

JESUS IN HEBREW PROPHECY

A Compilation of Old Testament Prophecies

Concerning the Coming of the Messiah

With Commentary

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PREFACE

Our first parents corrupted themselves with sin and transmitted that to all their offspring. Subsequent generations began to wander farther and farther away from God. In the course of time, people began to lose all knowledge of their Creator. Eventually their fallen natures focused their attention away from how they could be reconciled with God to how they could simply live in a physically demanding and hostile world. As a result, it was supposed that God could be found in numerous elemental spirits in the natural world who could be appeased with gifts and sacrifices to make everything go their way. These took the form of animals and human figures and were represented by numerous statuary, engravings, and painted images. Their sensual minds imagined myths to explain their existence and activities, and much in those myths mirrored their own immoral behavior. These, however, failing to satisfy a hunger to know God, drove some even further away from God in supposing that He was a mere force, channel, or attitude. In time, some would suppose that there is no God at all or, if He existed, He entirely abandoned us long ago.

God, however, did not abandoned us, as He was entitled to do, but set about to re-establish a genuine knowledge of Himself and prepare the way for the solution to our fallen condition and our restoration to a right relationship with Him.

For this, God chose a man from among the idol-worshippers in the Middle East during the bronze age by the name of Abraham (Joshua 24:2-3) and built through his offspring a nation to be His unique witness to the world of just who He is, what He requires, and what He intends to do to save us. That nation was Israel; and from their observance of the law, given to them by God through the prophet, Moses, and their history, we can learn of God's character and nature. God guided them according to His purposes and spoke directly to devout men whom He raised up from among them to faithfully transmit His word to the world. We have that word, their history, and their law. Originally written in the Hebrew language, it has been translated into nearly every language and dialect on earth. It is generally known in the Christian age as the Old Testament.

From that Book, we see that God's solution to our separation from Him was to come through one very special Man. In order for the Man to be recognized as being from God at His appearing and not merely a man aspiring to fame, to whom the things which are to happen are merely accidents of history, God set down ahead of time a detailed description of His purpose, activity, and conduct as well as the things that were meant to happen to Him in fulfilment of God's plan. To prevent the revelation of this Man from looking like the mere notion of one man, it was revealed over a period of more than a thousand years to a number of God's most devoted servants among the people of Israel. To further eliminate the possibility of misidentification of this Man when He appeared, God arranged for Him to be descended from just the kings of Judea, who were in turn descended from David, their most illustrious king.

Let us look now at the most important prophecies concerning this Man to be found in the Hebrew scriptures.

INTRODUCTION

The Messiah, which is a descriptive title rather than a proper name, is the most important figure in Hebrew prophecy; and, as the Hebrew scriptures were brought to completion, an expectation for the appearance of the Messiah grew. Matthew, Mark, and John began their gospels by letting us know that Jesus is the Messiah. Matthew and Mark use the term Christ (Χριστός), the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word; John uses the term *Messias*, a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word. (Matthew 1:1, Mark 1:1, John 1:41) Within the following pages, we shall examine the major prophecies in the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) concerning the Messiah, which provide considerable detail about Jesus' birth, nature, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection hundreds and thousands of years before He was born.

At birth, He was given the Hebrew name, *Yeshua*, which is the same as the name given in English translations of the Old Testament as Joshua. Our first encounter with this name is in Exodus 17:9, where we are introduced to Moses' young assistant. This Joshua would eventually become Moses' successor and lead the Israelites in a conquest of the promised land. Originally named *Hoshea*, which means "deliverer," Moses called him *Yehoshua*, which means "*Yahweh* saves" or "the LORD saves." (Numbers 13:16) Centuries later, *Yehoshua* was shortened to *Yeshua*.

The Greek transliteration of the name, *Yeshua*, is Ἰησοῦς, which is pronounced as if spelled in English as Yaysou. It was rendered into Latin as *Iesus* (pronounced as Yaysus). Through a long process of interaction between European languages, we arrived at what we call the English language and, in that process, the name *Yeshua* became Jesus.

It was appropriate that Jesus should be named for Moses' successor, not only because of the meaning of their common name but because of the similarity of Jesus' role to that of Joshua, son of Nun. As Joshua brought victory on an earthly battlefield to obtain the promised land for Israel, so Jesus brought victory on a spiritual battlefield to make salvation and reconciliation available for all mankind.

The word, Messiah, means "anointed one" and, in most places in English translations where the word Messiah occurs in the Old Testament, it is translated as such. The term, Messiah, arises from the tradition of establishing a new king in Israel by anointing his head with olive oil. (1 Samuel 10:1) In scripture, olive oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. So the Messiah would be a future king anointed in actuality by the Holy Spirit. The title, Messiah, also carried with it the idea of a deliverer. The Messiah is also known in a number of passages in the Hebrew scriptures by other terms, such as "the branch," and, sometimes when God is speaking, "My servant," and also "Son of Man."

The Hebrew name, *Yahweh*, is the proper name of God, our Creator and Lord of the Universe, which had been lost to the world for centuries and was finally restored to the earth through Israel. "God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am *Yahweh*, and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the name of God Almighty; but by my name, *Yahweh*, I was not known to them.'" (Exodus 6:2-3) In Exodus 3:14 we have the meaning of the name, *Yahweh*, "God said to Moses, 'I AM THAT I AM' and He said, 'Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.''"

Jesus declared Himself the incarnation of *Yahweh* with these words, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” (John 8:58)

Some, in relatively modern times, have rendered the name as Jehovah. Jews, out of intense reverence, developed the practice of not speaking this name and, instead, spoke the word, *Adonai*, meaning Lord in its place; translators of the scriptures have continued the practice; the name is rendered in English Bibles as “LORD,” in large and medium capital letters, and will appear in this text in the same way. Because of centuries without the name being pronounced, it is not actually known what vowel sounds were actually used with the four consonances of the name, YHWH; but *Yahweh* has gained considerable acceptance. The name first appears as “*Yahweh* God” in the Holy Scriptures in Genesis 2:4, where the writer of Genesis proclaims Him the maker of heaven and earth.

The following is a compilation of the most important prophecies about the Messiah and, therefore, Jesus, contained in Hebrew prophecy. It is arranged by Old Testament books, starting with the oldest and ending with the newest. The approximate time period covered is given for each book in parentheses. All dates are from *The Criswell Study Bible*.¹ Under each book are one or more scripture listings, giving chapters and verses, with many of the listings also giving references to other passages in the Bible, indicated by “Ref:”; those that are underlined are to New Testament passages in which the Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled or referenced. Under each scripture listing, is a brief commentary. Scripture quotations are the author’s paraphrase of the King James Version (1611), with reference to Hebrew-English lexicons. You should have at hand a copy of the Bible, preferably the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the New International Version (NIV), the English Standard Version (ESV), or the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), so that you can read these passages for yourself. The NIV has, for the most part, produced a good readable translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The NASB has done a good technical job of translating the Hebrew Old Testament and has done exceptionally well at translating the New Testament. You can freely access any of these translations through your computer device at <https://www.biblegateway.com/>.

The revelation of the coming Messiah began early in scripture as a hint then built to a resounding crescendo of prophetic utterances as His time drew near.

¹ *The Criswell Study Bible*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1979).

GENESIS (from the Creation to approximately 19th or 17th century BC)

A Prologue to Prophecy

GENESIS 3:14-15

The revelation of a man who would redeem the human race began early. The first indication is seen in God's pronouncement of punishment for the serpent who was used by Satan to tempt Eve. Except in this passage, the Hebrew word for seed is used consistently in the rest of Hebrew scripture in a masculine sense and never associated with a woman. It is the man who has seed, not a woman. The exceptional use of the term in connection with Eve, hints at an offspring conceived by a different means than usual, that is, a virgin conception and birth. A future male descendant of Eve, which is solely the offspring of a woman, would be wounded by Satan but not destroyed, as indicated by the serpent bruising His heel, an area where a wound would not be fatal. Satan, however, would be destroyed by this future offspring, as indicated by His bruising the serpent's head, an area where a fatal wound could be inflicted.

Melchizedek

GENESIS 14:18-20

Ref: Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 6:20-7:28

The next prophecy concerning the Messiah appeared with our introduction to Melchizedek. The Messiah is not directly mentioned in this passage, but we shall learn that he has a significant role to play. When Abraham returned from rescuing the King of Sodom and Abraham's nephew, Lot, from the kings who had invaded from Mesopotamia, Melchizedek came out of his city, Salem, to welcome back Abraham and to bless him in the name of God Most High. Abraham gave the king a tenth of all that the invading kings had carried off.

The name, Melchizedek, means King of Righteousness. The word, Salem, means peace; so he was the righteous king of the city of peace. This city would one day be called, Jerusalem. Its early destiny would make it the seat of government of Israel; its final destiny will make it the throne city of the Messiah, the seat of government for the Kingdom of God on earth.

The priesthood of Aaron, which would be installed under the law of Moses was a temporary priesthood to administer a temporary law until a universal priesthood would be established in the Messiah. As Paul put it in Galatians, "the law was our teacher to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24) Melchizedek, who was not related to Abraham, was a priest of God Most High before Abraham entered the future territory of Israel; he was a priest recognized by both Gentile and Israelite. From the declaration of David, speaking by the Holy Spirit, in Psalm 110, we know Melchizedek is a model for the type of high priesthood that the Messiah is to hold, a universal and everlasting priesthood over the entire earth. Before Abraham was called out of Mesopotamia, God had already chosen the site for the future Kingdom of God and had installed a priest there, who was the prototype of the One to come.

Although Melchizedek occupied a position higher than that of Abraham, God chose to bring forth the Messiah from among Abraham's descendants. Nevertheless, He would not come through the tribe of Levi, which held the priesthood in Israel, but through the kingly tribe of Judah.

The Lamb of God and the Abrahamic Blessing

GENESIS 22:1-19

Ref: Genesis 12:3

In this passage, the LORD decides to test Abraham's faith and present us with an object lesson concerning our deliverance through the Son of God. The LORD told Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, to a place He would show him and offer his only son as a sacrifice. Abraham did everything he was told to do. When Abraham raised his knife over his son to sacrifice him on an altar he had constructed, the angel of the LORD stopped him and provided Abraham a lamb instead. Although, the lamb that the LORD provided was not sufficient, in and of itself, for everlasting forgiveness, it was a dramatic illustration for us that only God Himself can provide the sacrifice that can satisfy His demand for justice in the punishment of our sins. Not even the sacrifice of one of our own sons is enough; it is only provided by the sacrifice of the LORD's own son. The practice of animal sacrifice was required later under the Law of Moses, though it was never enough to atone for sin, but it showed the need for the genuine substitutionary sacrifice for sin that was yet to come. Thus we have John the Baptist exclaim on seeing Jesus for the first time, "Behold the lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) On the cross, as He died, Jesus said, "It is finished." (John 19:30)

Because Abraham had shown himself to be faithful, we have in verse 18, "Therefore God said, 'In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.'" In this verse, God confirms a promise made earlier, at the time Abraham was called out of Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan. It states that the nations of the earth will be blessed through Abraham's offspring. The nation of Israel has been a blessing to the world by being the keepers and transmitters of the revelation of God, but the blessing was not fully realized until that particular offspring of Abraham, the Messiah, came in the person of Jesus.

All of Israel's Kings are to come from Judah

GENESIS 49:10

Three generations after Abraham, God revealed through the blessing of Jacob spoken to his sons that the Messiah would come through the descendants of Judah. All the kings of Israel are to come from the tribe of Judah and the kingship would not pass from them until it rested finally on the One to whom all people would gather to acknowledge as king. The Hebrew word in the text used to describe the Messiah is *Shiloh*, which means "to whose it is." ² *Shiloh* occurs in the King James text untranslated; others translate it.

² Francis Brown, with S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951). p. 1010

EXODUS (1445 BC to 1405 BC)

The Passover

EXODUS 12:43-49

Ref: Matthew 26:20-27:66; Mark 14:17-15:47;
Luke 22:14-23:56; John 1:36; 19:33,36;
1 Corinthians 5:6-8

The nation of Israel was brought into existence for the purpose of being a priesthood to the rest of mankind. "You shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:6) Everything it did and everything that happened to it prefigured the larger plan God had for all mankind.

The Passover was the first formal rite in which the Israelites would participate as a nation. It became the first feast to be instituted for observance through all Israel's generations. The nation of Israel was born the night of the first Passover. It was a night of death for the Egyptians but a night of deliverance for the Israelites. As Israel was delivered from physical death that night by the blood of a lamb, so all mankind would be delivered from spiritual death by the blood of the Son of God.

All the features of the feast prefigure the crucifixion of Christ. The lamb had to be a male without blemish. This symbolized Jesus' manhood, and His sinless nature. The blood of the lamb was dabbed on the door frame of their houses forming the three points of a cross. The lamb was roasted whole over direct fire, symbolizing Christ's agony and torment of soul endured in our place. The lamb was consumed entirely in one night, signifying the atonement of Christ would be accomplished in a single point in time, once and for all. It was eaten with unleavened bread. Leavening (yeast or bacteria) symbolized sin. Bread without leavening symbolized the putting away of sin. The crucifixion of Christ was a victory against sin as well as an atonement for sin. The Israelites were specifically told not to break a bone of the Passover lamb. This foretold a unique feature of Jesus' crucifixion - not a bone of Him was broken.

Normally a victim of crucifixion lasted well past the first day; it was a slow torturous death. The Romans, however, had a way of shortening the process; by breaking the legs, death came more quickly without lessening any of the agony. Because the day following Jesus' crucifixion, which would begin at sundown, was a particularly holy day, the Jews wanted all those crucified to be dead and taken down before that time. The soldiers broke the legs of the two crucified with Jesus, but when they found Him already dead, they did not bother to break His legs; Jesus had died within hours of His being nailed to the cross.

The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, ordered Jesus crucified at about noon, at the same time the daily afternoon sacrifice was being offered in the temple; noon was the time required to do that on a Passover that fell on the eve of a Sabbath (Mishnah: Pesachim V, 1). Jesus died just after 3:00 PM (the 9th hour, according to the Hebrew custom of counting the hours of daylight from dawn to sundown). His death occurred at the very time they were beginning to slaughter the Passover lambs in the Temple for those who would be celebrating the Passover that day. Flavius Josephus, states in

his book, *The History of the Jewish War Against the Romans*, in book VI § 423,³ that the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the temple between the 9th and 11th hours (3:00 PM – 5:00 PM).

DEUTERONOMY (approximately 1405 BC)

The Prophet

DEUTERONOMY 18:15-19

Ref: John 1:21, 7:16, 40

Many great prophets have come to Israel since the time of Moses, but none had the stature of Moses, who delivered to Israel the law and mediated the establishment of a covenant with God. At the time Jesus was born, the people of Israel still looked for the fulfillment of the word of the LORD to Moses, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brothers like unto you and will put my words in His mouth; and He shall speak to them all that I shall command Him." Jesus is the only one who could fulfill that word. As Moses mediated a covenant of law with Israel, so Jesus mediated a covenant of everlasting salvation with all mankind. Jesus further confirmed His fulfillment of the word to Moses by acknowledging that all the words He spoke were given to Him by His Father in heaven.

PSALMS (David was King of Israel from 1011 BC to 1051 BC)

David, Israel's most illustrious king, a man after God's heart, to whom was given the promise of everlasting kingship and the lineage of Christ, was especially inspired to deliver messianic prophecy in songs of supplication and praise. His psalms were, of course, personally meaningful, arising from his own experiences of sorrow, fear, and joy; but on a number of occasions, his words were chosen by the Holy Spirit to foreshadow some feature or event in the life of his greatest future descendant, the Messiah.

The Messiah is the LORD's Son

PSALM 2:1-12

Ref: Matthew 17: 5; Mark 9:7; Luke 1:32, 9:35

In David's second psalm, he makes it clear that the LORD's Anointed, or Messiah, is to be considered the Son of God. He paints a vivid picture of the world setting in which the Son of God is to make his appearance. He is to be met with hostility from all the kings of the earth, and the psalm warns them to be wise and take instruction and embrace the Son lest He be angry and they all perish. In spite of all their hostility, the Son of God, the Anointed, will be established as king in God's chosen nation of Israel ("upon My holy hill of Zion"). The Son of God is to rule over all the nations of the earth ("Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.")

³ Josephus. *The Jewish War*. Loeb Classical Library. v. 3.

The Resurrection from the Dead

PSALM 16:8-11 Ref: [Matthew 28:6](#); [Mark 16:6](#); [Luke 24:6-7](#); [John 5:25, 20:17](#)

In the sixteenth psalm, David expresses his confidence that God will one day raise him from the grave. That confidence is matched with the equal confidence that the Holy One, another title meaning the Messiah, would be raised from the dead before experiencing decomposition which results from death. The Hebrew word for which the meaning, grave, was assigned in the scripture, is sheol. The King James Version incorrectly translates it "hell." Sheol roughly corresponded in concept to that of the Greek Hades. It was the world of the dead, not a place of eternal punishment, as ascribed to hell.

The Crucifixion of the Messiah

PSALM 22:1-18

Ref: [Matthew 27:35-46](#); [Mark 15:18-34](#)
[Luke 23:33-39](#); [John 19:16-23](#)

In this psalm, David is gripped with despair because of a seemingly hopeless situation in which he finds himself because of his enemies. He cries out to God in song; and the Holy Spirit in timely manner chooses words for him which will have meaning only in the distant future. It begins with the cry Jesus would make from the cross in His deep agony of taking on the sins of the world. It continues with a detailed description of the setting for the crucifixion: Jesus was surrounded by a mob of accusers who mocked Him and laughed and taunted Him to come down from the cross, to invoke the power of heaven to save Himself. The psalm then describes in graphic detail what Jesus would experience in his body during crucifixion, a description all the more remarkable in light of the fact that crucifixion was not practiced in David's time. This was topped off by the prediction that Jesus' executioners would cast lots for His garments.

A Priest Forever after the order of Melchizedek

PSALM 110:1-7 Ref: [Genesis 14:18](#); [Matthew 22:41-46](#); [Hebrews 6:20-7:28](#)

In this psalm, David refers to the Messiah as "my Lord," and proclaims the nature of His ministry: "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Jesus' priesthood is to be a universal priesthood, for both Gentile and Israelite. (See section on Melchizedek, above.)

The Stone the Builders Rejected

PSALM 118:19-29

Ref: [John 10:7-10](#); [Matthew 21:9-10, 21:42-45](#)

This psalm foreshadows Jesus' analogy of Himself being a door for His sheep to enter and find salvation. It also predicts Jesus' rejection by the ruling class of Israel, who viewed Him as being without worth to their idea of building a religious structure. But this stone they have rejected, ultimately becomes the featured stone of the building.

Also, within this psalm are heard the cries of those who greeted Jesus on the day of His final entry into Jerusalem, which came to be called, in later times, Palm Sunday. They carried palm branches and paved His way with them and called out “*Hosanna*” to Jesus as He rode by on the road from Bethany to the gates of Jerusalem. *Hosanna* was the Greek rendering of the Hebrew words, “*hoshiah nah*,” which means “save now.”

This psalm was a part of what was called the Hallel, which included psalm 113 – 118. In the temple, while the priests were slaughtering the Passover lambs, brought in by the people, the Levites, positioned on platforms between the people and the altar, sang the Hallel, repeating it as many times as necessary to extend through the entire time of slaughter. It was also sung on other feast days and was accompanied by the waving of palm branches.

ISAIAH (740 BC to 700 BC)

A number of commentators have referred to the collection of messianic prophecies found in Isaiah as “The Gospel According to Isaiah;” and this is certainly justified by the great amount of detail to be found within the book concerning the circumstances surrounding the Messiah's appearing, His nature, mission, activity, and what would happen to Him. Next to Moses, Isaiah was perhaps Israel's greatest prophet. He lived during the period 767 B.C. to sometime after 681 B.C. and knew four kings of Judea and six kings of the ten northern tribes of Israel, often referred to as Samaria, “house of Israel” or simply Israel. He saw the Assyrians subdue Judea and carry off a great many people from the ten northern tribes, replacing them with a people who would be known as the Samaritans in Jesus' day.

The Mission of Isaiah and his Sons

ISAIAH 6:8-9

Ref: Matthew 13:13-17

Isaiah's mission was especially difficult for him personally to bear; for he was to deliver messages from God to a people he was told beforehand would not listen. These messages would, however, be heard and come to pass in the course of time, but most not in his own lifetime. Some of these prophecies required hundreds of years for fulfillment, and some would need thousands of years. His ministry often took on a messianic role, his words and deeds prefiguring the ministry and activity of the Messiah.

In 8:18, Isaiah informs us, “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwells in mount Zion.” Isaiah's name in Hebrew was *Yasha-yahu*, which means “the salvation of *Yahweh*.”⁴ His name stood in sharp contrast to what the king and the people were relying upon for their salvation. They were looking to Assyria and to the pagan gods of the region for their deliverance from the threat of the kings in Samaria and Syria. At the direction of the LORD, Isaiah gave his sons names to represent the prophetic messages he delivered from the LORD. By doing this, Isaiah also showed the confidence he had in those messages. A name is something a person carries all his

⁴ Ibid *The Criswell Study Bible*. p. 778.

life. Imagine the embarrassment it would cause both to the child and to the father who named him if the prophecy represented by the child's name turned out to be false. It was a bold statement for Isaiah to make, and he proudly took his sons with him when he went to the king or among the people with his message. All could see his sons as living testimony of the certainty of Isaiah's words.

The name of Isaiah's first son, Shear-Jashub, meaning "a remnant shall return,"⁵ expressed one of the major themes in Isaiah's prophecies. He prophesied of several invasions that would result in exile for inhabitants of Israel, but along with them followed assurances that a remnant would return. And coupled with the promise of their return are promises of a deliverer, the Messiah, who shall bring redemption and peace not only to them but to the whole world. One remnant of Israel saw the birth of the Messiah, only to be exiled again. Now a remnant of that exile has begun its return to the land and shall see the return of the Messiah.

Perhaps no other book of Hebrew scripture is more important to that returning remnant than the book of Isaiah. About a year before the present nation of Israel came into being, an almost intact copy of the book of Isaiah was found on the shore of the Dead Sea, dating to the second century before Jesus. At the time of its discovery, it was the only copy found predating the time of Jesus. Up to that point in time, the copy of the book of Isaiah in current use was under suspicion by some secular academics of having been altered by early Christians to embellish or insert the Messianic prophecies. The Isaiah scrolls, however, say the same things as our copy of Isaiah. The Isaiah scrolls are now the centerpiece in the Shrine of the Book in the Israel Museum, in Jerusalem. Its prominent dome, shaped like an urn lid, can easily be seen from the Knesset, the Israeli parliament building. It's almost as if Isaiah is standing among his people again, pointing the way.

A Virgin Shall Conceive and Bear a Son

ISAIAH 7-8

Ref: Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:34

At the beginning of chapter seven, we find that Samaria and Syria have allied themselves and are attacking Judea. In 7:3, Isaiah was told by the LORD to take with him his son Shear-Jashub and deliver a message to Ahaz, king of Judea, telling him that he did not need to fear these nations for the LORD would deliver him from them. Isaiah was instructed to offer the king the opportunity to name a sign from God to assure him of the truthfulness of his message. The king, however, refused. Isaiah responded, "Hear now, house of David, is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? Therefore, the LORD Himself shall give you a sign ..." Because Ahaz refused to have a sign of his choosing, the LORD made the choice for him. Because the word, himself, is used, the LORD's response is to be at a personal level. It should be assumed that, if Ahaz had accepted the LORD's offer, the LORD would have provided a sign that Ahaz could see and experience within a short time of making his request; but, when he refused, an immediate performance of a sign was no longer in play. Isaiah's sons were a part of his ministry and were given prophetic names at the direction of the LORD. Here, we have the picture of Isaiah and his son

⁵ Ibid *The Criswell Study Bible*. p. 778.

standing before Ahaz and being rejected by him. This was the perfect time for the LORD, with Isaiah and his son for a backdrop, to speak of His own Son who would one day, in the presence of His Father, stand before the rulers of Judea and be rejected by them. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel. Butter (cottage cheese) and honey, shall He eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings." (7:14-16)

Indeed, by the time of Jesus, those kings were long gone. The prophecy, however, was not meant to be a sign for the moment but rather to serve a double purpose of both a rebuke of Ahaz and a revelation of the manner in which the LORD'S Son would be born; and, since it was addressed to the House of David and not specifically to Ahaz, it was a prophecy for all of Ahaz's descendants to keep in mind. Ahaz was bypassed; he had refused a sign for his own times, so a sign was given for a future time. The word, Immanuel, incidentally, is not a formal name but, rather, a descriptive title which means "God with us."

The consumption by the child, Immanuel, of butter (or curds, that is, cottage cheese) and honey conveys the idea that the child will grow up in humble circumstances, as, indeed, Jesus did. Jesus identified with the humble circumstances of an oppressed people and the prophecy of Immanuel connects Him to what would be coming upon the inhabitants of Judea at the time. Immediately following the prophecy of 7:14-16, Isaiah continues with a warning of an even bigger disaster for Judea than the two northern kings, the invasion of Assyria, accompanied by Egypt. Within that prophecy, found in Isaiah 7:17-25, we have in 7:21-22, a man who survives on cottage cheese and honey.

Chapter seven finishes with words of doom for Judea at the hands of Assyria. In chapter eight, we see a return to the original concern that began chapter seven, Samaria and Syria. Isaiah is told by the LORD to write on a large scroll the words, maher shalal hash baz, in the presence of Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah as witnesses. We aren't told the significance of this action; however, from what follows, it is evident that Isaiah is beginning a new prophecy concerning the destruction of Samaria and Syria; it can be assumed that much of the content of chapter 8 formed the content of the scroll. To accompany this new scroll, he is to have a child with his wife and call the boy Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, which means "quickly spoil, speedily plunder." This son is meant to be a sign to Judea that Samaria and Syria are doomed to destruction by Assyria.

When the boy was born, "Then said the LORD to me, 'Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, "my father" and "my mother," the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.'" (Isaiah 8:3-4) This is the last mention of Maher-shalal-hash-baz. He served as a sign to reinforce the message of the scroll, that Syria's capital, Damascus, will be destroyed along with Samaria. Ahaz and Judea only have to trust in the LORD and wait.

But Ahaz did not trust in the LORD and became like the kings of the northern ten tribes of Israel and made images to the Canaanite gods, which were called the Baals and were worshiped in the land before the Israelites conquered it. He also

sacrificed his children to these gods and sacrificed and burned incense on high places and “under every green tree.” (2 Chronicles 28:1-4)

“Therefore, the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they struck him, carrying away a great multitude of them as captives and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with a great slaughter; for Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judea a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.” (2 Chronicles 28:5-6)

Even under this great assault, Ahaz had managed to hold out against them; but then the Edomites in the southeast and the Philistines in the southwest attacked Judea and took territory and captives. Exhausted, Ahaz asked Assyria to help him, sending to the Assyrian king a large quantity of gold collected from the princes of Judea and from the articles in the temple of the LORD; he also made sacrifices to the gods of the king of Syria, assuming that was Syria’s source of power to defeat him, and set up pagan altars everywhere and closed the temple of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 28:16-25)

Assyria did attack Syria and defeat them and continued on into Samaria, defeating them. Finally, Ahaz and Judea thought that they were delivered; and they rejoiced in the defeat of the two kings that had them under siege. But Isaiah stepped in with a message from the LORD, prophesying a different outcome: “The LORD spoke also to me again, saying, ‘Since this people refuses the waters of Shiloah that go softly and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah’s son, therefore, behold, the LORD brings upon them the waters of the river, the strong and mighty ones, the king of Assyria and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels and go over all his banks; and he shall pass through Judea and overflow and reach to the neck; and, the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of your land, Immanuel!’” (Isaiah 8:5-8)

Shiloah is a brook that flows from a spring in the City of David on Mount Zion. Isaiah tells us in 8:18 that the LORD dwells on Mount Zion; so its waters can be taken as representing the word of God, in the same way that Jesus said He had living waters to provide us (John 4:7-14). The word, river, in the passage refers to the Euphrates River, which bordered Assyria and whose waters represented Assyria’s massive army. The passage informs Judea that Assyria will not stop at the defeat of Syria and Samaria but will invade Judea itself, wreaking great destruction and hardship on its people. It is a continuation of the prophecy following the prophecy of Immanuel’s birth; and Immanuel appears in this passage as well. Then follow words of reassurance in 8:10 that “God is with us,” which, in Hebrew, is *immanuel*.

Unto Us a Child is Born

ISAIAH 9:1-7

Ref: Luke 1:35; John 1:1-14; 5:22-23

Chapter eight ended with a message of impending doom, with the Assyrians overrunning the land of Israel. It is followed in chapter nine by a message of hope to not only those who would experience the disaster described in chapter eight, but all those who would follow and experience hardship and exile. At the time of the birth of the child in this prophecy, people walking in darkness would see a great light and those dwelling in the land of the shadow of death would have a great light shine upon them. A Son would be born to them, a Son given to them. “The government shall be

upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

This is an astounding revelation for anyone hearing it for the first time; and, even for those of us who believe but have not had direct experience with such a birth, it is an awesome thing to think about. A child is to be call "the Mighty God!" — a child who looks like us, that we can touch with our hands, see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, yet should be called "the Mighty God," and not only that, but "the everlasting Father," God most high, the ultimate hearer of our prayers, the ultimate power and authority over all creation!

This child is not one of Isaiah's children; He is not a child born by ordinary means. This child can only be born in a miraculous way, a virgin birth. This child is Immanuel, "God with us." The Gospel of Luke described the circumstances of this child's birth when he quoted the angel Gabriel speaking to Mary: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you; therefore, that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35) In Hebrew culture, as elsewhere, the word, son, indicates not only origin but also nature; as the term "son of man" indicates someone in the likeness and nature of a human being, so "Son of God" indicates someone in the likeness and nature of God. This child born to Mary was to be considered not only from God but, in nature, God. He should be called "the Mighty God" and "the everlasting Father." John proclaims this in the first verse of his gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

This prophecy of Isaiah has found fulfilment in no one but Jesus Christ, who spent most of His time in Galilee, as this passage in Isaiah prophesied. Galilee, which encompasses the old tribal territories of Zebulun and Naphtali, was, at the time of Jesus, occupied mostly by Jews, but non-Jews, Gentiles, were well represented there and, indeed, the predominant language of Galilee at the time of Jesus was Aramaic, the language of Syria. Galilee was Palestine's main doorway to the rest of the world; trade-routes to Mesopotamia, Lebanon, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece (and ultimately Rome) passed through Galilee, "Galilee of the nations (or Gentiles)," as Isaiah's prophecy called it.

Verse 7 speaks "of the increase of His government and peace" having no end. This speaks of the increase in His church continually from that time to the end of the present age and continuing on for eternity. For the present, it is a spiritual government over those who willingly submit to Him in the shadow of worldly governments, who find an inner peace in the midst of the oppressions and calamities in the world. The rest of verse 7 awaits the end of the present age, when Christ returns to rule the earth in person, at which time He takes his seat on the throne of David and there is no end to His rule.

This passage is really a continuation of chapter eight. It contrasts a future time, when Immanuel is born, to a time of imminent destruction in the days of Ahaz, when Immanuel is only a hope.

A Branch from the Root of Jesse

ISAIAH 11:1-12

Ref: Matthew 1:1, 6; Luke 1:26-27

In the eleventh chapter, Isaiah informs us that this Prince of Peace will be descended from Jesse, the father of David. When this passage is taken together with 2 Samuel 7:16, we see that the Messiah is descended from that particular root of Jesse, David. And for the first time Isaiah gives us a clear picture of the nature and ministry of the Prince of Peace. His ministry would be directed by the Holy Spirit of God, “the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,” (11:2) imparting exceptional wisdom and knowledge and reverence for God. He will not judge by what He sees and hears, as the world does, but by deep insight born of a righteous nature. (11:3) “He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and, with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.” (11:4) His words will have a great impact upon the peoples of the world and bring condemnation and destruction of the wicked. (11:4)

In 11:7-9, we find that this Root of Jesse will one day usher in a new age of peace upon the earth, in which even dangerous animals will no longer be a threat to people or other animals. And in that day, the Root of Jesse will stand as an ensign of the people and the nations of the world will look to Him. (11:10) Also at that time, the LORD will gather the people of Israel into their land for the second and final time from all over the earth. (11:11-12) The first return of exiles to Israel started in 444 BC after the Babylonian captivity. The second return of exiles to Israel began in the late nineteenth century then picked up momentum right after World War II and resulted in nationhood status for Israel in 1948; but the return is not complete; there are still more Jews living outside of Israel than within. Another mass migration is yet to occur, after which an era of peace will ensue, ruled over by the Messiah.

The Mission of John the Baptist

ISAIAH 40:1-11

Ref: Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23

This is a Messianic passage. There is much in this passage that pertains to Jesus’ ministry and mission, but it also contains a mandate for the ministry of John the Baptist. It begins with, “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak soothingly to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is finished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received of the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.” These verses are addressed to the nation as a whole, represented by her capital city, Jerusalem. The nation, itself as a whole, has received enough punishment and should be prepared for a personal appearance of God.

Verse 3 was cited by John the Baptist (John 1:23) as characterizing his mission, that of calling his people to repentance of sin in preparation of the coming of the Messiah. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

Verse 4 proclaims that mighty men will be brought low and the humble will be raised up.

Verse 5: The glory of the LORD will be revealed and all mankind will see it.

Verses 6-8: The frailty of mankind is contrasted to the enduring, unfailing word of God, that stands forever.

Verse 9: Those who bring good news to Jerusalem are told to tell all the towns of Judea, "Behold your God!" And this was done principally by John the Baptist in proclaiming Jesus as "the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a man which is preferred before me; for He was before me.'" (John 1:29-30) He also said of Jesus, "... He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Also the apostles were commissioned to go out into all the towns of Israel to heal and preach. (Mark 6:7-13, 30) Later, Jesus sent out seventy to heal and preach in the towns. (Luke 10:1, 17)

Verse 11: Jesus is portrayed as the good shepherd. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, nor shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 6:27-28) "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)

John the Baptist was an important work of God in expressing His approval and identification of Jesus as the Messiah. He was a man called by God from his conception for preparing the way of the Messiah. As soon as he was old enough, he went into the wilderness to be alone with God and wore rough clothing made of camel hair, fastened about his waist with a large leather belt; his food consisted of locusts and wild honey. When he burst into the public attention, his fiery condemnation of sin and frequent mention of an expectation of the appearance of the Messiah, for which they should prepare, grabbed the attention of the people, and they came to him in large numbers to be baptized for repentance. Being no respecter of persons, he leveled condemnation on the leadership of Judea, calling them "a generation of vipers." He also confronted King Herod the Tetrarch for his adulterous relationship with his brother's wife, which would secure for him imprisonment and beheading.

Flavius Josephus, who was a Jewish general in the rebellion against Rome in 70 AD and, later in life, a secular historian of the Jewish people, said in his *Jewish Antiquities*, book XVIII, 116-119, that the Jewish people attributed the defeat of Herod's army in a battle with the King of Petra as punishment for his having put John the Baptist to death. Josephus also informed us (109-115) that the battle was the result of Herod's wife fleeing to her father, the King of Petra, with the news of Herod's mistreatment of her by taking his brother's wife for his own.

John was not a man to conspire with anyone and was devoted to God and His word though it brought him death. When he saw Jesus coming to him and recognized Him immediately, without having ever seen Him before, as the One who was the fulfilment of all the prophecies of the Messiah, that was as good an endorsement as anyone can receive from a man.

A New Covenant mediated by the Messiah

ISAIAH 42:1-7

Ref: Matthew 12:17-20

In chapter forty-two, we have one of several passages concerning the work of a special servant of God. In some passages, this servant is equated to the nation of Israel as a whole, because of its original role in the earth to be a nation of priests to the world; but, in other passages, the servant being described is clearly a particular person and not the nation as a whole. This passage is an instance where the servant

is an individual member of Israel, clearly intended to describe the activity of the Messiah. Verse 1 clearly indicates this by the fact that the LORD puts His Spirit upon Him; unlike the Christian era, in which the Spirit is given to all of Jesus' followers, the Holy Spirit only came upon a few select persons during the period of the Old Testament. Verse two, by describing activity that is only suited to an individual, makes it especially evident that "My servant" is just one person.

In verse 2, we see that Jesus will not go through the streets crying out for people to listen to Him. As the gospels inform us, the people came to Him to hear His message. In verse 3, we see that Jesus will walk gently among the bruised and sin-broken people, bringing them salvation rather than judgment. (John 3:17)

In verse 6, Jesus is given for a covenant of the people and a light to the nations. A covenant is a formal relationship between persons that is governed by certain promises, often sworn to by oath. The old covenant was an agreement between the people of Israel and God, in which the people promised to keep the law and God promised them His protection and prosperity. (Exodus 23:20-33) The people agreed to the covenant, and it was sealed by the sprinkling of blood. (Exodus 24:3-8) The new covenant in Christ is: "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) It was also sealed with blood: "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:28)

In verse 7, His ministry is shown to be a healing ministry, opening the eyes of the blind and freeing people from the dark imprisonment of sin.

The Messiah is a Sacrifice for Sin

ISAIAH 52; 53:1-12

Ref: Matthew 27:35-46; Mark 15:18-34
Luke 23:33-39; John 19:16-23

In the preceding chapters, beginning in chapter 9, Isaiah continually warns his people of the consequences their wickedness will bring upon them. Up to chapter 13, he is only concerned with the consequences that Assyria will bring upon them and what God will eventually do to the Assyrians after they have acted to punish Israel and Judea for their unfaithfulness. Beginning in chapter 13, Isaiah starts warning about the Babylonians, who will eventually conquer Judea and carry off the vast majority of its inhabitants into the lands between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. From there through chapter 37, he alternates prophecies about Assyria with those about Babylon; from there on, only Babylon is mentioned. In all that space of scripture, he repeats a pattern of warning the people about their iniquity and its consequences in the form of invasion by foreign powers then presenting the promise of deliverance and return of exiles. Accompanying several of those passages, are prophecies concerning the Messiah and His association with the return of exiles.

52:1-12 describes a time in the far future to Isaiah, a day that we now even wait to see. It follows a captivity in Babylon, as evidenced in 48:20. As we learned in 11:11, there are to be two returns of exiles to Israel. The first followed a captivity in Babylon, and the second will follow captivity in a type of Babylon. 52:1-12 speaks of this second return, which will be from a revived Roman empire that is characterized in Revelation 17:5 as having inherited all the evil attributes of the original Babylon.

In Revelation 18:4, we have a voice from heaven proclaiming, "Come out of her, my people, that you do not partake of her sins and receive her plagues!"

In 52:1, Isaiah speaks of a complete and everlasting deliverance for the nation of Israel, saying, "Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth the uncircumcised and the unclean shall come to you no more." Even though many Jews returned to the land of Israel after the captivity of the Assyrians and the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar, their return did not result in the kind of security described in this verse, such that no heathen foreigners would ever invade the land. Eventually, the Romans completely destroyed the Jewish nation, completing their action of carrying off and driving out most of its inhabitants in 73 AD with the storming of the citadel, Masada; this came 40 years after the crucifixion of Jesus. As the people of Israel were made to wander in the desert for 40 years before entering their promised land, (Numbers 32:13) they were given 40 years of grace in which to embrace their Messiah. The Jewish people have largely remained scattered up until the nineteenth century, when a trickle of immigrants began to return to the land of Israel; this eventually turned into a mass migration after World War II. But Israel still has not achieved the security and sense of redemption promised in this passage.

So, 52:1-12 puts us into the context of a time far in the future to Isaiah. As we continue, we arrive at verse 52:13, where we suddenly encounter a very special person in this future point in time: "Behold, My servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high." Prior to this passage, Isaiah has focused from time to time on a very special man, whom he has identified by various descriptive titles, who is first introduced in Isaiah 7:14-16, where he is given the title, Immanuel, and is later described in Isaiah 9:6 as "the Mighty God" and "the Everlasting Father," and in 11:1 as a branch from the root of Jesse and in 42:1 is called "My servant." We shall notice, as we read through the current passage, that no personal name has been given for this person, either, as none has been given for the Messiah in any prophecy. The person called "My servant" in this passage is the same special Man, described elsewhere in Isaiah. He is not one of Isaiah's sons, who all had personal names and were always identified by them. He is not some individual living in Isaiah's own times, for whom he could have readily supplied a name. We are at a complete loss to find an actual person who lived in Israel anywhere in the historical accounts of Israel or Judea given in the Old Testament or in any of the extrabiblical Hebrew accounts or Greek historical writings written before the beginning of the present Christian era who is a match for the extraordinary things said about the person in this passage. Indeed, in all of human history, there is just one person who is a precise match for the Man in this passage and in all the preceding Messianic passages – Jesus Christ, who entered the world almost seven hundred years after Isaiah delivered his prophecies. Here, in 52:13, we encounter Him in His resurrected, glorified state at the close of the church era.

Isaiah then, standing as it were with his fellow Jews in that future place, begins to look back in time and tell them how this person came to be so highly exalted. Because of this, the narrative switches largely to the use of a Hebrew verb form that is optimally translated as in the past tense.

In Psalm 22:1-18, David described the crucifixion of Jesus as if he were experiencing what Jesus would feel and see as He was being crucified. In this passage,

we get a description of the crucifixion from the point of view of an observer. In addition to more details about the Man and the process of crucifixion, we get for the first time a detailed explanation of what it all means, how we can be changed by it and the effect He is to have on the world. The suffering and death of this Man is an atonement for sin, a substitution for our punishment, through which we can have complete forgiveness of our sins.

In the next verse, 52:14, the Hebrew verbs translate to those in the past tense; and we begin Isaiah's look back in time. Up to now, the LORD has been speaking, but now Isaiah assumes the role of speaker; this is especially evident in verse 53:5 where the phrase, "He was wounded for our transgressions," would make no sense if the LORD were speaking, since the LORD has no transgressions. In 52:14, we have: "As many were astonished at you, His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." The NIV translation has substituted "Him" for the pronoun, "you," appearing in the Hebrew text for this verse, assuming that it had to refer to the one called "My servant;" but this is really not the case here nor in verse 53:10 where some substitute "the LORD" or "He" for "you," which clearly appears in the Hebrew text. Isaiah meant "you" because he is speaking to his fellow Israelites in that future period. He is saying, in effect, just look at this Man, as he recalls the crucifixion; the astonishment at Him is like the astonishment people have had for all the Jews have suffered through the ages, especially in the Holocaust; yet Jesus' body was more brutally marred than any man.

There can be no doubt that Isaiah was speaking of a specific individual in this servant passage. The text itself draws the distinction by comparing the suffering of this individual to the suffering of the nation of Israel as a whole through history; since comparisons are always made between separate entities, we see that the nation of Israel is not identical with the individual being described in the passage.

In 52:15, we switch back to a future verb tense; but, unlike the future tenses in 52:1-13, that put us into the distant future where Isaiah is now standing with his fellow Jews, this future verb tense is relative to the period of time that Isaiah is presently describing to his fellows, which, to them, is in the past. This is the case for all instances of the future tense occurring within this crucifixion narrative; occasionally, Isaiah will pause to describe something occurring after the crucifixion using a Hebrew verb form that is optimally translated in the future tense. As a result of the suffering described in 15:14, we have in 15:15: "So He will sprinkle many nations," in other words, He will confirm a covenant with them, as in the sprinkling of blood done by Moses at mount Horeb (Exodus 24:8). "The kings will shut their mouths at Him," in other words, they will have no argument to make; this new covenant which they are being offered is coming as a complete surprise. "... for that which had not been told them, they will see, and that which they had not heard, they shall consider." All the heathen kings of the earth, having had no body of prophecy imbedded in their culture to prepare them ahead of time as the Jews did, suddenly are finding themselves considering a thing completely new to their ears. Biblical prophecy does play a role in this circumstance, but only concurrently with hearing the fulfillment of those prophecies.

In 53:1, Isaiah continues his look back at the period of time in which the Messiah was crucified, remarking on how few have believed the report of the

Messiah's completed work: "Who has believed our report?" Then he describes His appearance and how He was treated and what people thought of Him when He came. He was not handsome nor was there any physical reason to desire Him. Like a tender plant or a shoot out of dry ground, Jesus was born as a helpless babe and grew up in harsh, sin-marred surroundings.

Beginning in 53:4, Isaiah reveals clearly for the first time in scripture the work of redemption that the Messiah accomplished, looking back on it, as it were, from thousands of years in the future in the company of his fellow Israelites.

"Certainly He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we considered Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes (marks in His flesh from a lash) we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment. Who shall declare His descendants, for He was cut off out of the land of the living. For the transgression of my people, He was stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, in spite of having done no violence and having no deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He put Him to grief. If you will make His life an offering for sin, He will see His seed. He extends His days and the will of the LORD grows strong in His hand."
(Isaiah 53:4-10)

53:8 tells us that Jesus would have no biological descendants; but, in 53:10, we have the phrase, "He will see His seed." Seed is a Hebrew idiom for offspring. This, however, refers to a different kind of offspring, as we shall see. We also have, in this verse, another instance of "you" meaning you; ⁶ Isaiah is speaking directly to this future generation of his fellow Jews. The phrase, "If you will make His life an offering for sin," expresses a condition, that may or may not occur, by which the crucified Jesus is to see His offspring. The words, "you will make," do not mean, however, that the persons referred to as "you" are to make an actual, physical sacrifice because that was a certainty and not dependent on the will of men and has already been accomplished by the LORD. Jesus was put to death at the request of the Jews; but they did not intend it to be a sacrifice for sin but rather for other reasons. Some were motivated by the fear that the Romans would destroy their nation if Jesus were widely accepted. Caiaphas, the high priest, believed that the death of Jesus would draw all the Jews scattered abroad back to the land of Israel (John 11:47-53), presumably to strengthen their hand against the Roman occupiers, who would bear the brunt of responsibility for His death as the ones to actually carry out the deed. His death, however, as this passage informs us, was pre-arranged by God as a sacrifice for sin. This verse is inviting those to whom Isaiah is speaking to make Jesus' sacrifice their own offering for sin in their hearts, so that Jesus will then see them as His offspring. Furthermore, because the "you" in this verse is in the masculine, singular, Isaiah is addressing this

⁶ For more detail, see the section, "Translating Isaiah 53:10" in the appendix, at the end of this document.

appeal to each of his audience, male and female, individually; each must personally decide to do this. Jesus' sacrifice for sin atones for our sins only if we personally choose to accept it. The idea of an automatic, blanket coverage for all mankind, such as found in some heretical churches, is completely refuted by this verse.

There is a penalty for all sin that must be paid according to what God requires. Under the law of Moses, it was necessary for anyone, who has committed sin, to personally offer a sacrifice of a prescribed animal at the temple, which was symbolic of the sacrifice to come in Jesus. It is likewise necessary for each of us to offer God's prescribed sacrifice for our sins. Only now, God has provided the sacrifice in Jesus Christ, once and for all time; we only have to accept it as our own offering in our hearts through faith. When a person puts his or her trust in Jesus, that person experiences a spiritual re-birth (John 3:3) and receives the promise of adoption as a son of God (John 1:12; Romans 8:15, 23). They become, in effect, the offspring of Jesus.

The phrase, "He extends His days," indicates Jesus' resurrection and His life continuing for eternity.

In 53:11-12, we have more of the future verb tense which, except for the second half of verse 12, places the action in these verses sometime after the crucifixion. The one speaking in these verses also switches from Isaiah back to the LORD: "He will look at the travail of His soul and be satisfied; by His knowledge, My righteous servant shall justify many and bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot to Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong because He has poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many and made intercession for transgressors." (Isaiah 53:11-12)

In verse 11, the phrase, "by His knowledge" refers to the satisfaction He has with the travail of His soul; in other words, the travail of His soul is enough for Him to justify, declare righteous, all who put their trust in Him as Lord and Savior, and satisfy the just demand of punishment for our sins. The phrase, "My righteous servant" in verse 11, indicates Jesus' sinless nature. The phrase, "divide the spoil with the strong" in verse 12, presents the picture of a conquering general dividing the spoils of conquest with his loyal soldiers. In this case, though, it is Jesus who is the conqueror over the world, sin, and death; and He will apportion to the strong, those who are his faithful followers to the end of their lives, the benefits of that conquest.

MICAH (740 BC TO 686 BC)

The prophet, Micah, lived at the same time as Isaiah and his messages were framed by the same pending doom posed by Assyria, found in Isaiah.

Bethlehem is the Birthplace of the Messiah

MICAH 5:1-4

Ref: Matthew 2:6

In chapter five, Micah has words of hope for Israel and takes the occasion to reveal that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Jesus, who called Himself "the bread of life" (John 6:35,48), "bread of God" (John 6:33) and "the living bread" (John 6:51), would be born in a town, whose name, Bethlehem, means "House of Bread." It is also the birthplace of King David, through whose lineage the Messiah is to come.

Micah says that Israel would remain scattered until after the Messiah's mother had given birth to Him. "He (God) will give them up until the time that she which travails has brought forth." This tells us that a complete gathering in of all the people of Israel cannot happen until sometime after the birth of the Messiah; indeed, at the time of Jesus' birth, not all of Israel had returned to the land of Israel; many remained scattered among neighboring nations; and, after Jesus' crucifixion, those who were actually in the land were scattered again. After that, without specifying the elapsed time, those of Israel scattered abroad would be gathered together again and stand with the Messiah in the land. At that point, the Messiah's reign would extend "to the ends of the earth."

JEREMIAH (From before 642 to 586 BC)

Jeremiah lived in the days following Isaiah when the Babylonians had succeeded the Assyrians as the power in the region. He spent his whole ministry trying to convince the Jews to repent of their idolatry and wickedness in the face of the threat of being wiped out by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. Like Isaiah, he also had a message of hope for the nation; yet they would not listen to his warnings.

The Lord Our Righteousness

JEREMIAH 23:5-6

Ref: [Philippians 3:8-9](#)

In this passage, Jeremiah confirms Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah coming from the lineage of Jesse by further saying that He would come through a particular son of Jesse, David. He also reveals the principal work of the Messiah by calling Him "The Lord Our Righteousness." It is only through the righteousness of Christ that we can claim righteousness for ourselves.

Rachel Weeping for Her Children

JEREMIAH 31:15-17

Ref: [Matthew 2:13-18](#)

In this passage, Jeremiah alludes to a particularly sorrowful time for some of the children of Rachel. She is depicted as weeping for them because they are no more. Rachel was the second wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Benjamin, as a tribe of Israel, became permanently associated with the tribe of Judah and settled in the region south of Jerusalem. Bethlehem is a city in the region of Benjamin. Although Bethlehem is in the territory of Benjamin, David, who was born there, was of the tribe of Judah.

Rachel was entombed on a hillside not far to the north of Bethlehem. When Herod heard of the birth of Jesus, he attempted to destroy Him by killing all the male babies who were born in that region at the time who were two years of age and younger. Thus Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the weeping of the inhabitants of the region around Bethlehem within two years-time of the birth of Jesus.

DANIEL (605 BC to 535 BC)

Daniel was taken prisoner to Babylon during Nebuchadnezzar's first assault on Judea. He lived to see the Persians overrun the Babylonians. He was given a number of visions of the future, including the coming of the Greek and Roman empires. He was also given a glimpse of the world's final empire, a revival of the old Roman empire.

The Time for the Appearance of the Messiah

DANIEL 9:24-27

In this particular vision, the angel, Gabriel, the one who would later appear to Mary the mother of Jesus, came to tell Daniel the time table for the Messiah. On the whole, it involved a period of time termed seventy weeks, or seventy sevens. Sixty-nine of these sevens are treated together as a unit and can be regarded as consecutive. The "going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" should be taken as the decree by the Persian king, Cyrus, for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, in the first year of his defeat of Babylon; this we know occurred in 444 B.C. (Ezra 1:1-2). If the sixty-nine weeks represents 69 times 7 years, we have 483 years; then, since a Jewish calendar was in use at the time, in which a year is only 360 days, we must convert them to a date in the present calendar having 365-day years. If we perform the following arithmetic: $483 \times 360 / 365 = 476.3$ years, then adding 1 year for the change over from BC to AD, since there is no zero year, we have 477.3; then subtracting 444, the date of the final decree, we arrive at a date of 33.3 A.D., the date, which is after the 62 weeks, the time "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself." It's true that 62 weeks is less than the 69 weeks used to arrive at 33 AD, but, of course, the cutting off can't occur until He arrives, which is after 69 weeks. The "62 weeks" should be taken as representing the phrase, "7 sevens and 62 sevens," which includes the entire 69 sevens. 33 AD is the undisputed date in history that Jesus was crucified. Taking the additional 3 tenths of a year produced by our calculation and further rendering it into a more exact date, we have $.3 \times 365 = 109.5$ days, then subtracting 31 days of January, 28 of February, and 31 of March, we arrive at April 19th of 33 AD, which is within the range from late March to late April in which the Passover can fall in our current Gregorian calendar. And we know from the gospel of John, that Jesus was crucified on the day they slaughtered the lambs for the Passover. Now, we have a half day left over from our calculation, which we haven't used yet; if we add that in, we arrive at the halfway point of April 19th, which puts us at noon on that day, which John tells us is the time of day that Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified. (John 19:14; "the sixth hour" = 12:00 PM) If one wants to argue that a present-day year must be taken as 365.25, thus accounting for leap years, the calculations still give 33 AD as the final result. (This interpretation of the 70 sevens is from *The Criswell Study Bible*.)⁷

After that, Gabriel tells Daniel, "the people of the prince that shall come," will destroy the city, Jerusalem, and the temple. The Romans came in force under the command of Titus, the son of Emperor Vespasian, and completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. It came like a flood, with much desolation.

⁷ Ibid *The Criswell Study Bible* p. 995.

This event is re-told in the twelfth chapter of the book of Revelation. The chapter describes the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ in terms of Israel, a woman crowned with twelve stars representing the twelve sons of Jacob, giving birth not only to the child, Jesus, but all those who believe in Him. A great struggle takes place in the heavenly realm between Satan and the archangel, Michael, which is reflected in Rome's hostility to Israel. The seven heads are the seven hills upon which the city of Rome was constructed. It was under Roman rule that Herod tried to kill Jesus at His birth and it was a representative of Rome who ordered Jesus crucified; it was Roman soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross. In Rev. 12:15, we see the woman again as representing Israel of 70 A.D. Her offspring, mentioned in verse 17, are Christians. Rome, having destroyed Israel and dispersed her people, turned its attention to her offspring, the Christians, and began persecuting them.

The rest of Gabriel's message following the destruction of Jerusalem concerns the last week of the seventy. It is the final seven years before the return of Jesus. In verse 26 of Daniel, discussed above, the phrase, "the people of the prince that shall come," tells us that the prince mentioned in connection with this final week is a descendent of the same people who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple following the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; he is of Roman ancestry. A revived Roman Empire will take the place of the one which destroyed the temple in 70 A.D. Its prince will find a restored Israel and a restored temple with which he must deal. At the start of the seven years, he makes promises to many, evidently allowing the Israelites to practice their ancient ritual sacrifice of animals in the restored temple; but, in the middle of the seven years, he breaks his word, putting an end to the practice. He follows that with desecration of the temple. But an end for him is decreed, an end poured out in destruction. Chapters 13 through 18 of the book of Revelation go into detail about this final week given by Daniel.

ZECHARIAH (520 BC to beyond 480 BC)

Zechariah was a prophet who lived during the period when the city of Jerusalem and the temple were being rebuilt following the decree of Cyrus the Persian to allow the Jews to return home from Babylon.

Joshua the High Priest

ZECHARIAH 3:8-9

Zechariah has a vision of the high priest, Joshua, who had been installed to serve in the new temple. Zechariah hears the LORD address the high priest and say that He will bring forth His servant the Branch. From the previous prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, we know the Branch is the Messiah. At that point, the LORD says, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." This refers to the work of atonement completed by Jesus on the cross in a single day.

The vision is a wake-up call for the returning exiles, to get themselves ready for the time of the Messiah's appearance which is not far off, according to the LORD's timekeeping. Indeed, this high priest shares the same personal name the Messiah would have, Joshua, which in Hebrew is *Yeshua* and, when translated into English, is Jesus.

Your King comes to you riding on a Donkey

ZECHARIAH 9:9-10

Ref: Matthew 21:1-11

In chapter nine, Zechariah prophesies of a time when the Jews would dwell securely in their own land, having broken the hold of Greece on them. This was done by Judas Maccabeus in a rebellion of the Jews against Antiochus Epiphanes, the Greek ruler of the region of Syria. Judas Maccabeus established the Hasmonean ruling Dynasty which lasted until the Romans invaded Judea.

In that context, he calls upon the Jews, the daughter of Zion (Zion refers to Mount Zion, the location of Jerusalem) to rejoice because their king comes to them humbly riding on a donkey. Jesus fulfilled this scripture when He entered Jerusalem for the last time, riding on a donkey colt. As many prophecies do, Zechariah reminds us again that this king's "dominion shall be from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth." The phrase, "sea to sea and from the river" refers to the promised territory of Israel; the phrase "to the ends of the earth" means the entire earth. So, Jesus will one day rule over all Israel and the entire earth.

Thirty Pieces of Silver

ZECHARIAH 11:4-17

Ref: Matthew 27:3-10

In this passage, Zechariah, at the direction of the LORD, creates an allegory involving a flock of sheep. Some humanistic Bible interpreters wrongly attempt to turn the entire Bible into nothing more than an allegory, devoid of its true meaning and power; but here is an actual occurrence of an allegory. The sheep as well as the management of the sheep act as visual aids in presenting a prophecy from the LORD. It paints a picture of a particular scenario in history. As evident in the passage, the sheep represent the people of Israel who are subject to certain societal conditions. Throughout the allegory, Zechariah functions as a kind of stage manager and occasionally steps in to play different roles. A good fit to an actual period of time in history for the setting and events described in this passage are not to be found until we arrive at the time of Jesus, where everything fits perfectly.

"Thus says the LORD my God, 'Feed the flock of the slaughter, whose acquirers slay them and hold themselves not guilty. Those that sell them say, "Blessed be the LORD for I am rich!" And their own shepherds do not pity them; for I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land,' says the LORD; 'But I will deliver the men, every one, into his neighbor's hand and into the hand of his king; and they shall smite the land; and I will not deliver them out of their hand!' " (Zechariah 11:4-6)

The preceding verses characterize the times in which Jesus is born and lives. The people of Judea are at the mercy of a corrupt priesthood, a corrupt nobility class, and, to top it off, a corrupt king rules over them under the authority of a brutal foreign occupier, the Romans; and even between neighbors there is mistrust, false dealing, and thievery. The rulers of the people act in hypocrisy, extorting wealth from the people then praising the LORD for their ill-gotten gain. Jesus said, "Beware of the scribes, who love to go in long clothing and love salutations in the marketplaces ...

who devour widows' houses and, for a pretense, make long prayers; these shall receive greater condemnation." (Mark 12:38-40)

"And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took two rods, one I called Beauty and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. I also cut off three shepherds in one month; my soul loathed them and their souls also abhorred me. Then I said, 'I will not feed you, that those, who are to die, die and those, who are to be cut off, are cut off; and let the rest eat the flesh of the others.' And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day; and the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD." (Zechariah 11:7-11)

The "poor of the flock" in the preceding verses are those who remain faithful to the LORD; they recognize that the things that are happening are from the LORD. The three shepherds are thought, according to one ancient theory, to represent the prophets, the priests, and the king at the time this prophecy plays out.⁸ The cutting of the staff, Beauty, in two symbolizes the end of the covenant made at mount Horeb with Israel during the Exodus, requiring observance of all things in the law of Moses (Exodus 24:8); it ended with the making of the new covenant in Jesus' blood, which was the fulfillment of the law. (Matthew 5:17)

"And I said to them, 'If you think it good, give me my price; and if not, let it be.' So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." (Zechariah 11:12)

In the preceding verse, Zechariah steps out of his role as stage manager for a moment and acts as one of the players in the drama, a certain unidentified person associated with this period of time who is notable for having received thirty pieces of silver as his price. We know from Matthew 26:14-16, that Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' chosen twelve disciples, stepped into that role when the drama played out for real. Jesus knew Judas' heart from the beginning, when Judas showed up among his early followers and Jesus chose him to be one of the twelve. Jesus knew he had the heart of a thief, which was set on material gain and took no thought of the spiritual. Judas naturally gravitated to being the keeper of the purse. In John 12:4-6, we see Judas objecting to the woman pouring the perfumed oil over Jesus' feet at the banquet in Bethany not because of the money the oil could have brought for the poor, but because "he was a thief and had the purse and used what was put into it." (John 12:4-6) "I know whom I have chosen; but this is so the scripture may be fulfilled, 'He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me.' I tell you now, before it comes, so that when it comes to pass, you may believe that I am He." (John 13:18-19) Jesus not only knew everything that was to happen, but He also wanted his true followers to know in advance also, so that they would know that He was not the victim of chance or the scheming of others. This was also the role that prophecy was meant to play, as well; and we find Jesus quoting Psalm 41:9 in the last verse given above from John. God does not want those who believe in Him to be taken by surprise but to know in advance the things that will happen according to His will and plan and, therefore, how to respond.

Even so, Jesus chose His inner circle of twelve from a rough-hewn lot, who knew little prophecy from the scriptures at the time of their selection; they had come

⁸ Ibid *The Criswell Study Bible*. p. 1069.

to Jesus on the word of John the Baptist and the miracles that Jesus performed and the hopeful message He had for them but were often surprised at the turn of events and what Jesus foretold was ahead of Him. But those kind of men were just what was needed; they were not imaginative nor clever and could not be credibly accused of creating a false narrative about Jesus; they were ideal eye-witnesses, which is precisely why He chose them. They would afterward dive into the Hebrew scriptures with a passion and hold them up as the evidence, that they indeed are, that Jesus was from God and all that happened was according to the will and plan of God.

“And the LORD said to me, ‘Cast it to the potter, a goodly price that I was valued of them.’ And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.” (Zechariah 11:13)

In this verse, we have acted out the action Judas took after he saw that Jesus was condemned. Filled with remorse at what he had done, Judas tried to return the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests; but they refused the money. Judas then cast the money down on the temple floor and went out and hanged himself. The priests then used the money to buy a field from a potter for burying strangers. (Matthew 27:3-10) Although the passage in Matthew attributes this prophecy to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah, it was customary in those days to attribute prophecies of “minor” prophets to a “major” prophet.⁹

The NIV translation has placed a quotation mark in this verse in the wrong place, excluding the words, “a goodly price that I was valued of them,” from those that the LORD spoke. By doing this, they attribute them to the character that Zechariah is playing in the drama. There are, however, no quotation marks in Hebrew scripture; if you look at any of the scrolls found by the Dead Sea, which date to the second century BC, you’ll not see a one; neither are there any in our modern copies of the Hebrew scriptures. Quotations are determined by context. They have placed a quote mark in the middle of a sentence, separating a modifying phrase from its reference, “it,” in the process. The LORD spoke this whole sentence. The next sentence is obviously spoken by Zechariah, playing the part of the one who received the thirty pieces of silver. The NASB translation got the quotation marks correctly. As we shall see in the next section, the LORD, that is, *Yahweh*, and Jesus are One and the same. Thirty pieces of silver was the price placed on the life of “the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

“Then I cut in pieces my other staff, Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.” (Zechariah 11:14)

Since the inhabitants of the land of Israel were scattered by the Romans in 73 AD and well before then, those inhabitants or their descendants have been commonly referred to as “Jews” and not as Israelites. The remnant of the ten northern tribes, known as Israel since the days of Solomon, have completely lost their identity, either mingling in with the nations of the earth or with the Judean population.

“And the LORD said to me, ‘Take up the instruments of a foolish shepherd, for I will raise up a shepherd in the land, who shall not visit those that are cut off nor shall seek the young nor heal that which is broken nor feed the ones standing still; but he shall eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. Woe to the idle shepherd

⁹ Ibid *The Criswell Study Bible* p. 1153.

that leaves the flock! The sword shall fall upon his arm and upon his right eye. His arm shall be thoroughly dried up and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.’” (Zechariah 11:16-17)

These verses are probably meant to describe the religious leaders at the time of Jesus. The activity of a shepherd has long been used to describe the role of a religious leader. Our word, pastor, used to describe a minister of the church is taken from the activity of a shepherd in pasturing, or feeding, his sheep. Jesus said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves nor allow those that are entering to go in.” (Matthew 23:13)

They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced

ZECHARIAH 12:1-14

Ref: [John 10:30](#)

At the beginning of chapter twelve, Zechariah makes it clear in the first verse that all the words to follow in the chapter are the words of *Yahweh*, the proper name of God. To make sure that there is no misunderstanding about who will be speaking in this chapter, Zechariah reminds us that this *Yahweh* is the one “... which stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him.”

The LORD prophesies of a time in the far future to Zechariah’s times, when all the people of the earth are gathered together against Jerusalem. A day of peace is coming for them about which the LORD, *Yahweh* God, says in verse 10, “I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications (appeals for mercy and forgiveness). And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son ...” The LORD, *Yahweh* God, informs us that He is the one who was hung on a cross and pierced through with nails and a spear. He also indicates here the concept of the Trinity, God in three persons, yet all one God. We see God hanging on the cross, yet as the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son, referred to as “Him” in this verse. The Father and the Son communicate as separate persons, yet each is fully God; One hanging on the cross is also the Other hanging on the cross. In that day, the inhabitants of Jerusalem will come face to face with the risen Jesus Christ, who, during His crucifixion, had His hands and feet pierced with nails and His chest pierced with a spear by Roman soldiers acting on orders from the Roman authority, Pontius Pilate, who was persuaded to put Jesus to death by the leadership of the Jews. “I and the Father are one.” (John 10:30)

A Fountain for Sin and Uncleanness

ZECHARIAH 13:1-9

Continuing the prophecy started in chapter twelve, the LORD says through Zechariah that when Israel finds her final peace, they shall have present with them a fountain for sin and impurity. This fountain can be none other than the shed blood of Jesus Christ, which has brought us complete forgiveness of sin.

But, according to 13:7, this shall not come to pass before the Shepherd, the Messiah, is struck down and Israel scattered like sheep. In the end, after they have been refined in fire, God can say, "It is my people;" and Israel can say, "The LORD is my God."

This scattering of Israel, which came after the Messiah was struck down in 33 AD, began between 70 & 73 AD, when Judea ceased being a national entity; and the Jews have largely remained scattered until the beginning of their great migration back to Palestine out of war-torn Europe and other parts of the world following World War II. This resulted in Israel again being recognized as a nation in 1948. The return of the Jews to the territory of Israel surely indicates the imminent fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. It shouldn't be long before Jews in the territory of Israel will look on Him "whom they have pierced."

EPILOGUE

“When the fulness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, brought forth of woman and under the law.” (Galatians 4:4)

The Roman historian, Tacitus (55 AD – 120 AD), in his book, *Annals*, book 15, section 54, says that Christ was ordered put to death by Pontius Pilate during the reign of the Roman emperor, Tiberius, and goes on to describe how the emperor Nero, to divert suspicion from himself, falsely accused the Christians of Rome of setting fire to the city, which resulted in most of it burning to the ground (64 AD). To further divert suspicion from himself, Nero proceeded to put to death a large number of Christians by many horrible means, including setting some afire to serve as torches to illuminate parts of the city. Accounts from that time tell us that the apostle Peter and apostle Paul were put to death among the Christians of Rome.

Someone has pointed out that many will die for a lie, thinking that it is the truth; and many will risk the chance of death on behalf of a lie to avoid the certainty of death if they were to refuse to submit; such is the case of many soldiers who have fought wars on behalf of tyrants. And some, who have propagated a lie, have been surprised by being put to death because of their lie. But no one will willingly submit his life to risk of near certain death for what he knows is a lie, and certainly not twelve men at once, all with the same access to the facts. The twelve apostles were all in a position to know absolutely whether Jesus Christ appeared alive after His death or not; and, to a man, all proclaimed His resurrection as fact under the threat of death and, except for the apostle John, all eventually suffered violent deaths because of their preaching.

Life is filled with uncertainty, yet we still choose to trust one thing after another. We put ourselves in the hands of surgeons without any guarantee that we will survive. We put our trust in a lot of steel and concrete every time we guide our cars up a ramp onto an overpass that may reach more than a hundred feet off the ground or cross a large river or bay on a suspension bridge or set foot on a plane. We can't function without putting our trust in numerous things. And we shall never know and have fellowship with our God through all eternity without putting our trust in Jesus Christ, who is far more certain than any of these things.

Jesus said, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavily burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

We invite you to discover the meaning of true faith in Jesus Christ and how to secure for yourself eternal life by reading the document on this website titled, “What must I do to Receive Eternal Life,” which can be accessed by the following link: <http://sonburstclass.org/eternal-life/>

Appendix

Translating *Almah* as Virgin

The idea of a virgin birth expressed in Isaiah 7:14 has met with opposition among some academics. A virgin birth is not something that happens every day; and no one who has not lived in the time of Jesus can say that he or she has known anyone to whom it has happened. Some insist on translating the Hebrew word, *almah*, from which virgin is translated, as simply "young woman."

The argument has been made that, had Isaiah meant virgin, he would have used *bethulah*, a word more frequently used for virgins. But the stronger argument can be made that, had Isaiah meant simply a "young woman," why did he not use the word *naarah* which means simply a "young woman" and implies nothing about her state of virginity and occurs more often in scripture than *almah*? A good example of its use is found in Deuteronomy 22:20-21, where a procedure is given for determining if a young woman was a virgin when she married: "But if this thing be true and the evidence of virginity (*bethulim*) is not found for the *young woman (naarah)*, then they shall bring out the *young woman (naarah)* to the door of her father's house and the men of her city shall stone her with stones so that she dies ..." Another thing to consider in speculating on the best word to use in this verse is that the word, *bethulah*, does not carry any indication of the person's age; it is used of a virgin of any age. If the author wished to communicate the fact that she was both a young woman and a virgin with a single word, neither *naarah* nor *bethulah* would be adequate.

Language translators rely very heavily on how a word is used to determine its meaning; this is especially true for ancient languages that do not have ancient dictionaries available for consultation. We should also gain some valuable insight into the meaning of the word, *almah*, in Isaiah 7:14 if we do the same. So, let us look now at the only other significant occurrences of the word, *almah*, in the scriptures. There are two other occurrences of *almah*, Psalm 46, in the heading, and 1 Chronicles 15:20, each having the plural form of the word; but in both of these instances it is likely being used as a musical term, perhaps to represent a high musical pitch.

Genesis 24:43 - Abraham sent his servant to look for a wife for his son among his kinsmen living in Mesopotamia. Upon arrival at the city of Nahor, he came to the spring from which the women of the city drew water and asked God to cause the woman he should choose as a wife for Isaac to make herself known in a certain way. When the woman, Rebekah, revealed herself in that way, we are told in Genesis 24:16 that "the young woman (*naarah*) is very fair to look upon, a virgin (*bethulah*) ..." and the author of this passage emphasizes the fact that she is a virgin by adding "neither had any man known her..." The phrase "known her" is used in Hebrew scripture to express the idea of sexual intercourse. Later, when the servant is giving an account to Rebekah's brother, Laban (and her father, Bethuel: Genesis 24:50), of his reason for coming and how he knew Rebekah to be the one he sought, he uses the word, *almah*, occurring for the first time in scripture, to refer to her: "Behold, I stand by the well of water, and it shall come to pass, that when the *almah* comes forth to draw water ..." (Genesis 24:43) In many societies, and certainly in the Hebrew society of that day, the ideal candidate for a young man to marry is a

young, virgin woman. The servant in this passage should have been keenly aware of that. In speaking to Rebekah's brother and father about her, the servant would have wanted to speak of her in the most respectful way since he needed their approval for the marriage. Clearly, for the servant, *naarah* was not an adequate term to use in speaking about Rebekah since it carried no implication of virginity. He needed a term for her that would indicate exactly what she was. So we have here a woman, who is described by the author of this passage in Genesis 24:16 not only as a young woman but very emphatically as a virgin, being referred to as an *almah*. The implication is clear - *almah* encompasses the characteristics of both a young woman (*naarah*) and a virgin (*bethulah*). An *almah* is a young, virgin woman.

Exodus 2:8 - The mother of Moses, after hiding her new-born son for three months, decided she couldn't hide him any longer and made an ark caulked with tar and, after setting him within it, set him afloat on the Nile River. Moses' sister stood some distance away to see what would happen to him. "And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river and her young women (*naaroth*, plural of *naarah*) were walking along the river bank; when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her servant girl (*amath*) to get it." (Exodus 2:5) After Pharaoh's daughter saw it was a Hebrew child, Moses' sister spoke to her and offered to obtain a woman from the Hebrews to nurse the baby. "And the daughter of Pharaoh said, 'Go!' and the girl (*almah*) went and got the mother of the baby." (Exodus 2:8) Here we have *almah* as the only generic reference to Moses' sister in this passage. Verse 5 described the females who attended Pharaoh's daughter as *naaroth*, "young women." Clearly the departure of verse 8 from using the singular of that term, *naarah*, to describe Moses' sister was meant to draw a distinction between her and those who were simply young women. There has to be a difference between *naarah* and *almah*; they both can't mean simply a "young woman." The word, *almah*, tells us more about Moses' sister than *naarah* would. From the lesson learned in Genesis 24:16 & 43, that difference must be that Moses' sister was known to be a virgin at that time and probably a very young, virgin woman.

Psalms 68:25 - In verses 24 & 25 of a psalm of praise, we have a description of a procession into the outer sanctuary of the tabernacle. Singers lead the procession, followed by those playing music and, among them, *alamoth* (plural of *almah*) playing tambourines (verse 25). There is nothing in this scripture of a defining nature for the word *almah*, one way or another. Yet, the previous uses of *almah* in scripture advocate that we take these *alamoth* for young, virgin women.

Proverbs 30:19 - In verses 18 - 20, Agur lists several things that are utterly amazing to him – how an eagle can fly, how a snake can move on a rock, how a ship can move on the sea, and, in verse 19, how a man can entice an *almah* into illicit sex. Here again, there is nothing of a defining nature for the word, *almah*, in this passage. Verse 20 does speak of her action as the "way of an adulteress." In modern English-speaking culture, we think of an adulteress as a married woman; but the Hebrew word, *naaph*, used for adulteress in this verse can mean either a

wife or a betrothed virgin woman who has illicit sex.¹⁰ In light of the use of *almah* in the preceding passages, we should conclude that Agur's amazement is with a young, betrothed, virgin woman who is lured into sex by a man who is not her husband-to-be. Agur's amazement is especially understandable in light of the fact that, if discovered, she could be put to death for doing that. Deuteronomy 22:23-24 specifies the law for a betrothed, virgin woman caught in illicit sex.

Song of Songs 1:3 & 6:8 - The Song of Songs is a love poem expressing the joy that Solomon and his new bride have for each other. First let us consider verse 6:8. In this verse, we see a census of Solomon's harem as it was at the time of the writing of this song. There are 60 queens, who are high status wives, 80 concubines, who are low status wives, and an uncountable number of *alamoth* (plural of *almah*). These *alamoth* are not among those who share Solomon's bed; if they were, they would be numbered among the concubines. Rather, these are young women, who serve the other two classes of women in the harem, who must live in close proximity to them and be at their beck and call night and day; this precludes any of them from having husbands. They are young, unmarried women.

This is re-enforced by Psalm 45, which is a song for the wedding of a king and his bride. In all likelihood, it celebrates the marriage of Solomon to one of his wives. In verse 14, the bride is led to the king with her virgin companions following her. Here, the Hebrew word used for virgin is *bethuloth*, the plural of *bethulah*, which is consistently used in Hebrew scripture of a virgin. These virgins undoubtedly will remain with the newly married woman in the harem to serve her and are among those listed in 6:8 of the Song of Songs as *alamoth*.

The Song of Songs begins with the bride's view of Solomon; and, in 1:3, we have: "Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, your name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the *alamoth* love you." Because the bride has knowledge of the feeling these *alamoth* have for Solomon and their reason for it, we have to assume they are women with whom she is intimately associated and who would occasionally have some contact with Solomon, that is, her young, virgin women servants, included among the *alamoth* of verse 6:8. Here, again, we see the word *almah* used as young, virgin woman.

So, we find in three of these occurrences of *almah* strong implication that it means a young, virgin woman; and, at the same time, we have not found any indication in any of these occurrences that it is used of a woman who is not a virgin. The distinction between *bethulah* and *almah*, according to usage in the Hebrew scriptures, is that *bethulah* is a virgin of any age, while an *almah* is a very young virgin.

The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, done in the second century BC, many years before the birth of Jesus, by Jews in Alexandria, Egypt. They translated *almah*, as it occurs in Isaiah 7:14, as *παρθενοσ* (*parthenos*), which means virgin in Greek.

Some have suggested that Immanuel refers to a son born later to Isaiah and his wife, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, found in chapter eight. However, Isaiah's wife at

¹⁰ Ludwig Koehler & Walter Baumgartner. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (Leiden: Brill, 2001) Vol I, p. 658

this point already had a son, Shear-Jashub, mentioned at the start of chapter seven, who was at that point old enough to accompany his father on a mission to confront the king; he was probably at least thirteen years of age, the point at which a Hebrew son was considered responsible for his actions. Isaiah's wife was well past being a young woman of marriageable age; she would, in this context, have to be at least twenty-nine years of age and scarcely even thought of as a *naarah*, a young woman, much less an *almah*.

The LORD tells Isaiah the name he should call his new son. Right away we should note that his name is *not* Immanuel, nor is Immanuel used to describe him. Furthermore, it would break with the precedent set by Isaiah with his first son, Shear-Jashub, by naming a son with more than one name or giving him a title with an added message; each son represented a single message, given by just one name. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz means "quickly spoil, speedily plunder." Again, Isaiah showed his confidence in the revelation he received from the LORD and, in obedience, gave a son a name to represent the imminent destruction of Samaria and Syria.

We should also note that a different circumstance is indicated as being significant in his life. While reaching the point of knowing good from evil for Immanuel is taken as significant, for Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, it is the point at which he knows to cry "my father" and "my mother;" for, at that point, Samaria and Syria, whose kings are troubling Ahaz and Judea, will be overrun by the Assyrians. (Isaiah 8:3-4) Thus ends any further mention of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; he has no further role to play; it ends with the destruction of Syria and Samaria; and, from that point, the rest of chapter eight is devoted to the destruction of Judea, itself, and the hope that rested in the person, Immanuel.

The declaration in Isaiah 9:6 of the birth of a child who should be called the "Mighty God" and "The Everlasting Father," which is nothing less than the incarnation of God, demands a miraculous conception for the child, a child born to a virgin; this eliminates any other meaning for *almah* than virgin.

Translating Isaiah 53:10

The New American Standard Bible (NASB) translates Isaiah 53:10 as follows:

- (a) “But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief;
- (b) If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring.”

The New International Version (NIV) has:

- (a) “Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer,
- (b) and though the LORD makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring ...”

The Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) has:

- (a) “Yet the LORD was pleased to crush Him, and He made Him sick.
- (b) When You make him a restitution offering, He will see [His] seed, ...”

The King James Version (KJV) has:

- (a) “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put him to grief:
- (b) when you shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, ...”

It was rendered by the author of this commentary as follows:

- (a) “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He put Him to grief.
- (b) If you will make His life an offering for sin, He will see His seed.”

All five translations agree very well with one another for the first part of this verse (a), but the first two diverge considerably from the others for the next part of the verse (b). The HCSB and KJV texts have it almost exactly as it is in the Hebrew text; however, the Hebrew word, *im*, which introduces the clause in (b) means primarily “if.” *Im* can be translated as “when” in some contexts and even as “though” in other contexts; but the better choice for this instance is “if,” since *im* is used here with an imperfect verb form.¹¹ The HCSB capitalized “you,” implying that “you” is referring to one of the persons of the Trinity; but we shall see that this is not the case. The NASB did translate *im* as “if.” However, the translators of the NASB and the NIV both stumbled in translating the Hebrew word, *tasim*. The NASB renders *tasim* as “He would render Himself,” making the Messiah (Jesus) the one acting in the clause; and the NIV renders *tasim* as “the LORD makes,” making the LORD the one acting in the clause.

But *tasim* literally means either “she makes” or the masculine, singular “you make;” since there is no possible reference to a feminine noun or female in the text, it should be translated as “you make.” *Ta*, then, is the second person (you) preformative, masculine, singular for the imperfect form of the Hebrew verb, *sim*,¹² which means “put,” “lay,” or, in this case, “make,” though “render” is not a bad choice

¹¹ Ibid *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. p. 49.

¹² Kyle M. Yates, revised by John Joseph Owens. *The Essentials of Biblical Hebrew*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1954) p. 41.

for the meaning either.¹³ Since the verb, *tasim*, is the masculine, singular of “you,” Isaiah is addressing each of his hearers individually, eliminating the idea of a collective choice to be made. As for the tense of this verb, that has to be determined by context. Hebrew verbs, in and of themselves, do not carry an indication of tense, or sense of time. There are only two forms of verbs in Hebrew, the perfect and the imperfect. The perfect verb form expresses a completed action which lends itself well to any form of past tense though it can be interpreted as some form of present or future tense as well. The imperfect verb form expresses the opposite, an incomplete action, which lends itself well to any form of present or future tense, though it can be interpreted as some form of past tense.¹⁴ Since *tasim* is the imperfect form of the verb and used in a conditional phrase, translating it as either the present tense or the future tense will give the correct meaning to the sentence; however, the future tense probably harmonizes a little better with the way a rule like this is stated in English – “If you will do this, he will do that.”

The translators of the NASB and the NIV, for this verse, were working under the wrong assumption that the “you” in the verse is making an actual physical sacrifice. The translators for each translation, being careful to notice that all the prior text in this passage clearly states that it was the LORD who offered the Messiah (Jesus) as a sacrifice for sin, decided that the “you” in the verse couldn’t refer to the Jews but to one already mentioned as being directly involved with making the sacrifice; the use of the masculine, singular for “you” probably also influenced their decision. The translators of the NASB decided it must be saying that for Jesus to see His offspring, it was necessary for Jesus to cooperate in offering Himself; it is true that Jesus had to actively cooperate in His sacrifice; but this verse is not referring to that. The NIV, on the other hand, decided that it had to be the LORD who was making Jesus’ life an offering in this verse, which would be in keeping with all that had preceded this verse. The NIV also diverged even further from the meaning of the Hebrew text by changing the phrase from a conditional to a contrasting phrase by rendering *im* as “though.”

The one speaking the words in this verse and throughout the preceding passage is Isaiah, as 53:4 indicates with the phrase, “Certainly He has borne our griefs ...;” since the narrator is including his own griefs as being borne by the Messiah with the use of the word, our, the speaker can’t be the LORD, who has no griefs to be borne by the Messiah. We should also see that, by using the word, our, Isaiah is addressing his words not only to himself but to others besides the LORD or the Messiah. Isaiah, in this verse is clearly addressing this statement to the same “you” to whom he has directed all the words in this entire prophecy – that body of Jews we find in the far future to Isaiah and even to the crucifixion of Jesus, as well.

The fact that “you make” is found in a conditional clause introduced by “if” further rules out the possibility that “you,” even though it is masculine, singular, refers to either the Messiah or the LORD, because all of the verses occurring before this, describing the crucifixion and the actions of the LORD and the Messiah, imply the absolute certainty of them coming to pass; this is especially evident in the use of perfect verb forms in these verses which express a completed action. To attribute

¹³ Ibid *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Vol II, p. 1986.

¹⁴ Ibid *The Essentials of Biblical Hebrew*. p. 37, 41.

any uncertainty to the actions of the LORD or the Messiah at this point is totally without merit. It may be for this reason that the NIV translators nudged the meaning of *im* from “if” to “though;” which would only amount to fixing one error with another.

Now, if we stick to what the Hebrew text actually says, and keep “you” in the translation and preserve the introductory phrase as a conditional, as it more closely represents the Hebrew text, we are forced to take a closer look at the phrase “will make His life an offering for sin.” Since the preceding verses have clearly stated that the LORD is the one making Jesus’ life a physical offering for sin, we can’t have the physical offering of His life for sin dependent on “you,” the Jews, doing it as well. But the Hebrew word, *tasim*, can mean “you make” in the spiritual sense of accepting something as your own. Since this phrase can’t be a physical offering for sin, the only other choice is a spiritual offering for sin. Isaiah is telling these Jews that if they, each individually, will make Jesus’ life their own offering for sin in their hearts, Jesus will then see them as His offspring. When a person puts his or her trust in Jesus, that person experiences a spiritual re-birth as called for in John 3:3 and receives the promise of adoption as a son of God, as given by John 1:12 and Romans 8:15, 23. So, here, we find in the Old Testament, as in the New Testament, the requirement of a personal choice to put one’s trust in what Jesus did on the cross rather than assume some idea of an automatic, blanket coverage for all mankind, such as found in some heretical churches.