 3:6), yet here the New Testament clearly states that *Jesus* was "growing up", i.e., changing. Secondly, since God is omniscient, i.e., all-knowing, how was it possible for *Jesus* to learn more if he were this omniscient God?

The authors of the New Testament refer to *Jesus* being exalted (Acts 5:31; Philippians 2:9). However, there is nothing found within the New Testament to support the rest of the verse Isaiah 52:13. Concerning the matter of the servant being **lifted up** and made **high**, how could this possibly refer to a divine being? Recall that the prophet Malachi declares how God does not change! The only (implicit) reference in the New Testament to any kind of "lifting up" of *Jesus* is during the event of his crucifixion, when he had to be

literally raised unto the cross, which placed him in a higher position than the people who may have stood around on the ground.

✝ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**Isaiah 52:14**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:14	As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	כְּאַשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ כִּן-מְשַׁחַת מְאִישׁ מִרְאֵהוּ וְתֵאָרוֹ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:	נב, יד

The multitudes were astonished when they saw the servant, whose features were so disfigured that he did not even bear resemblance to a human being, be exalted and become successful.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 52:14 apply to *the Messiah*?**

There are no passages in the Hebrew Bible where *the Messiah* is described in this kind of language, i.e., as having first been beaten beyond recognition, and later being exalted and becoming successful.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✝ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 52:14 apply to *Jesus*?**

The accounts of the events leading up to the crucifixion include several descriptions of how *Jesus* was handled by the Roman soldiers. Apparently the Romans (verbally) mocked him, they placed a crown of thorns on his head, spat on him, and hit him on the head, either with a reed or with their hands (e.g., Matthew 27:27-30, John 19:2-3).

From the treatment described in the New Testament, and given that this took place over a short period of time prior to his crucifixion, could the appearance of *Jesus* have been marred and his features disfigured to such an extent that he was unrecognizable as a person?

What did *Jesus* look like throughout his entire life span prior to this treatment? Was he also in this condition? If he were in this condition, why would God have chosen such a damaged body for Himself? Quite to the contrary, the authors of the New Testament describe *Jesus* as handsome and popular with the multitudes (e.g., Matthew 21:9; Luke 2:52), an image that is depicted in many later works of art.

✝ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

## Isaiah 52:15

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:15	So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	כִּן יִזָּה גוֹיִם רַבִּים עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא-סִפְּרָ לָהֶם רְאוּ וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ הִתְבּוֹנְנוּ:	נב, טו

(i) Romans 15:21(KJV) - But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

This verse describes the future surprise expressed by many (Gentile) nations; their leaders will be dumbfounded by what they perceive, which will not be what they expected.

### ☆ [Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 52:15 apply to *the Messiah*?

There are no passages in the Hebrew Bible in which this kind of a reaction to the appearance of *the Messiah* is described. Yet, it is reasonable to posit that, when he executes and completes the messianic agenda, the (Gentile) nations will be astonished.

### ☆ [Hebrew Bible] Answer: Yes!

### † [New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 52:15 apply to *Jesus*?

The cross-referenced passage, Romans 15:21, points to the last two phrases in this verse. However, the context of Isaiah 52:15 is different from the context of the passage in the New Testament:

Romans 15:20-22(KJV) – (20) Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: (21) But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. (22) For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

Paul is addressing an audience of Romans as he explains his own mission to them. Christian missionaries are still busy doing this today, as they have been doing for the past two millennia. Any astonishment here, and none is described by Paul, did not result from the unexpected success of the servant who, after all, was viewed as a lowly being. Some other religions of the world today have very large numbers of followers, and many of these people may have never even heard about *Jesus*, yet they do not appear to be astonished at what they may be hearing from the Christian missionaries.

Moreover, Christian theology holds that *Jesus* will return, as he promises in the New Testament (Matthew 24, John 14), at which time he will reign as *the King/Messiah*. Yet, there are no Scriptures found in the Hebrew Bible that

speak of *the Messiah* coming, failing to complete the messianic agenda, dying on a cross, and returning in glory to complete that which he did not accomplish during his first appearance. According to the Hebrew Bible, *the Messiah* is expected to execute and successfully complete the messianic agenda during his reign following his first and only appearance.

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**D. Interim Summary – Isaiah 52:13-15**

The *Scientific Method* is applied to the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53". In effect, the work previously done with the Jewish perspective, where the original *Hypothesis* was tested against the Hebrew text and the historical record, and validated, was set aside, and the process was started afresh in order to develop a *New Hypothesis* that would represent the Christian perspective.

Although certain restrictions had to be imposed on the texts being utilized, and some of the rigor applied in formulating the original *Hypothesis* had to be relaxed, a new set of data elements was generated from which the following *New Hypothesis* was formulated:

† **New Hypothesis: *The Messiah* is the servant in "Isaiah 53".**

This *New Hypothesis* is being tested against the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible. Along with the *New Hypothesis*, also being tested is the proposition that *Jesus*, as he is described in the New Testament, is the servant in "Isaiah 53".

Table III.D-1 contains results obtained thus far in the *Verification* stage and, for comparison, results obtained from testing the original *Hypothesis*, are shown in the column on the extreme right.

**Table III.D-1 – Results from Verification stage of New Hypothesis for Isaiah 52:13-52:15**

Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	New Hypothesis		Original Hypothesis
		Generic (from HB)	Specific (from NT)	Results from testing
		Does " <i>the Messiah</i> =Servant" Fit?	Does " <i>Jesus</i> = Servant" Fit?	" <i>Israel</i> = Servant"
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	YES	NO	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	NO	NO	YES

52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	YES	NO	YES
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#### IV. SEGMENT 2 – ISAIAH 53:1-4

The application of the *Scientific Method* to the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53" continues with the analysis of the second segment.

##### A. Verification Stage – Testing the New Hypothesis

The *Verification* stage resumes with a verse-by-verse analysis of the *New Hypothesis*, along the two parallel paths described in Section III.B. One path contrasts what the Hebrew Bible teaches about *the Messiah* against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53". The parallel path contrasts the way that the New Testament portrays *Jesus* (Christianity's Messiah) against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53".

##### Isaiah 53:1

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:1	Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	מי האמין לשמעתנו וזרוע יהוה על-מי נגלתה:	נגא

(i) John 12:38(KJV) - That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

Romans 10:16(KJV) - But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

This verse declares how the nations and their kings, who were mentioned in the previous verse, will not see God's mighty arm of salvation until the messianic era commences, as Isaiah himself declares several verses earlier:

**Isaiah 52:10 – The Lord has revealed His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.**

##### ☆ [Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:1 apply to *the Messiah*?

Christian missionaries claim that "the arm of the Lord" is a metaphor for *the Messiah*, yet a search of the Hebrew Bible for this and related imagery reveals no such connection. As was described in Part I, allusions in the Hebrew Bible to God's "arm", "hand", and "finger", etc., often are metaphoric references to God's taking direct action and to His acts of vindication, and these are commonly used to point to the physical and spiritual redemption of the Jewish people. Such terms are never used in the Hebrew Bible as

metaphors for *the Messiah*, neither is reference made anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible to the salvation of a suffering *Messiah*.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:1 apply to *Jesus*?**

This verse is cross-referenced with two verses in the New Testament, John 12:38 and Romans 10:16, both of which allege that the Jews who, even after having seen *Jesus* perform miracles, refused to accept him. How could the context change so drastically and have the “voice” suddenly switch to the Jews when the previous verse speaks of the startled kings of many nations? Rather than it being the Jews who speak here, starting at this verse, those kings of the nations begin to realize that what they had perceived in the past is not what they are witnessing. Thus, the authors of these cross-referenced passages in the New Testament either misrepresented or misunderstood Isaiah's words and attributed them to the wrong “speakers”.

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**Isaiah 53:2**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:2	For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him and he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	וַיַּעַל כַּיּוֹנֵק לְפָנָיו וּכְשֶׁרֶשׁ מֵאֶרֶץ צִיָּה לֹא-תֵאֵר לוֹ וְלֹא הָדָר וְנִרְאָהוּ וְלֹא-מְרָאָה וְנִחְמְדָהוּ:	נגב

The metaphors employed in this verse describe an entity that appeared on the scene but was not expected to survive or, if it survived, it was not going to grow into something beautiful that is desired by everyone.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:2 apply to *the Messiah*?**

The imagery of a young tree growing in dry earth is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in connection with the Jewish people, never to describe *the Messiah*. In fact, other than *the Messiah* being a direct male descendant of King David, there is little else found in the Hebrew Bible that describes his other attributes.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:2 apply to *Jesus*?**

It was noted in connection with Isaiah 52:13 how the New Testament depicts *Jesus*, with his handsome appearance, charismatic personality, and wisdom,

as constantly gaining popularity among ever growing multitudes. If that was true, how could the present verse possibly refer to the massive rejection of **Jesus'** message by the Jews at the time of his death? Quite to the contrary, the New Testament indicates that, even within Jerusalem itself, great multitudes were still loyal to **Jesus** as he was on his way to being crucified:

**Luke 23:27(KJV) – And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.**

As it regards his followers outside of Jerusalem, it is most likely that they were unaware of the events that transpired in the capital and, thus, they would not have rejected him at that time.

With approximately 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the world's Jewry in the first century C.E. living outside the Land of Israel, it is also likely that the majority of his Jewish contemporaries in the Diaspora never even heard of **Jesus**. Even the well-known Jewish historian Philo of Alexandria [20 B.C.E.-50 C.E.], a contemporary of **Jesus**, never mentioned him in his works. Clearly, the rejection of **Jesus** by the Jews was not yet an issue at the time of his death.

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**Isaiah 53:3**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:3	He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	נְבוֹזָה וְחָדַל אִישִׁים אִישׁ מְכַאֲבוֹת וְיָדוּעַ חָלִי וּכְמִסְתָּר פְּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ נְבוֹזָה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנָהוּ:	נג,ג

(ii) Luke 18:31-33(KJV) – (31) Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. (32) For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: (33) And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. [See also Mark 10:33-34; John 1:10-11]

This verse describes a pathetic entity, forsaken and afflicted with sickness, being despised by the multitudes that could not even bear to look at it.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:3 apply to *the Messiah*?**

Descriptions of **the Messiah** as being forsaken, sickly, and despised by all are not found anywhere in the Hebrew Bible.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:3 apply to *Jesus*?**

Terminology similar to the language found in Isaiah 53:3 is used by the authors of the Gospels in reference to *Jesus* for the very short duration of the events that led up to his crucifixion. Otherwise, and quite to the contrary, the Gospels abound with language that gives a very different picture of *Jesus*.

The phrase "... despised and forsaken by men ..." cannot be reconciled with the way *Jesus* is described in the New Testament, according to which he was immensely popular:

- † In his youth, he was loved by all (Luke 2:40,47,52)
- † He was a popular preacher (Mark 3:7-9)
- † He was "praised by all" (Luke 4:14-15)
- † He was followed by multitudes who later acclaim him as a prophet upon his triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 4:25, 21:9-11)
- † When it was time to take him away to be crucified, Jesus had to be spirited away since the rulers feared "a riot of the people" (Mark 14:1-2)

The cross-referenced verse, Luke 18:31, is out of context with respect to the language in the Hebrew Bible, where the expression **אִישׁ מְכַאֲבוֹת** (*ISH mach'ovot*), **a man of pains**, appears in connection with the servant. When a person is described in the Hebrew Bible as "**a man of ...**", the common implication is that such a condition has been present for a prolonged period of time. For example, the phrase **אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים** (*ISH E-lohim*), **a man of God**, in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 1Samuel 9:6) signifies that the person was devoted to God for a long time, perhaps even for a lifetime. Other examples of this kind include references to tribal affiliations, such as **אִישׁ בְּנֵימִין** (*ISH Binyamin*), **a man of [the Tribe of] Benjamin** (e.g., Judges 20:41). Therefore, when the phrase "... a man of pains, and accustomed to illness ..." is said to apply to *Jesus*, one must ask: *Where in the New Testament is *Jesus* described as having been afflicted with disease, and for how long did this condition last?* If he were in this condition, one would have to wonder why God would choose to put Himself into such an afflicted and decrepit body, and how *Jesus* could qualify as an "unblemished sacrifice" being in such an "imperfect" body.

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**Isaiah 53:4**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:4	Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.	Indeed, he bore our illnesses and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	אָכֵן חָלֵינוּ הוּא נָשָׂא וּמְכַאֲבֵינוּ סָבַלָם וְאֶנְחָנוּ חֲשַׁבְנָהוּ נְגוּעַ מִכָּה אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲנָה:	נגד,

(iii) Matthew 8:17(KJV) - That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

Using terminology similar to that found in the previous verse, this verse provides further elaboration on the perceived condition of the servant. It is still a pathetic entity, and not only is this entity afflicted with illnesses and pains, it was figured to have been plagued, oppressed, and smitten at the hand of God.

✧ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:4 apply to *the Messiah*?**

*The Messiah* is never described in the Hebrew Bible in these terms, and certainly not as someone smitten by God. As the one who will oversee the completion of the messianic agenda, he will be blessed by God, and will be a great and powerful leader.

✧ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✝ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:4 apply to *Jesus*?**

The use of the cross-referenced verse, Matthew 8:17, is likely to have been motivated by the author's desire to promote the idea of vicarious punishment, an unfortunate misinterpretation of Isaiah 53:4.

Where in the New Testament is *Jesus* ever described in terms of such language, especially as being smitten by God? Nowhere is *Jesus* described as being sickly, oppressed, and smitten by God. While on the cross, *Jesus* allegedly complained to God about being forsaken (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34), yet King David said that a righteous person is not forsaken by God:

**Psalms 37:25 – I was young, I also aged, and I have not seen a righteous man forsaken and his seed seeking bread.**

Was *Jesus* righteous? If, as missionaries claim, he was God, how could he forsake himself, or be unable to help himself while on the cross?

✝ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

## B. Interim Summary – Isaiah 53:1-4

The *New Hypothesis*, formulated in Section III.B, is being tested against the Hebrew text via the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method*. Along with the *New Hypothesis*, also being tested is the proposition that *Jesus*, as he is described in the New Testament, is the servant in "Isaiah 53".

Table IV.B-1 contains results obtained thus far in the *Verification* stage and, for comparison, results obtained from testing the original Hypothesis, are shown in the column on the extreme right.

**Table IV.B-1 – Results from Verification stage of New Hypothesis for Isaiah 52:13-53:6**

Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	New Hypothesis		Original Hypothesis
		Generic (from HB) Does "the Messiah=Servant" Fit?	Generic (from HB) Does "Jesus = Servant" Fit?	Results from testing "Israel = Servant"
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	YES	NO	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	NO	NO	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	YES	NO	YES
53:1	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	NO	NO	YES
53:2	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	NO	NO	YES
53:3	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	NO	NO	YES
53:4	Indeed, he bore our illnesses, and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	NO	NO	YES

**V. SEGMENT 3 – ISAIAH 53:5-8**

The application of the *Scientific Method* to the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53" continues with the analysis of the last segment.

## A. Verification Stage – Testing the New Hypothesis

The *Verification* stage resumes with a verse-by-verse analysis of the *New Hypothesis*, along the two parallel paths described in Section III.B. One path contrasts what the Hebrew Bible teaches about *the Messiah* against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53". The parallel path contrasts the way that the New Testament portrays *Jesus* (Christianity's Messiah) against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53".

### Isaiah 53:5

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:5	But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. <sup>(i)</sup>	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	וְהוּא מְחֻלָּל מִפְשָׁעֵנוּ מִדַּכָּא מֵעוֹ נִתְיַנּוּ מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו וּבְחִבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ:	נגה

(i) Romans 4:25(KJV) – Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

1Corinthians 15:3(KJV) – For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

Hebrews 5:8(KJV) – Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Hebrews 9:28(KJV) – So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

1Peter 2:24-25(KJV) – (24) Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (25) For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

The servant is described here as having suffered because of the evil acts of others. Their sicknesses became the vehicle for the servant's oppression, thereby inflicting suffering on the servant, which he bore.

### ☆ [Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:5 apply to *the Messiah*?

*The Messiah* is never described in the Hebrew Bible as being wounded, and oppressed by others. Quite to the contrary, if *the Messiah* is the servant in Isaiah's *First Servant Song*, then the following is said of him there:

**Isaiah 42:4 – He [*the Messiah*] shall not fail nor shall he be crushed till he has set judgment in the earth; and the islands shall wait for his Torah.**

With the above being one of the descriptions of *the Messiah*, it is rather clear that Isaiah 53:5 does not describe the same individual.

### ☆ [Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:5 apply to *Jesus*?**

As can be seen from the number of cross-referenced verses to it, the authors of the New Testament quite fond of this verse in their efforts to design and promote the notion that the death of *Jesus* effected the atonement of the sins of others. Yet, aside of the mistranslations in the KJV, human vicarious atonement is strictly prohibited according to the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Exodus 32:31-33; Numbers 35:33; Deuteronomy 24:16; 2Kings 14:6; Jeremiah 31:29[30]; Ezekiel 18:4,20; Psalms 49:7-8).

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**Isaiah 53:6**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:6	All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [or, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	כָּלֵנוּ כָצֵאן תְּעִינֵנוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכוֹ פָּנִינוּ וַיהוָה הִפְגִיעַ בּוֹ אֶת עֲוֹן כָּלֵנוּ:	נגו

This verse is a statement about the speakers having lost their way and, depending on which of the two possible Jewish renditions of the last phrase is accepted, either that the servant was punished through the speakers at God's behest, or that the servant's intercession on behalf of his oppressors was accepted by God.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:6 apply to *the Messiah*?**

According the first case, the servant is punished by God through the speakers. There is no situation described anywhere in the Hebrew Bible where *the Messiah* was to be punished and oppressed by others at God's request.

In the alternate case, there are no evidence in the Hebrew Bible to support the notion that *the Messiah* will intercede on behalf of his oppressors; after all, no such oppressors are ever mentioned.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:6 apply to *Jesus*?**

The New Testament contains many references to *Jesus* taking on the people's sins and dying for them (e.g., Matthew 26:28; 1Corinthians 15:3; 1Peter 2:24; 1John 3:5), though none testify to the text of Isaiah 53:6, according to which this was inflicted on him by the people at God's request. In fact, some passages in the New Testament claim that *Jesus* may have done this at his own behest:

**Galatians 1:3-4(KJV) – (3) Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:**

The closest the New Testament approaches the concept that God may have had a hand in the event is in passages such as the following:

**John 3:16(KJV) – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

**1John 4:10(KJV) – Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

However, none of these passages reflect the context of Isaiah 53:6 and, perhaps, that is the reason they are not cross-referenced to this verse.

Even though the alternative rendition is neither found nor acknowledged in Christian translations, does the New Testament describe any situations where **Jesus** interceded on behalf of someone who oppressed him? While no such accounts are recorded about the Pharisees, who were alleged to be his enemies, one such passage concerns the Roman soldiers who put **Jesus** on the cross:

**Luke 23:34(KJV) – Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.**

Based on this passage, **Jesus** is given the benefit of the doubt with respect to Isaiah 53:6.

† **[New Testament] Answer: Yes!**

**ISAIAH 53:7**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	נִגְשׁ וְהוּא נִעְנָה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח-פִּיּוֹ כִּשְׂהַ יִבְלֵ וְכָרְחַל לְפָנָי גֹּזְזִיָּה נִאֲלָמָה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּיּוֹ :	נגז,

(ii) Matthew 26:63(KJV) – But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Matthew 27:12-14(KJV) – (12) And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. (13) Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? (14) And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

Mark 14:61(KJV) – But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

Mark 15:5(KJV) – But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

Luke 23:9(KJV) – Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

John 19:9(KJV) – And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Acts 8:32(KJV) – The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

This verse describes an oppressed and afflicted servant who, like a lamb being led to the slaughter or like a sheep being sheared, never opened his mouth.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:7 apply to *the Messiah*?**

There are no passages in the Hebrew Bible where *the Messiah* is compared to a lamb on its way to be slaughtered, or to a sheep standing silently before its shearers.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:7 apply to *Jesus*?**

There are several cross-referenced citations of this verse in the New Testament, as indicated below the translation. All cited verses, except for Acts 8:32, describe how *Jesus* stood silently when questioned by Pilate and the High Priest. Acts 8:32 is a "quote" of Isaiah 53:7, which, according to the context in Acts 8, was the passage the Ethiopian eunuch read and asked Philip to teach him of whom Isaiah was speaking. Philip responded that it was speaking of *Jesus*. So, the overall impression of these references to this verse is that *Jesus* was quiet on his way to be crucified.

The Gospel accounts contain (conflicting) accounts that describe *Jesus* as anything but silent in his own defense before the High Priest:

**John 18:19-23(KJV)** – (19) The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. (20) Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. (21) Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. (22) And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? (23) Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

*Jesus* also protested when questioned by Pontius Pilate:

**John 18:33-37(KJV) – (33) Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? (34) Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? (35) Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? (36) Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. (37) Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.**

**Jesus** also prayed at the cross, as was noted in the discussion of Isaiah 53:6.

Then, according to the Gospel accounts, **Jesus** did not remain silent when he was on the cross, with his last words being reported differently in three of the four Gospels:

**Matthew 27:46(KJV) – And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? [See also Mark 15:34; Luke 23:46; John 19:30.]**

In fact, according to the Gospel of Matthew, **Jesus** screamed so loudly while on the cross that it might have even caused an earthquake:

**Matthew 27:50-51(KJV) – (50) Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. (51) And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;**

Moreover, it seems that **Jesus** tried to save himself from death with prayers:

**Matthew 26:39(KJV) – And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. [See also Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42]**

**Hebrews 5:7(KJV) – Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;**

**Jesus** did not go willingly to his death, and he protested loudly against it, contrary to Galatians 1:4, cited earlier in reference to Isaiah 53:6.

These accounts in the New Testament contradict the claim that **Jesus** was silent before his accusers, and that he humbled himself and did not open his mouth. The encounters with the Jewish and Roman authorities involved strong verbal confrontations and did not feature a silent and meek **Jesus**. Quite to the contrary, he is depicted as presenting a strong defense of himself and for his teaching.

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**ISAIAH 53:8**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:8	He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.	From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.	מֵעֶצֶר וּמִשְׁפָּט לָקַח וְאֶת-דָּוְרוֹ מִי יְשׁוּחַח כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים מִפְּשַׁע עַמִּי נָגַע לָמוֹ:	נגח

This verse continues to describe the servant who was deprived of fair treatment, and who was banished from his land and was afflicted because of the transgressions of the speaker's people.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:8 apply to *the Messiah*?**

Aside from the fact that the servant is described here in the plural in terms of the collective noun, לָמוֹ (*lamo*), [to/unto/upon] **them**, which rules out an individual, such descriptions of *the Messiah* are not found in the Hebrew Bible.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✝ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:8 apply to *Jesus*?**

The New Testament does not describe *Jesus* as being taken out of imprisonment and from judgment, and cut off from the land of the living, i.e., exiled from the Land of Israel.

Even with the numerous references in the New Testament to the idea that *Jesus* died for the sins of mankind, according to the description of the servant in this verse, and as further supported in the Hebrew Bible, this could not possibly be the case. First, it was already demonstrated that the servant described here in terms of a collective noun is a plurality, a group of people, not an individual. Second, the claim in the New Testament is that *Jesus*, who, according to Christian beliefs, is God incarnate in the flesh as a human being, was offered as a sacrifice in order to pay the ransom for people's sins and thereby providing their salvation through the shedding of the human blood of his human flesh. In other words, it was *Jesus* the human being and not *Jesus* the divine being that allegedly served as the sacrificial offering for the atonement of humanity's sins. Yet, according to the Hebrew Bible, this scenario is not possible:

**Psalms 49:8 – A brother cannot redeem a man, he cannot give his ransom to God.**

Compare this with the KJV “Old Testament” rendition:

**Psalms 49:7(KJV) – None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:**

Both versions clearly convey the same message, that one human being cannot redeem another. On the other hand, according to the New Testament, the human, not the divine, aspect of **Jesus** was offered as a ransom for the salvation of mankind. *Which source should be accepted as the authoritative one – the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament?*

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

## B. Interim Summary – Isaiah 53:5-8

The *New Hypothesis*, formulated in Section III.B, is being tested against the Hebrew text via the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method*. Along with the *New Hypothesis*, also being tested is the proposition that **Jesus**, as he is described in the New Testament, is the servant in "Isaiah 53".

Table V.B-1 contains results obtained thus far in the *Verification* stage and, for comparison, results obtained from testing the original *Hypothesis*, are shown in the column on the extreme right.

**Table V.B-1 – Results from Verification stage of New Hypothesis for Isaiah 52:13-53:8**

Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	New Hypothesis		Original Hypothesis Results from testing "Israel = Servant"
		Generic (from HB) Does "the Messiah=Servant" Fit?	Specific (from NT) Does "Jesus = Servant" Fit?	
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	YES	NO	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	NO	NO	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	YES	NO	YES
53:1	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	NO	NO	YES

53:2	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	NO	NO	YES
53:3	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	NO	NO	YES
53:4	Indeed, he bore our illnesses, and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	NO	NO	YES
53:5	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	NO	NO	YES
53:6	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [or, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	NO	YES	YES
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	NO	NO	YES
53:8	From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.	NO	NO	YES

## VI. SEGMENT 4 – ISAIAH 53:9-12

The application of the *Scientific Method* to the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53" continues with the analysis of the last segment.

### A. Verification Stage – Testing the New Hypothesis

The *Verification* stage resumes with a verse-by-verse analysis of the *New Hypothesis*, along the two parallel paths described in Section III.B. One path contrasts what the Hebrew Bible teaches about *the Messiah* against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53". The parallel path contrasts the way that the New Testament portrays *Jesus* (Christianity's Messiah) against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53".

#### Isaiah 53:9

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:9	And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.	And he gave his grave to the wicked, and to the wealthy in his deaths, because he committed no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.	וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רִשְׁעִים קְבָרוֹ וְאֶת־עֲשִׂיר בְּמֹתָיו עַל לֹא־חָמָס עָשָׂה וְלֹא מְרָמָה בְּפִיו:	נג,ט

(i) Matthew 27:57-60(KJV) – (57) When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: (58) He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. (59) And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, (60) And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

1Peter 2:22(KJV) - Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

This verse describes the servant as non-violent and non-deceitful, who was put to death only because of his wealth, and buried as if he were a criminal.

#### ☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:9 apply to *the Messiah*?**

According to the Prophet Zephaniah, this description could well suit the righteous remnant of Israel:

**Zephaniah 3:13 – The remnant of Israel shall neither commit injustice nor speak lies; neither shall deceitful speech be found in their mouth, for they shall graze and lie down, with no one to cause them to shudder.**

Although this appellation could include *the Messiah*, since he will be part of Israel, such language is never used in the Hebrew Bible in connection with any of the prophecies that speak of him. Regarding the rest of the verse, there are no accounts in the Hebrew Bible that speak of *the Messiah* dying in the manner described here. Moreover, as was already demonstrated, the Hebrew language indicates that the servant here is a group of people, not a single individual.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:9 apply to *Jesus*?**

There are two cross-referenced passages in the New Testament that point to portions of this verse. The first, Matthew 27:57-60, describes a wealthy man, Joseph of Arimathea, who placed the body of *Jesus* in his own grave, which was most likely located in an exclusive section where the deceased rich people were entombed. Yet, just a few verses earlier *Jesus* is described as having died among the wicked:

**Matthew 27:38(KJV) – Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. [See also Mark 15:27.]**

So, aside from the problem created by the fact that the servant is a group, not an individual, it appears that the circumstances described in the New Testament were reversed from those stated in the literal sense of the verse in the Hebrew Bible.

The second reference, 1Peter 2:22, points to the last two phrases in the verse, alleging that *Jesus* committed no violence and did not speak a lie. The accounts in the New Testament belie these claims.

Did *Jesus* engage in any activities that could be described as violent? Noting that violence, whether or not it is justified, is still violence, consider the following account in New Testament:

**John 2:15(KJV) – So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. [See also Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45.]**

If this account is true, *Jesus* committed acts of violence when he attacked the merchants, dispersed their coins, and overturned the furniture in the Temple.

Would the following be words of a peaceful and non-violent person?

**Matthew 10:34-36(KJV) – (34) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. [See also Luke 12:51-53.]**

**Luke 19:27(KJV) – But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.**

*Jesus* appears to be coming not to bring peace but strife to humanity, and orders to have his foes brought before him and slain.

The New Testament describes other examples of behavior by *Jesus* which can be characterized as violent acts. For example, *Jesus* caused the drowning death of a herd of swine by having demons possess them (Matthew

8:32, Mark 5:13, Luke 8:33); and he destroyed a fig tree for not bearing fruit out of season (Matthew 21:18-21, Mark 11:13-14).

Concerning deceit in the servant's mouth, did **Jesus** ever speak a lie or deceive someone? The New Testament includes accounts which testify to the fact that **Jesus** was guilty of lying and deceiving:

**Matthew 16:27-28(KJV) – (27) For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. (28) Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.**

Are any of those whom **Jesus** allegedly addressed with these words still alive today awaiting his (second) coming? After all, **Jesus** (the Son of man) has not yet returned to establish his kingdom. Similarly, **Jesus** did not speak the truth when he assured his disciples that the end of the world order and his own triumphant return to judge all men would occur before the generation then living had passed away:

**Matthew 24:34(KJV) – Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.** [See also Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32.]

In fact, in the era following the alleged resurrection of **Jesus**, the author of the Book of Revelation, the last book in the New Testament, still quotes him as promising to return in the near future and reward all his followers:

**Revelation 22:7,12,20(KJV) – (7) Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (12) And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. (20) He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**

What does “quickly” mean? After nearly two millennia beyond the days when those words were allegedly spoken, **Jesus** has still not returned.

Then there is the following promise by **Jesus** to his followers:

**Mark 16:17-18(KJV) – (17) And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; (18) They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.**

Are there any followers of **Jesus** alive today who can safely drink poison, and heal the sick without medical knowledge?

Then there is the following promise by **Jesus**:

**John 14:12-14(KJV) – (12) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. (13) And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (14) If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.**

Does someone know of any Christians who have had all of their wishes granted? Why are not all Christians healthy, wealthy, and in charge of the world? This passage is reminiscent of the story about the genie inside a bottle who grants an endless number of wishes to its owner.

The New Testament contains other examples of deceitful behavior by **Jesus**:

- † He deceived his disciples by promising a hundredfold of material possessions in this life to those who left everything in order to follow him (Mark 10:28-30), which has not happened!
- † He claims to have spoken openly to everyone when he was questioned by the Jewish authorities (John 18:19-21). Yet, several accounts describe instances when Jesus demanded secrecy of those to whom he spoke (Matthew 16:20; Mark 8:30; Luke 9:21).
- † He admonished his disciples not to divulge the fact that he was the Messiah.
- † He demanded of the devils he exorcised to keep his deeds a secret (Mark 1:34, 3:11-12; Luke 4:41)
- † Of those who he healed, he demanded that they not tell he cured them (Matthew 8:3-4, 12:15-16; Mark 1:44, 5:43, 7:36; Luke 5:14, 8:56).

Do these actions describe works of an upright person? Quite to the contrary, they testify that **Jesus** acted violently and deceptively.

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**Sidebar Note:** Based on the analysis and correct understanding of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 53:8&9, it is established that the servant in "Isaiah 53" cannot be an individual. Rather, the servant is an entity that consists of a collection of people, a group. This fact has an impact on the analysis of the remaining three verses, but it may be set aside at times in order to focus on some other issues.

**ISAIAH 53:10**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:10	Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.	And the Lord wished to crush him, He made him ill; if his soul would acknowledge guilt, he shall have descendants [or, he shall see progeny], he shall prolong his days, and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand.	וַיְהוּה חֲפָץ דַּכָּאוּ הַחֲלִי אִם-תְּשִׂים אֲשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה זָרַע יִאֲרִיךְ יָמָיו וְחֲפָץ יְהוּה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלַח:	נגי

(ii) John 1:29(KJV) - The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

This verse describes a servant who was punished at God's behest, yet was also promised children, a long life, and success as rewards for his repentance.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:10 apply to *the Messiah*?**

Since the servant cannot be an individual but an entity, i.e., a group, *the Messiah* is excluded as the servant in Isaiah 53:10. However, setting aside this fact for a moment, it is noted that, in Isaiah 53:10, God promises to reward the servant for acknowledging his iniquity and his subsequent repentance. While the Hebrew Bible frequently speaks of promises made or rewards that would accrue to the Jewish people if they do God's will, such rewards are not individually promised to *the Messiah*.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:10 apply to *Jesus*?**

In cross-referencing this verse and John 1:29, the New Testament points specifically at the phrase "... **when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin ...**" as it appears in common Christian translations. However, it was already demonstrated that the correct (Jewish) context differs significantly from the context being implied by Christian translations. Consequently, there is no need to further comment on this reference at John 1:29.

"... **And the Lord wished to crush him, He made him ill ...**": According to the New Testament, the only one who was to be crushed by God is Satan, not *Jesus* (Romans 16:20). Of what sickness did *Jesus* suffer? Why would God want to crush *Jesus* and make him ill? If he was crushed and sick, then how, according to the Christian interpretation of this verse, could *Jesus* be a perfect and unblemished sacrificial offering?

"... **if his soul would acknowledge guilt ...**": How could a "sinless" *Jesus* acknowledge any guilt? According to the Christian interpretation, this phrase speaks of *Jesus* offering himself as a *guilt offering*, [אָשָׁם (*ASHAM*) in the Hebrew text of the verse], one that is supposed to effect atonement for a limited class of intentional sins. Yet, the New Testament, pointing at the Paschal Lamb (Exodus 12), also refers to *Jesus* as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). So, notwithstanding the fact that the Paschal Lamb did not serve to atone for any sins, how could *Jesus* be both at once? After all, each of these two sacrificial offerings had a different purpose.

This phrase "... **when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin ...**" cannot apply to *Jesus* even according to the Christian rendition. Did *Jesus* offer his soul (spirit), or did he offer his body (flesh)? If this was the purpose for God coming to earth in the flesh, why is it necessary to have here the conditional "when" (or, "if" in some Christian renditions)? Was there a chance that *Jesus* would not offer himself? As was already noted earlier, *Jesus* was not necessarily a willing party to this sacrifice (Matthew 26:39, 27:46; Mark 14:36,

15:34; Luke 22:42, 23:46; John 19:30; Hebrews 5:7). It appears that **Jesus** died against his will, so that he really offered nothing at all.

"... **he shall have descendants [or, he shall see progeny] ...**": It was previously established that the use in the Hebrew Bible of idiomatic expressions such as "seeing seed" always refers to physical seed, whether it is plant, animal, or human seed. According to the New Testament and other Christian sources, **Jesus** never fathered any children, so it is evident that he did not enjoy the promise of this reward.

"... **he shall prolong his days ...**" It was also previously established that the use in the Hebrew Bible of the idiomatic expression "[to] prolong days" refers exclusively to extending a person's mortal lifetime on earth. One of the psalms speaks of what such a mortal lifetime might be:

**Psalms 90:10 - The days of our years among them are seventy years, and if with might, eighty years; and their proudest success is but toil and pain, for it passes quickly and we fly away.**

It is 70-80 years! Yet, the New Testament contains the following account:

**Luke 3:23(KJV) - And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,**

Accordingly, **Jesus** started his ministry around the age of 30, and he was crucified some three years later, so that he was in his early thirties when he died, which hardly qualifies as having prolonged days, even according to Biblical standards.

The Hebrew Bible teaches that the above two rewards – children and a long life, the two greatest rewards God gives to mankind here on earth – come at the same time:

**Isaiah 65:20-23 – (20) There shall no longer be from there a youth or an old man who will not fill his days, for the youth who is one hundred years old shall die, and the sinner who is one hundred years old shall be cursed. (21) And they shall build houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. (22) They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat, for like the days of the tree are the days of My people, and My elect shall outlive their handiwork. (23) They shall not toil in vain, neither shall they bear for terror, for they are seed blessed by the Lord, and their offspring shall be with them. [See also Job 5:25-26.]**

Clearly, **Jesus** enjoyed neither of these rewards during his lifetime.

"... and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand ...": According to accounts in the New Testament, **Jesus** was well aware of the purpose of his mission, both on earth and destiny in heaven:

**Matthew 16:21(KJV) - From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.**

**John 6:38(KJV) – For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.**

**John 8:14(KJV) – Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.**

Why would *Jesus*, who is God manifest in the flesh according to most Christians, need to be promised by God a reward for doing God's will, and that he will be successful? What was the purpose of his being sent to earth if not to be successful? Would not an omniscient God know in advance that his incarnate divine "son" will fulfill all that was supposed to be done? Why would a heaven-bound being have to be promised earthly rewards such as a long life and children? Perhaps this verse shows that God's servant could not possibly be divine.

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**ISAIAH 53:11**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:11	He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.	From the toil of his soul he shall see [and he shall] be satisfied; with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the righteous before the multitudes, and their iniquities he shall carry.	מְעַמֵּל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה יִשְׁבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִצְדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדֵי לְרַבִּים וְעוֹנֵתָם הוּא יִסְבֵּל:	נג, יא

(iii) John 10:14-18(KJV) – (14) I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. (15) As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (17) Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Romans 5:18-19(KJV) – (18) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (19) For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

This verse describes how the servant will eventually see that God has had a special purpose in allowing such wickedness, and will be satisfied and will not challenge God's actions. The servant will vindicate mankind with his knowledge, and this will not come easily, since it will be at the expense of suffering inflicted by the multitudes.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:11 apply to *the Messiah*?**

While *the Messiah* will be a widely respected and recognized spiritual and military/political leader (e.g., Isaiah 2:3, 11:2; Daniel 7:14), this verse cannot apply to him as an individual, though he will be among those included in the entity called *My servant*.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:11 apply to *Jesus*?**

The first of the two New Testament cross-referenced passages to this verse, John 10:14-18, alludes to (the divine) *Jesus* claiming equality with the Father and carrying out his ordained mission by laying down his life and being satisfied, and how he will be satisfied as the shepherd. The second passage, Romans 5:18-19, conveys the message that mankind, which became infected with sin by what Adam had done, is justified through the work of *Jesus*. These references reflect the Christian mistranslation and misinterpretation of this verse, which are not consistent with the Hebrew text and its context.

In addition to the fact that the servant cannot be an individual, and contrary to Christian theology, this verse explains how the people will be vindicated by the servant's knowledge and not through his suffering, shed blood, and death.

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

**ISAIAH 53:12**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:12	Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.	Therefore, I will allot him a portion among the multitudes, and with the mighty he shall share booty, because he has bared his soul to death, and with transgressors he was counted; and he bore the sin of many, and he will [continue to] intercede for the transgressors.	לְכוּן אֶחְלַק-לוֹ בְּרַבִּים וְאֶת-עֲצוּמִים יְחַלֵּק שָׁלַל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הָעֵרָה לַמּוֹת נִפְשׁוֹ וְאֶת-פְּשָׁעִים נִמְנָה וְהוּא חָטָא רַבִּים נִשְׂא וּלְפָשָׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ:	נג, יב

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(iv) Matthew 26:38-39,42(KJV) – (38) Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. (39) And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (42) He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Mark 15:28(KJV) - And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

Luke 22:37(KJV) - For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

2Corinthians 5:21(KJV) - For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Philippians 2:9-11(KJV) – (9) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: (10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; (11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This verse describes a servant who will be compensated for having risked his life in dangerous situations, even to the point where he was counted among the criminals. Although he has borne the effects of, and suffered from, the sins of others, he will continue to intercede on their behalf.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:12 apply to *the Messiah*?**

Although *the Messiah* will be counted among those collectively referred to as *My servant*, there are no references in the Hebrew Bible to him, as an individual, being rewarded, having suffered due to the actions of others, being counted among criminals, and interceding on behalf of others.

☆ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

† **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:12 apply to *Jesus*?**

The various New Testament cross-references again reflect Christian misinterpretations of the Hebrew text, some of which have already demonstrated that certain verses cannot apply to *Jesus*.

The Hebrew word שָׁלַל (*shalal*), **booty**, which appears in this verse, is used throughout the Hebrew Bible exclusively to describe the spoils of war in a literal sense, i.e., taking possession of material goods that belong to others. Attempting to apply the phrase "... and with the mighty he shall share booty ..." to *Jesus* raises some poignant questions: *Did Jesus ever fight in any war? Whom did he defeat? What were his spoils? With, or of, whom will Jesus be sharing the spoils of war?*

Lastly, since *Jesus* was allegedly sacrificed and gave up his human body, how then could he intercede for anyone? After his crucifixion, was he not up

in heaven as “one with the Father”? Should not he himself be the one to forgive?

† **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

## VII. ADDITIONAL ISSUES REGARDING THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF "ISAIAH 53"

According to the accounts in the Gospels, the disciples never anticipated a dying Messiah. Peter acknowledges that *Jesus* was *the Messiah*:

**Matthew 16:16(KJV)** – And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**

Yet, when *Jesus* informs his disciples that he will be going to Jerusalem where he will be killed (Matthew 16:21), this is Peter's response:

**Matthew 16:22(KJV)** – Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, **Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.**

Peter did not appear to have had the expectation that *Jesus*, as *the Messiah*, was to fulfill "Isaiah 53". In fact, *Jesus* taught his disciples about what is to happen to him:

**Mark 9:31(KJV)** – For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, **The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.**

The following account in the New Testament describes their reaction:

**Mark 9:32(KJV)** – **But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.**

These accounts leave no doubt that the disciples did not expect *Jesus* to fulfill "Isaiah 53" according to the common Christian interpretation of it as the scenario for his suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. Rather, it appears that the common Christian interpretation of "Isaiah 53" is a later invention by the Church.

## VIII. SUMMARY

In this essay, the *Scientific Method* was used to examine the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53". In order to do this as objectively as possible, the work done in Part I had to be set aside, and the process was restarted.

In the *Observation* stage, the desired fair sample of "data" was collected, and it consisted of the following four data elements:

**Data Element #1:** “My servant” is a reference by God to one of His servants.

**Data Element #2:** The prophet Ezekiel refers to *the Messiah* as “My Servant”.

**Data Element #3:** Christian writers agree with some Jewish writers that the

respective passages in the Book of Zechariah and in the Book of Psalms refer to *the Messiah*.

**Data Element #4:** A significant portion of Chapters 40-66 in the Book of Isaiah concerns the messianic era.

In the *Generalization* Stage, a **New Hypothesis** was formulated for the Christian perspective:

† **New Hypothesis:** *The Messiah* is the servant in "Isaiah 53".

In the *Verification* Stage, this *New Hypothesis* was tested against the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible, and tested in parallel was the proposition that *Jesus*, as he is described in the New Testament, could fit as the servant of "Isaiah 53". Table VIII-1 shows the results obtained from testing the *New Hypothesis*. For reference, results obtained from testing the original *Hypothesis* are also included.

**Table VIII-1 – Results obtained from testing the New Hypothesis on Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	New Hypothesis		Original Hypothesis Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
		Generic (from HB) Does " <i>the Messiah</i> =Servant" Fit?	Specific (from NT) Does " <i>Jesus</i> = Servant" Fit?	
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	YES	NO	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	NO	NO	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	YES	NO	YES
53:1	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	NO	NO	YES
53:2	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	NO	NO	YES

53:3	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	NO	NO	YES
53:4	Indeed, he bore our illnesses, and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	NO	NO	YES
53:5	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	NO	NO	YES
53:6	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [or, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	NO	YES	YES
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	NO	NO	YES
53:8	From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.	NO	NO	YES
53:9	And he gave his grave to the wicked, and to the wealthy in his deaths, because he committed no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.	NO	NO	YES

53:10	And the Lord wished to crush him, He made him ill; if his soul would acknowledge guilt, he shall have descendants [or, he shall see progeny], he shall prolong his days, and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand.	NO	NO	YES
53:11	From the toil of his soul he shall see [and he shall] be satisfied; with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the righteous before the multitudes, and their iniquities he shall carry.	NO	NO	YES
53:12	Therefore, I will allot him a portion among the multitudes, and with the mighty he shall share booty, because he has bared his soul to death, and with transgressors he was counted; and he bore the sin of many, and he will [continue to] intercede for the transgressors.	NO	NO	YES
Scores:		YES = 2 NO = 13	YES = 1 NO = 14	YES = 15 NO = 0

The results obtained from the *Verification* stage demonstrate that neither *the Messiah* nor *Jesus* can be considered as viable candidates for the servant in "Isaiah 53". Consequently, the *New Hypothesis* [*the Messiah* = **Servant**] and its parallel Christian extension [*Jesus* = **Servant**] are not valid and must, therefore, be rejected.

† **Conclusion:** The Christian interpretation of "Isaiah 53" is false, since neither *the Messiah* nor *Jesus* can be identified as the entity being referred to as "My servant".

**Final Conclusion for Parts I & II:** The Jewish interpretation of Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song ("Isaiah 53") that *Israel* is the identity of the entity being referred to as "My servant" is correct.