

HOW TO ANSWER A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY STEP-BY-STEP BIBLICAL REFUTATIONS

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Maybe you have a neighbour who's been telling you that ever since he became a Christian his life as *improved dramatically*. Or there's someone at work who's been giving you literature trying to prove the truths of the Christian faith.

This E-Book, entitled *How to Answer a Christian Missionary*, has been prepared by Jews for Judaism to equip Jewish people with responses to some of the issues that are raised by Born Again Christians.

THE MESSIAH

The central teaching of Christianity is that Jesus of Nazareth was the Jewish Messiah. To understand why Judaism has consistently rejected this claim for the past 2,000 years, we first must understand what the Messiah is. Just like in order to know whether or not your friend is loquacious you have to know the meaning of that word, we must also know what the Messiah is, what the Messiah is supposed to be, before we can understand whether or not someone actually is the Messiah.

The word Messiah is an English rendering of the Hebrew word *Moshiach*, whose correct translation is "anointed". In the Bible it usually refers to someone who has been initiated into G-d's service through the ceremony of being anointed with oil. In the Bible, Jewish kings and high priests were anointed with oil and, therefore, they may be referred to as an anointed one or a Messiah.

For example, in the first book of Samuel, chapter 24 verse 6, King Saul is referred to as G-d's Messiah. In the 45th chapter of the Book of Isaiah, verse 1, Cyrus, the king of Persia, is referred to as G-d's Messiah. What we see is that in the Jewish bible the word Messiah is used generically to refer to anyone who is anointed.

I might tell you that my brother is president of his chess club, and my sister is president of her stamp club, and my father is president of his glee club, but this morning I received a phone call from the president. You're quite aware of who I'm talking about. Now, we see that the word Messiah is used throughout the Bible to refer to anyone who is anointed. But what

does the Bible teach about The Messiah? And here we run into a problem because the Hebrew word *HaMoshiach*, literally The Messiah, the anointed one, describing a future anointed person to come, never appears in the Bible.

This being the case, how did Jewish people derive the concept of the Messiah? One of the central themes of Biblical prophecy is the promise of a future age of perfection which will be characterized by universal peace and universal recognition of G-d. For example, in the second chapter of the Book of Isaiah, the prophet speaks about a time in the future when the nations will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, and neither shall they learn war anymore. In the third chapter in the Book of Zephaniah, verse 9, the prophet speaks about a time when G-d will turn to the peoples a pure language that they may all call upon the name of G-d to serve him with one consent.

Among the hundreds of prophecies in the Bible that speak of this future age of perfection, there are several passages which specifically mention an individual, a descendant of King David, who will be the ruler of Israel during this age of perfection. For example, in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Isaiah, verses 1-9, the prophet speaks of a descendant from Jesse, who was the father of King David, and says that the spirit of G-d will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding. And with righteousness he will judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the land. And the wolf will dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid and they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea.

In the 23rd chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, verses 5-6, the prophet says: "Behold, days are coming, says G-d, when I will raise to David a righteous descendant and he shall reign as king and prosper and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. And in his days Judah will be saved and Israel shall dwell securely." The prophet Ezekiel in his 37th chapter, verses 24-28, says that, "My servant David shall be king over

them and they will all have one shepherd. They shall also walk in my ordinances and observe my statutes and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given to my servant Jacob where your fathers dwelt and they shall dwell therein, they and their children and their children's children forever. And David my servant shall be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant. And I will establish them and multiply them and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forever. My dwelling place also shall be over them and I will be their G-d and they shall be my people. And the nations shall know that I am the Lord that sanctifies Israel and my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them forever."

Now, in the entire Bible this is the only description of any descendant of David who is to come in the future. And since every king is a messiah, by convention Jewish people refer to this future king as The Messiah. And because no person has ever fulfilled the picture painted in the Bible of this future king, Jewish people still await the coming of the Messiah. All past messianic claimants, including, Jesus of Nazareth and Shabbtai Tzvi among others, have been rejected.

It's interesting that the Bible never speaks about believing in the Messiah. No one today would tell you that they believe George Bush is president of the United States. People don't believe that. They know that he's the president. He won the election. He's sitting in the White House. It's a verifiable fact. It's not an article of faith.

Similarly, because the reign of the Jewish king will be a historically verifiable reality, a clear and self-evident reality to any person, it won't require belief or faith. And therefore, the Bible never speaks about believing in the Messiah. Many Christians ask Jewish people: "Well, how will you recognize the Messiah?" The answer is obviously quite simple. We will look out our windows, we'll read our newspapers, and we'll determine that the world indeed has entered into a new phase. There's been a complete revolution in the history of the world. The entire world's at peace for the first time ever. The entire world believes in G-d. The Jewish people have been restored to their homeland. The Temple has been rebuilt in Jerusalem. The person that fulfills those prophecies is the Jewish Messiah. Anyone who doesn't fulfill those prophecies is not the Jewish Messiah. I once had a discussion with a Christian missionary who tried to denigrate the Jewish people because

they had faith in their rabbinic leaders. He explained to me that in the Talmud, one of the greatest rabbis was Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Akiva had made a terrible mistake by assuming that Bar Kochba, a Jewish general, was the Messiah. And during the time of Rabbi Akiva there was a revolution, a revolt, by the Jewish people against the Romans. And Rabbi Akiva, at one point, had suggested that Bar Kochba would indeed be the Jewish Messiah.

I asked this missionary how he knew that Bar Kochba wasn't the Messiah. He turned to me and said, "Well, it's obvious, because he was killed by the Romans and didn't bring peace to the world." As his face turned red, he realized that's precisely why the Jewish people didn't accept Jesus. It was because he died without fulfilling any of the prophecies in the Jewish Bible.

It's possible to suggest that Jesus himself recognized that he wasn't the Messiah. According to New Testament accounts (Matthew 27:46), as Jesus was dying on the Roman cross, he cried out in desperate disappointment, "My G-d, my G-d, why have You forsaken me."

Christians will claim that Jesus will fulfill the Messianic prophecies when he returns. However, there are many problems with this second coming theory. First of all, the Bible never speaks about it. There's no mention anywhere in the Bible about a Messiah who will return after an initial appearance. As a matter of fact, the passages that we examined which speak about the Messianic mission don't speak about someone returning. They have a first coming perspective to them. Clearly, the second coming theory is a desperate attempt to explain away the failure of Jesus. Obviously, the idea that someone will return does not give them any credibility for their first appearance. So, if someone were to claim that their grandfather was the Messiah, and their friends objected saying, "But your grandfather didn't accomplish anything, he didn't fulfill any of the Messianic prophecies." and This person may say "That's true, but you'll see that when my grandfather returns, he'll accomplish everything." Obviously, there is no reason to believe that this person's grandfather is the Messiah now.

And finally, Jesus promised in the New Testament that he would return soon. He would come back during the lifetime of his disciples. And, indeed, followers of Jesus expected him to return imminently. The fact is that Jesus did not return during the

lifetime of his followers and after almost two thousand years still hasn't returned. It's clear that the second coming theory is just that, nothing but a theory, wishful thinking on the part of Christian believers in Jesus.

Aside from the fact that Jesus didn't fulfill any of the major Messianic prophecies, there are several other points worth bearing in mind. According to Jewish tradition based upon a passage in the third chapter in the book of Malachi, verses 23-24, Elijah the Prophet will reappear before the coming of the Messiah. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers".

This tradition was so strong that the writers of the New Testament felt that if, indeed, Jesus was the Messiah, then Elijah the Prophet must have reappeared before he came. Therefore, according to the gospel of Matthew, chapter 11, verses 12-14 and chapter 17, verses 10-13, John the Baptist was Elijah the Prophet.

Now, it's certainly easy for New Testament writers to claim that John the Baptist was Elijah the Prophet, but we must examine whether or not that's true. When we read through the New Testament, we find some problematic information. For example, in the first chapter in the gospel of John, verses 19-21, the Jewish people ask John the Baptist, "Are you Elijah?" And he responds "No, I am not."

Christian apologists will try to get around this problem by claiming that even though John the Baptist was not Elijah the Prophet, John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah the Prophet. However, there are several problems with this claim. First of all, the Jewish bible predicted that Elijah the Prophet himself would return. It does not say that someone would come in the spirit of Elijah the Prophet. Secondly, when asked about his identity, John the Baptist didn't claim any association at all with Elijah. He didn't say, "No, I am not Elijah, but I've come in the spirit of Elijah." He flatly denied being Elijah the Prophet. And thirdly, the prophecy about the return of Elijah the Prophet by Malachi says that he would restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. There's no indication that John the Baptist accomplished this prophecy at all.

There exists one other major problem for the Messianic claims made for Jesus of Nazareth.

According to the Jewish bible, one of the central requirements for the Messiah is that he must be a descendant of King David. All of the major Messianic prophecies speak about the Messiah as a descendant of King David. In the thirty-third chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, verse 17, G-d says that David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the House of Israel.

The New Testament spends almost two chapters to establish the genealogical record of Jesus as going back to King David (Matthew 1 and Luke 3). The problem is that when we examine the genealogical records, we find some critical problems. In the gospel of Matthew, verse 16, the genealogy of Joseph, who was the husband of Mary, is traced back to King David.

However, Matthew then shoots himself in the foot by claiming that Joseph was never the father of Jesus (chapter 1, verses 18-23). Matthew does this to establish his claim that Jesus did not have a normal birth, but that Jesus was the product of a virgin birth. This would mean that Mary never had sexual relations with her husband Joseph, and that Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit impregnating Mary. Therefore, since the genealogy as recorded in Matthew only traces Joseph back to King David, but never connects Joseph as the father of Jesus, we see that Jesus has no genealogical record going back to King David.

Christian apologists might answer that even though Joseph wasn't the biological father of Jesus, he was the legal father of Jesus and, therefore, passed on his genealogical line through adoption.

There are several problems with this approach. First of all, there's no indication from the Bible that it's possible to pass on one's genealogy through adoption. For example, a priest is someone who is born to another priest. If your father is a priest, then you're a priest. There is no evidence from the Bible that if a priest adopts a boy who is the son of a non-priest, that child becomes a priest through adoption. Even if one would want to say that through adoption it's possible to pass on genealogy, we have an additional problem. It's only possible to pass on to a descendant that which you have. We find Joseph's genealogical line traces back to King David through a king of Israel named Jeconiah (Matthew 1:11=12). The problem is that in the twenty-second chapter of the book of Jeremiah, verses 28-30, this king is cursed by G-d, "Write this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days. For no man of his seed

shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah.” We see from this passage in Jeremiah that any descendant of Jeconiah would be disqualified from ever being a Messianic candidate. Therefore, if Christians insist upon having Jesus a legal adoptive child of Joseph, then Jesus himself would be disqualified from even potentially being the Messiah.

To answer this difficult problem, Christian apologists claim that Jesus also traces himself back to King David through his mother Mary. And the claim is made that Mary's genealogy is shown to be traced back to King David in the third chapter of the book of Luke.

There are, however, four basic problems with this claim. Firstly, there's no evidence from the book of Luke that Mary descends from David. The third chapter of the gospel of Luke is tracing Joseph's genealogy. Mary isn't mentioned at all (Luke 3:23). Secondly, even if Mary could trace herself back to David, that wouldn't help Jesus since according to the Torah, tribal affiliation and family genealogy can only be traced through the person's father, never through their mother. For example, in the first chapter of the book of Numbers, verse 18, we're told the Jewish people declare their pedigrees after their families according to their fathers' houses.

Thirdly, even if it could be maintained that a family line could be passed on through the mother, Mary herself was not from a legitimate messianic family. According to the Bible, the Messiah must be a descendant of King David through his son Solomon. It's interesting that in the book of Matthew the genealogy of Joseph is traced back to King David through his son Solomon (verses 6-7), but ultimately down to the cursed King Jeconiah. However, in the book of Luke, the genealogy goes from David through his son Nathan (Luke 3:31), and not through his son Solomon. The problem is that even if one wants to maintain that the book of Luke is tracing the genealogy of Mary, and that it's possible to pass on genealogical lineage through the mother, Mary would still not be of help to Jesus because Mary's line does not trace her back to David through Solomon. We see the requirement that the Messiah be a descendant of both David and Solomon in the second book of Samuel, Chapter 7, verses 12-13, and in the first book of Chronicles, Chapter 17, verses 11-14. Finally, there's a fourth problem. The third chapter in the book of Luke lists both Shialtiel and Zerubavel in

the genealogy (verse 27). These two also appear in Matthew, chapter 1, verse 12 as descendants of the cursed King Jeconiah. Therefore, if Mary descends from Shialtiel and Zerubavel, this would place her under the curse of King Jeconiah, and she would be disqualified from ever being a messianic progenitor.

To recap, we've seen that Jesus failed to fulfill any of the major messianic prophecies. In addition, he was not preceded by the return of the prophet Elijah. And finally, he was disqualified from ever being a messianic candidate due to his pedigree.

Many missionaries claim that Jesus was able to establish his rights to the Messianic throne through his performance of miracles. It would be appropriate at this time to examine the validity of this claim. First of all, there's no reason to believe that any of the miracles claimed on behalf of Jesus ever took place. The only source of knowledge of these miracles is the New Testament, which was not written by historians, but was written by Christian missionaries to convince people of the Messiahship of Jesus. Hardly unbiased witnesses. In addition, much of the New Testament has been shown to be historically suspect. For example, Pontius Pilate is portrayed as mild-mannered and cowering to the Jewish people (Mark 15:12-15, Luke 23:13-25, John 19:1-16). Yet the historian Josephus and Philo of Alexandria portray him as a vicious and bloodthirsty tyrant who was ultimately relieved of his office by the Roman high command for his brutality.

Secondly, even if miracles did take place, they don't prove anything. Pharaoh's magicians, for example, in the seventh and eighth chapters of the book of Exodus, were able to replicate some of the miracles that Moses performed in Egypt. The Bible never says that miracles would be a way to identify the Messiah. The Bible predicted in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, verses 1-5, that G-d would send false prophets who would be able to perform signs and wonders and miracles to test the Jewish people's fidelity.

Christian missionaries often raise the issue of Jesus' resurrection as confirming his Messianic status. Again, there's no reason to believe that this ever took place, since the only source for the occurrence of the resurrection of Jesus is the New Testament. It's interesting that the gospel of Matthew (27:52-53) claims that after Jesus was resurrected, the bodies of many righteous Jewish people were resurrected from their graves and walked the streets of Jerusalem.

This seems as credible as the claims of some people today who claim to have seen Elvis Presley alive, or the scores of Catholics who claim to have personally seen the Virgin Mary. Just because something is claimed doesn't mean that it's true.

The much-touted shroud of Turin, which has been claimed to substantiate the resurrection of Jesus, was recently shown to be a fake. What's more difficult is that even though the gospels are the only source of the resurrection, they each impeach the other's testimony. Each of the four gospels tells a completely different account of the alleged resurrection of Jesus. For example, who first approached the empty tomb? According to the gospel of John (20:1), Mary Magdalene by herself approached the empty tomb. According to the gospel of Matthew (28:1), it was Mary Magdalene with the other woman named Mary. According to the gospel of Mark (16:1), it was the two Marys and Salome. According to the gospel of Luke (24:10), it was the two Marys, Joanna and other women. What actually happened back then?

Who did they first see when they first came to the tomb? According to the book of Matthew (28:2), they saw an angel sitting outside the tomb. According to the book of Luke (24:4), they saw two men standing inside the tomb. According to the book of Mark (16:5), they saw one man sitting inside the tomb. According to the gospel of John (20:1-2), they didn't see anyone at all. What actually happened at the resurrection?

Who first told Mary Magdalene about the resurrection of Jesus? According to the book of Matthew (28:5-6), it was an angel. According to the book of Mark (15:5-6), it was a man. According to the gospel of Luke (24:4-6), it was two men. And according to the gospel of John (20:10-17), it was Jesus himself.

Who did Jesus first appear to? According to the book of Matthew (28:1-9), it was to a joy-filled Mary Magdalene and the other Mary on the road. However, according to the gospel of John (20:11-14), it was to a grief-stricken Mary Magdalene at the tomb itself.

What did the women do when they were informed that Jesus had risen? According to the gospel of Mark (16:), they fearfully kept the news to themselves. According to the books of Luke (24:9) and Matthew (28:8), they rushed to inform the disciples. We don't get a straight story from any of the gospels. Where did Jesus first reveal himself to his disciples? According to the books of Matthew (28:16) it was to

the eleven disciples in the Galilee. According to the book of Luke (24:33,49), it was to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem. And according to the gospel of John (20:18-29), it was to the ten disciples in Jerusalem.

Now, Christian apologists claim that the discrepancy between the four gospel accounts is similar to four different people who witness a traffic accident and will give slightly different reports because they're seeing the event from four slightly different perspectives.

The problem with this explanation is that none of the gospel writers were eyewitnesses to the resurrection. And finally, Christians claim that the New Testament is the word of G-d. And G-d would hardly make a mistake in transmitting the story that happened. One of the most damning issues is that even in the New Testament accounts, Jesus' disciples didn't recognize him when he appeared, and many didn't believe the reports that he was alive. Hardly information that would inspire us now to believe the story.

Finally, when Jesus was alive, the leading rabbis asked him for a sign. And in the twelfth chapter of the book of Matthew, verses 38-40, Jesus says that the only sign he would give them would be his own resurrection. However, Jesus never appeared before the Sanhedrin or the Pharisees. Certainly, if he was supposed to be giving them a sign, he should have appeared in his post-resurrection state to show the rabbis the sign that he had promised them. The only people that Jesus appeared to were to his followers. It certainly seems more reasonable to assume that the story of the resurrection was invented by the followers of Jesus who needed to explain away his embarrassing death at the hands of the Romans.

PROOFTEXTING

Another tactic employed by Christian missionaries is to try and demonstrate that all their teachings are found in the Jewish Bible. This is done for two reasons. First, having a source in the Jewish Bible would be an indication that what they believe is true. Secondly, missionaries are anxious to demonstrate that if a Jewish person accepts Christian teachings, they're doing nothing which is antithetical to Judaism. Therefore, if the missionary can show that belief in Jesus and accepting other Christian dogma can be found in the Jewish Bible, then the Jewish person is relieved of any guilt. He can feel that he can both accept Jesus and Christianity and not be in violation of Jewish teachings. This technique is called proof-texting.

One of their claims is that the Jewish Bible contains hundreds of prophecies that predict the coming of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. Christian missionaries frequently claim that the Bible contains over three hundred such proof-texts. We saw previously that the Jewish Bible never uses the word Messiah as a title for a particular person. Rather, the word messiah, is a description of anyone who is anointed with oil. The term "The Messiah", we saw, never appears in the Jewish Bible in reference to someone who is going to appear in the future. The Jewish concept of the Messiah develops by looking at the passages in the Bible which speak of a future king who will rule Israel at a time when the entire world is at peace and the entire world believes in G-d. Although the Bible never refers to that person as the Messiah, we, by convention refer to him as The Messiah. As a king he's anointed, he's a Messiah. Since he's the special anointed one to come in the future, we refer to him as The Messiah.

I once asked a missionary that if the word The Messiah never appears in the Jewish Bible, how could he be so sure that his three hundred plus verses refer to the Messiah and prophesize the coming of Jesus? The missionary told me that I was right. That he really couldn't say for certain that any of those passages refer to the Messiah, but if they were all put together, the picture that emerged would be clear.

In response to that I told him that three hundred times zero is still zero. You can't take three hundred pieces of weak evidence and put them together and make them into strong evidence.

It's often been said that Christian missionaries use the Jewish Bible much in the same way that a drunk makes use of a lamppost. Not so much for illumination but for support.

A story is told of a man walking through the forest and seeing a tree with a target painted on it. In the center of the target, exactly in the middle of the bull's-eye, is an arrow. An incredibly accurate shot. There were no other arrows in the tree. No near misses. He walks further and sees another tree with one arrow stuck dead-center in the middle of a bull's-eye. He continues walking and sees tree after tree, each one with an arrow right in the bull's-eye, dead center. The man is astonished. He begins to search for the archer. He sees someone carrying a bow and arrow and quiver and stops him and says, "Did you shoot those arrows?" And the man says, "Yes." And the first person says, "That's the most amazing thing I ever

saw in my life. I can't believe how accurate you are." And the man stopped him and said, "You shouldn't be so impressed with my shooting. You see, first I shoot the arrow at a tree and then I draw the target around it."

We're going to see that this is precisely what Christian missionaries do when using the Jewish Bible to prove their beliefs. They didn't study the Jewish Bible to see what it had to teach. Rather, they approached the Jewish Bible with preconceived conclusions and then tried to find support for those ideas, much in the same way that there was a verdict and then a trial in the story Alice and Wonderland. When we examine these Christian missionary proof-texts, we're going to find that there are several flaws in their arguments. Before we look into some of the more common proof-texts that are used, we're going to examine some of the typical mistakes that are made. The first problem that we need to be aware of is that sometimes Christians have invented verses out of whole cloth and claiming they are from the Old Testament. For example, in the second chapter in the gospel of Matthew, the story of the early years of Jesus is told, and the New Testament relates that Jesus and his family had to flee from the land of Israel to Egypt because Herod, who was ruling at that time, was seeking to kill him (verse 13).

The gospel goes on to say that when Jesus' family found out that Herod had died, they returned to the land of Israel and settled in a city called Nazareth (verses 19-23). The New Testament claims that this happened in fulfillment of a prophecy from the Jewish Bible. The twenty-third verse in the second chapter of Matthew says: "And they came and resided in a city called Nazareth that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled 'He shall be called a Nazarene'."

Now, the problem here is that if you search through the entire Jewish Bible you will find no verse which says anything about anyone being called a Nazarene. As a matter of fact, the city Nazareth is never mentioned at all in the Jewish Bible or in post-biblical Jewish literature. Clearly, this is a verse completely manufactured by the author of the book of Matthew to prove a point that he finds important.

The book of Matthew tells the story of the demise of Judas, who allegedly betrayed Jesus to the Romans for 30 pieces of silver (26:14-16). According to the story as told in the book of Matthew (27:1-5), he began feeling terribly guilty and he threw the pieces of silver into the Temple and ran away and killed

himself. The priests took the money and said that it wouldn't be proper to take this money and to use it in the Temple and, therefore, it says that they took the money and bought a potter's field as a burial place for strangers. The story goes on to say that for this reason the field had been called the field of blood and then in verse 9, "That which was spoken through Jeremiah the Prophet was fulfilled saying: And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel, and they gave it to them for the potter's field as the Lord directed me." However, if you were to search through the entire book of Jeremiah or search through the entire Jewish Bible, you will find no such passage.

Let's look at one more example of a verse manufactured by Christian missionaries. In the book of Hebrews in the New Testament, chapter 10, verses 5-7, a passage is quoted from the book of Psalms which is claimed to predict that G-d intended to sacrifice the Messiah. The New Testament here claims to quote a verse from the fortieth chapter in the book of Psalms, verse 7, and says: "Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me."

And the New Testament goes on to say that that body is the body of Jesus (Hebrews 10:10). Now, if you were to go back to the book of Psalms in the Jewish Bible and check chapter 40, verse 7, you'll see that it says, "Sacrifice and meal-offering you have no delight in. My ears You have opened. Burnt-offering and sin-offering You have not required." You'll see there's no reference in the Jewish Bible to a body being prepared.

Aside from the fact that missionaries will sometimes manufacture verses that don't exist in the Jewish Bible, they will often frequently misquote or mistranslate verses from the Jewish Bible.

A famous example is from the twenty-second chapter in the Book of Psalms, Verse 17. The verse correctly translated reads: "For dogs have encompassed me. A company of evil doers have enclosed me. Like a lion at my hands and my feet." To come up with what they feel is a reference to the crucifixion of Jesus, missionaries mistranslate this passage in the book of Psalms and read it, "They have pierced my hands and my feet." Now, the word in question in this passage is the word *'ka'ari'*: which correctly translated is "like a lion." We find that this word appears in several places in the Bible. For example, in the thirty-eighth chapter of the Book of Isaiah, verse 13, where even Christian

translations of the Book of Isaiah render it as "like a lion" and not "they pierced".

We find that throughout the Book of Psalms, David uses this metaphor of a lion to portray the enemies that are pursuing him. For example, in the seventh chapter of the Book of Psalms in verse 3, David says: "Lest he tear my soul like a lion." And in the twenty-second chapter of Psalms, in the twenty-second verse David says: "Save me from the lion's mouth."

Another example of mistranslation or misquoting from the Jewish Bible is from the New Testament Book of Romans, Chapter 11, verse 26, where the Christian Bible quotes the Book of Isaiah from the Jewish Bible as saying: "The deliverer will come from Zion, and he will remove ungodliness from Jacob." This is done to support the Christian view that the purpose of the Messiah is to take away our sins. However, if you look at the original passage in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 59 verse 20, it says something quite different. There we read: "A redeemer will come to Zion and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, declares the Lord." So, we see that the Messiah's role is not to take away our sins, but rather, when we turn from our sins, when we repent, then the Messiah will come. This is a perspective quite the opposite of that taken in the Book of Romans.

Now, aside from completely manufacturing passages from the Jewish Bible or mistranslating them, another very common error that's made by missionaries is quoting passages from the Jewish Bible out of context. For example, in the second chapter of the Book of Matthew, which discusses the infancy of Jesus, we saw before that Jesus and his family fled from the land of Israel and went down to Egypt. The author of the Book of Matthew claims that all of this was in fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Verse 15 says that "they were there until the death of Herod, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled saying: Out of Egypt did I call my son." The gospel is making the point that the Jewish Bible already predicted hundreds of years before, that G-d would take the Messiah out of the land of Egypt and G-d refers to the Messiah as His son.

The Book of Matthew is quoting a passage from the Jewish Bible in the Book of Hosea, chapter 11 verse 1. The problem is that when we read that passage in the Book of Hosea, we see that Matthew only quoted half of the verse, and that it's not a passage about the Messiah at all. Hosea says: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him. And out of Egypt I called my son." We see in this chapter of Hosea that the

prophet is speaking about the Jewish people at the beginning of their history. And G-d, at that stage, took them out of the land of Egypt. Throughout the Bible we see that G-d refers to the Jewish people as his children, oftentimes as his son. For example, in the fourth chapter of the Book of Exodus, verse 22, G-d says, "My son, My first-born son, is Israel."

The second chapter in the Book of Matthew from the New Testament provides us with another example of quotation out of context. The passage there says that Herod, in his efforts to destroy the infant Jesus, sent troops to Bethlehem who killed all the baby boys in the city of Bethlehem and all the outlying areas who were under the age of two. And the New Testament writer claims that this happened in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

Chapter 2, verse 17 of Matthew says: "Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the Prophet was fulfilled saying 'A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children. And she refused to be comforted because they were no more'." And here, Matthew claims that the slaughter of these children at the hands of Herod was in fulfillment of a prophecy from the Jewish Bible in the Book of Jeremiah. Now, when we read the Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 31 verse 15, we see that Matthew correctly quoted from that passage. However, in context we'll see that Jeremiah was not speaking about the massacre of young children, but something quite different.

There's a famous statement in our Talmud (Sanhedrin 38b) that whenever a heretic quotes the Jewish Bible in order to make a point, the answer is usually nearby. Now, when we read the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, the simplest way of demonstrating the fallacy of Matthew's interpretation is to read the verses that come after the one that he quotes. And there, Jeremiah states in the sixteenth and seventeenth verses in response to the crying and weeping of Rachel, "Thus says the Lord. Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for your future, says G-d, and your children shall return to their own border." We see from the Book of Jeremiah that the prophet was not speaking about children who were killed, but rather about children who were taken into captivity. Jeremiah here is referring to the Babylonian conquest of the land of Israel and taking many Jewish people into captivity. And Jeremiah

predicts that these children will return to the land of Israel.

Now, it's often possible when viewing a passage in context to demonstrate to a Christian missionary that the verse could not possibly be speaking about Jesus. For example, there was a pamphlet given out by missionaries for many years entitled, "27 Prophecies Fulfilled in One Day." The first of those passages is from the Book of Psalms, chapter 41, verse 10, which says, "Yes, my own familiar friend in whom I trusted who did eat of my bread has lifted up his heel against me." The missionary claim is that this is a prophecy predicting that the Messiah would be betrayed by a close friend.

Before analyzing this verse in the Book of Psalms, two questions need to be asked, First, is this passage even a prophecy? Usually, prophecies are written in the future tense. And many times, prophecies are introduced with an introduction such as Behold, days are coming, says the Lord. Or: It will come to pass at the end of days, says the Lord. The passage from Psalm 41 is not written in the future tense, but in the past tense. David is saying that he was betrayed by a close friend. So we always have to ask ourselves, are we actually reading a prophecy or is it a verse appropriated by Christian missionaries and turned into a prophecy?

The second issue is, are we reading a Messianic prophecy? What about the passage indicates that it's speaking of the Messiah?

A good test for this is to read the passage as someone living a hundred or two hundred years before Jesus and asking yourself what about this passage indicates that it's a Messianic prophecy?

Let's look at the forty-first chapter in the Book of Psalms in its entirety: "How blessed is he who considers the helpless. The Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble. The Lord will protect him and keep him alive. And he shall be called blessed upon the earth. And do not give him over to the desire of his enemies. The Lord will sustain him upon his sick bed. In his illness you restore him to health. As for me, I said, O Lord, be gracious to me. Heal my soul for I have sinned against You. My enemies speak evil against me. When will he die and his name perish? And when he comes to see me he speaks falsehood. His heart gathers wickedness to itself. When he goes outside he tells it. All who hate me whisper together against me. Against me they devise my hurt saying a wicked thing has poured out upon him, that when he

lies down, he will not rise up again. Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. O You, O G-d, be gracious to me and raise me up that I may repay them. By this I know that You are pleased with me because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me. As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and You set me in your presence forever."

Ask an honest missionary, "Why would someone living a hundred or two hundred years before Jesus understand this Psalm to be a messianic prophecy? What about the psalm indicates that it's a messianic prophecy?" You probably won't get an answer. Furthermore, there's indications in this psalm that for a Christian, it can't be referring to Jesus. In verse 5 the speaker says: "As for me, I said O Lord, be gracious unto me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against You." The same person that in verse 10 says that he was betrayed by a close friend says that he's sinned against G-d. Christians believe that Jesus never sinned. How could this possibly be referring to Jesus?

Another example of a passage which, in context, could never refer to the Jesus that Christians believe in is from the New Testament Book of Hebrews, chapter 1, verse 5. This verse quotes a passage from the second Book of Samuel in the Jewish Bible, chapter 7, verse 14, which says: "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me." The New Testament takes this passage as a prophecy speaking about Jesus who they consider to be the son of G-d.

However, when we look at the passage in the second Book of Samuel, it says that "I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me," and continues by saying, "When he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men." Now, this passage in the Book of Samuel is a passage speaking to King David about his son Solomon. How could Christians possibly apply it to Jesus when the passage speaks about the possibility of this son sinning? Christians believe that Jesus could never sin.

Finally, Christian missionaries often engage in circular reasoning. There are many passages in the Jewish Bible, which do speak about the coming of the Messiah. Christians believe that since Jesus was the Messiah, these passages must refer to him. Christians will say that they believe Jesus was the Messiah because he fulfilled biblical prophecy. But if you ask them to explain how they know that Jesus fulfilled those prophecies, they say because he was the Messiah. This is circular reasoning.

Let's look at a few examples. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 18 verse 18, G-d says, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like you and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him." The first question here obviously is why we would consider this to be a Messianic prophecy? In context, the passage is speaking to the Jewish people and to Moses about the time after Moses dies and G-d will raise up a prophet to lead the Jewish people after the death of Moses. The passage does not speak about a messiah that's going to come in the future. It speaks about a prophet that will follow Moses.

Even if you allow for the Christian interpretation that this passage refers to the Messiah, all it would be saying is that in the future the Messiah would come. The passage doesn't indicate that Jesus is this Messiah. Christians begin with the assumption that Jesus was the Messiah. And therefore, if this passage says that the Messiah would come, according to Christians it must be referring to Jesus. Again, this is an example of circular reasoning.

The final example is from the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 11 verse 2, which says: "And the spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding." Christians maintain that this passage refers to Jesus. However, the problem is that unless you first accept the Christian belief in Jesus, there's no way of applying this passage in Isaiah to Jesus.

Obviously, one could apply this passage to anyone that they believe the spirit of G-d rests upon. The followers of Reverend Moon could apply this passage to Reverend Moon. Again, if you first shoot your arrow, it's always very easy to score a bull's-eye.

With this introduction to the field of Christian proof-texting, we can now take a look at some of the more popular passages that missionaries use to prove their beliefs to Jewish people.

One of the problems that Christians have with their proof-texts is that many of them become quite meaningless. They might bring a proof-text showing that the Messiah was supposed to ride on a donkey and then they show that Jesus rode on a donkey, so he must be the Messiah. Or they'll bring the proof-text that the Messiah was supposed to be betrayed by a close friend and Jesus was betrayed by a close friend, therefore he must be the Messiah. Obviously, these are meaningless proof-texts because literally

millions of people have ridden on donkeys and millions of people have been betrayed by close friends.

So Christians have been forced to find prophecies which are a bit more unusual. If, for example, the Jewish Bible had said that you'd be able to recognize the Messiah because he'd have sixteen heads, he'd be forty-two feet tall, he'd have orange hair and nine thousand bellybuttons, then when that person came on the stage of history, people would have a good reason to believe that he was the Messiah.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Missionaries have attempted to come up with such an unusual prophecy by their claim that the Torah predicted that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. This is obviously a very unusual claim because the idea that someone is born to a woman who is a virgin is clearly unusual. And they base this prophecy on the seventh chapter in the Book of Isaiah, verse 14, where it says: "Therefore G-d himself will give you a sign. Behold, the *alma* shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." Now, Christians claim that the Hebrew word *alma* in this verse means virgin. And, therefore, they're saying that the sign that G-d is going to give to us is the birth of the Messiah to a woman who is a virgin.

The first problem here is one of a mistranslation. Christians claim that the word *alma* is translated as virgin. However, the correct translation of *alma* is 'young woman' or 'young maiden'. The meaning of *alma* relates to her youth, and not to her sexual experience. The male counterpart of *alma* is *elem*, which, even according to Christian translations of the Jewish Bible, is rendered as a young man. For example, in the first Book of Samuel, chapter 17, verse 56, and the Book of Isaiah, chapter 54, verse 4, we find that the word *elem* is translated as 'young man'.

Secondly, the Jewish Bible and the Hebrew language has a word which specifically does mean virgin, and that's the word *betulah*. Whenever the Jewish Bible is interested in specifically telling you that a woman is a virgin and not just that she's a young woman, it will use the specific word *betulah* and not the more general term *alma*. We see this, for example, in the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy verse 3, and chapter 21 in the Book of Leviticus verse 13.

One of the arguments that Christian missionaries use to press their idea that the word *alma* is translated as

virgin is based upon the Greek translation of the Bible known as the Septuagint. Christian missionaries claim that this translation was rendered by Jewish rabbis two hundred years before Jesus and that when they translated the word *alma* in the Book of Isaiah into Greek, they translated it into the Greek word *Parthenos*, which they claim means virgin. Therefore, they say, it's not they who translated the word *alma* as a virgin, but the rabbis themselves hundreds of years before Jesus.

There are two main problems with this claim. The first problem is that the Septuagint translation that was done by the rabbis was only of the Five Books of Moses and not of the Books of the Prophets. We really don't know who composed that Greek translation of the Prophets. Therefore, as far as Jewish tradition is concerned, the Septuagint translation, the Greek translation of the Prophets, has no authority.

Secondly, if you were to look at the usage of the word *parthenos* in the Septuagint translation, you'll find that it doesn't refer specifically to a virgin. For example, in the thirty-fourth chapter of the Book of Genesis, which is a story about the rape of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, the Septuagint refers to Dinah as a *parthenos* after she's raped (verse 3). So, therefore, when the Septuagint uses the word *parthenos* in Isaiah 7, it doesn't imply virginity.

The evidence for the Jewish translation of *alma* as a young woman has been recognized by more and more Christian scholars over the years and we see that many Christian bibles of late have been correctly translating Isaiah 7:14 as 'young woman'. We see this, for example, in the Revised Standard Version of the Christian scriptures, in the Jerusalem Bible put out by the Catholic Church, and by the Good News Bible among others.

A second area of concern regarding the virgin birth prophecy is the problem of context. Is this passage from Isaiah a messianic prophecy? Is there anything about this passage that would lead a person to believe that it's speaking about the coming of the Messiah? Obviously, the only solution to this question is to read the entire chapter. Starting from verse 1, we see that the seventh chapter of Isaiah is speaking about a very difficult time in the history of the Jewish people. Isaiah was prophesying about seven hundred years before the Common Era. During his days, there was a split among the Jewish people between the ten northern tribes, which was

called the kingdom of Israel or the kingdom of Ephraim, and the two southern tribes, which were called the kingdom of Judah. And these two kingdoms were at war for many years.

In the seventh chapter of Isaiah, we're told that there was a siege laid upon the kingdom of Judah by the northern kingdom of Israel and by their ally the king of Aram, which was a non-Jewish country to the east of Israel. The king of Judah, Achaz, who was a wicked king, was terrified by the impending attack of these two nations. He felt that the combined forces of the ten northern tribes of Israel and the eastern kingdom of Aram would destroy his kingdom.

Therefore, the prophet Isaiah was sent by G-d to King Achaz to console him and to tell him that all would be fine, and he shouldn't worry. The prophet Isaiah tells him not just to take his word for it, but to ask for a sign from G-d that things would be okay. At first King Achaz refuses. So, the prophet says that G-d will give him a sign. And what is the sign? The sign is that "the young woman will conceive and bear a son and you shall call his name Immanuel" (verse 14). The name Immanuel is significant because it means 'G-d is with us.' The king might have thought that since he's being attacked by two great nations he's being abandoned by G-d. So, G-d tells him no, I am with you.

The prophecy continues in verse 15, "Curd and honey shall he eat when he knows to refuse the evil and choose the good. And before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings horrify you shall be forsaken." The real sign that King Achaz is given here is that there will be a child born to a young woman he knows, and before he even is able to distinguish between good and evil, the two nations threatening his kingdom shall be destroyed.

We see that the fulfillment of this prophecy in the second Book of Kings, chapters 15 and 16, where indeed, the Kingdoms of Israel and Aram are destroyed. Obviously when read in context, Isaiah chapter 7 doesn't speak at all about the coming of the messiah. Its context is a military crisis facing the kingdom of Judah many hundreds of years before Jesus ever walked the earth.

It's interesting that the passage in Isaiah says that this child will be named Immanuel. Yet nowhere in the Christian bible is Jesus ever named or referred to as Immanuel.

A third issue here is the notion of a sign. Isaiah is promising a sign for King Achaz, the king of Judah.

How would the virgin birth of Jesus hundreds of years later ever function as a sign, as a reassurance to King Achaz? But more specifically, how could a virgin birth ever even function as a sign that Jesus was the Messiah? In the gospel accounts, Joseph and Mary are engaged to be married and Joseph comes home and finds that Mary is pregnant. Realizing that he wasn't the father, he suspects that Mary had been unfaithful. Joseph doesn't come home to see the pregnant Mary and say, "Praise G-d, you must be the mother of the Messiah". It's obviously impossible for a virgin birth to function as a sign because it can't be seen. No one could walk down the street during the time of Jesus and look at Jesus and say he was born of a virgin. And no one could look at Mary and realize that she was a virgin. Mary wasn't walking around Palestine with a gynecological examination sticker pasted to her clothing. Obviously, a virgin birth could never function as a sign for anything.

It's interesting that although there's no source for the idea of a virgin birth of the Messiah in the Jewish Bible, the concept was very popular among pagan mythologies during the days of early Christianity. The stories about Buddha, Krishna, Mithra, Osiris, Tamuz, Dionysus, Bacchus, and Isis are replete with stories of virgin-born saviours who are killed and are resurrected to atone for the sins of their followers. It's likely that the idea that Jesus was born of a virgin stems from these pagan mythologies and not from the Jewish Bible.

MESSIANIC MAKEOVER: THE SUFFERING SERVANT

At the time that Jesus was killed on a Roman cross, it became clear to the Jewish people of his time that he wasn't the Messiah. But what happens to the people who had followed him for many years? What happens to the people who put so much faith in the possibility that he would redeem them from the Roman oppression?

In a famous book written by Dr. Leon Festinger entitled, "When Prophecy Fails", the issue of a group of people facing a disconfirmation of their beliefs is dealt with. Festinger theorized that a group of people whose beliefs run up against radical and stark disconfirmation will, instead of giving up those beliefs, generally become more aggressive in trying to convert other people to those beliefs. In the 17th century, Shabbtai Tzvi was a Jewish mystic who convinced many people that he was the

Messiah. Some of his followers sold their homes and sold their possessions and were going to follow him back to the land of Israel where he'd become the king. Ultimately, Shabbtai Tzvi was captured by the Turks, thrown into prison, and forced to convert to Islam. It became clear to most of the Jewish world at that time that Shabbtai Tzvi wasn't the Messiah. However, many of his followers were not able to admit that they were deceived. Some ended up claiming that the person in jail was not the real Shabbtai Tzvi, the real one went up to heaven. The person in jail was just a double, and the real Shabbtai Tzvi would soon come down from heaven and take them back to the land of Israel.

Similarly, the early followers of Jesus had to explain away his death at the hands of the Romans. Their explanation was that Jesus was supposed to die as an atonement for the sins of the world. This brings us to the most famous and most popular proof-text that's used by Christian missionaries. It's the famous passage from the fifty-third chapter in the Book of Isaiah which is about the suffering servant of G-d.

Christians will point to verses 5 and 6 in this chapter as proof that Jesus was the Messiah. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. The chastisement of our welfare was upon him and with his stripes we were healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We turned everyone to his own way and the Lord visited upon him the iniquity of us all." Obviously Christian missionaries have been attracted to this passage in Isaiah because it seems to resemble their concept of who Jesus was. However, when we examine the context of this chapter in Isaiah, there is no reason for us to assume that it's about a sacrificed Messiah.

It's interesting that in the New Testament the followers of Jesus didn't understand this passage in Isaiah as a messianic prophecy. They had no concept at all that the Messiah was supposed to die as part of G-d's plan. In the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Matthew, verse 13, Jesus asks his disciples who he is. Peter identifies him as the Messiah and Jesus congratulates him for getting the correct answer. However, when Jesus begins to tell them that he must go to Jerusalem to be persecuted and tortured and killed, Peter protests strongly and says, "G-d forbid, this could never happen to you" (verse 22). Peter doesn't say to Jesus, "Praise G-d, you must be the suffering servant that Isaiah spoke about". Another important issue is that there's no corroboration for the Christological interpretation of

this passage in Isaiah. We saw previously that the Jewish concept of the Messiah emerged organically from reading the entire Bible and finding many passages which spoke about a descendant of David who would become the king of Israel at time of universal peace and universal knowledge of G-d.

The Christian understanding of the Messiah is that he's supposed to die as an atonement for sin. One of the great weaknesses of this idea is that the entire concept is founded on the singular passage in Isaiah that we're examining. There's no corroboration for it anywhere else in the Bible.

Another idea here is that the Christian concept is based upon circular reasoning. Although they may claim that Isaiah 53 is speaking about the suffering of the Messiah, there's no proof that Jesus died to atone for people's sins. This is just a conjecture they make – not an idea proven by Isaiah. Although people might have seen Jesus suffering, they didn't see him atone for anyone's sins.

Before we examine this chapter in Isaiah according to a Jewish perspective, we'll see why it's difficult to make the claim that it's speaking about Jesus.

Chapter 53 verse 3 says that the servant would be despised and rejected. However, this is not consistent with the way Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament. According to the gospels, Jesus was immensely popular (Mark 3:7-9). There were constantly multitudes of people following him. According to the Book of Luke (4:14-15), he was glorified and praised by all.

Verse 3 in Isaiah also says that the servant was a man of pain and a man well acquainted with disease. There's no indication and no proof in the gospels that this applied to Jesus at all. Although he might have experienced some pain during his hours of crucifixion, there's no reason to believe and no indication from the New Testament that during his entire life he suffered and was well-acquainted with pain and with illness. The sense of the Hebrew is a man of constant pain, of continual pain. And Jesus doesn't seem to fit this description from the Book of Isaiah.

In verse 7 Isaiah says "He was oppressed, though he humbled himself and did not open his mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, he did not open his mouth." This description doesn't fit Jesus at all. In his trial before the Roman Pontius Pilate on charges of

sedition, Jesus very cleverly defends himself. According to the gospel of John, chapter 18, verse 36, Jesus says: "My kingdom is not of this world." His claim that he's only setting up a spiritual kingdom is meant to defuse the situation so the Romans should have no fear of an armed rebellion from himself or from his followers. Later at the crucifixion Jesus protests and screams out, according to the gospel of Matthew, Chapter 27 verse 48: "My G-d, my G-d, why have You forsaken me?"

By mistranslating part of verse 8, Christian apologists try to create the impression that the servant in this passage is a singular person. However, the Hebrew in verse 8 says "due to the transgressions of my people, they were afflicted. According to this verse, the suffering servant are a people, not one individual.

According to verse 9, the servant did no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth. Now, from the accounts in the New Testament, this clearly doesn't apply to Jesus. First of all, there were several acts of violence committed by Jesus. According to the gospels he came into the Temple with a whip in hand and chased out the moneychangers, turning over their tables (John 2:14-15). Chasing out people with a whip could hardly be construed as an act of non-violence.

Another act of violence is found in the twenty-first chapter of the gospel of Matthew (verses 18-20), Jesus is hungry and sees a fig tree on the road. He comes to it but finds no figs on it, only leaves. Getting angry, he says: "May there no longer be any fruit on you from now on." And at once the fig tree withered. This story becomes more difficult to understand in light of the fact that according to the gospel of Mark (11:13), it wasn't even the season for the growing of figs. And according to the Book of Deuteronomy in the Jewish Bible, chapter 20, verse 19, even in a time of war when waging a siege against a city, it's prohibited to cut down a fruit tree. It's difficult, therefore, to understand how Jesus could curse the tree that it should never produce fruit. If he was able to produce miracles, he could have just as easily blessed the tree that it should produce fruit. There's another incident in the New Testament where Jesus unnecessarily kills an entire herd of swine (Luke 8:32-33).

In a parable from the Book of Luke, chapter 19, verse 27, Jesus says: "These enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence." Again, hardly a

comment we would expect from someone dubbed the Prince of Peace.

Regarding Jesus's deception and deceit, we have a number of examples. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is constantly telling people to keep certain things secret. They shouldn't reveal that he was the Messiah (Matthew 16:20). They shouldn't reveal that he performed certain miracles (Luke 8:40-56). He constantly taught in parables that he explained he was doing so the people shouldn't understand what he was talking about (Matthew 13:10-13). However, when he's brought up before the Roman trial, he says in the Book of John, chapter 18, verse 20 that, "I've always spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the Temple where all the Jews could come together. I spoke nothing in secret".

Finally, in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 26, verse 52, Jesus says that all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. And we saw that in the gospel of John, Jesus claimed that his kingdom was a kingdom not of this world. It was a spiritual kingdom. However, in the gospel of Luke, chapter 22, verse 36, Jesus tells his followers: "Let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one."

In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, verse 10, G-d explains how he will reward the servant. G-d says he shall see his seed, he will prolong his days. This clearly doesn't apply to Jesus. Seeing his seed was a reference to having children and Jesus had no children. Christians might claim that it means spiritual children. However, in the Bible the word *zera*, seed, only refers to physical children. When the Bible wants to refer to figurative children, it uses the word *banim*, sons. For example, Deuteronomy 14:1, "You are the (*banim*) sons of the Lord your G-d." The Bible doesn't refer to the human beings as being the seed of G-d.

Also, Jesus's days were not prolonged. He died at a relatively young age. According to Christian theology, Jesus was G-d. Obviously, it makes little sense to speak about prolonging the days of an eternal being. The traditional Jewish understanding of this passage in Isaiah is that it speaks about the history and destiny of the Jewish people.

There are several reasons for assuming that this passage in Isaiah is speaking about the Jewish people as a whole. First of all, the context of the surrounding chapters, 52 and 54, both deal with the Jewish nation. Secondly, if we're looking for clues about the identity of the servant of G-d, we have

many both in the Book of Isaiah and throughout the rest of the Jewish Bible. In the Book of Isaiah 41:8-9, 43:10, 44:1-2, 44:21, 45:4, 48:20, 49:3, 54:17, the servant of G-d is clearly identified as being the Jewish people.

And if you're wondering how this passage in Isaiah can refer to the nation of Israel when it seems to be speaking about an individual person, the answer is that throughout the Bible the Jewish people are spoken about as an individual person. We see this, for example, in the thirty-second chapter in the Book of Deuteronomy, verses 8-13, in the eighth chapter in the Book of Hosea, verse 3. Throughout the opening chapters in the Book of Exodus when the Jews are being persecuted -- it refers to him being persecuted (Exodus 1:10-12). And we see at Mount Sinai when the Jews are about to receive the Torah, it says that, "he encamped under the mountain" (Exodus 19:2).

The concluding verses in Chapter 52 of Isaiah predict that when the Jewish people fully blossom in the Messianic Age, the nations of the world will be startled when they realize the true nature of their history vis-à-vis the Jewish people. Verses 13-15, "Behold, My servant shall prosper. He shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high. As many were astounded at him, his appearance was marred beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of the sons of men. So shall he startle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall understand."

The Bible constantly speaks about the Jewish people as being exalted in the Messianic Age. In the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, verses 14 and 15, the prophet says: "And the sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you. And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet. And they will call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the holy one of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated with no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, a joy from generation to generation." The Bible says that when the Jewish people are finally exalted in the Messianic Age, the nations of the world will be shocked, the kings will be startled, their mouths will be shut.

In the Book of Micah, chapter 7 verse 16, the prophet says: "Nations will see and be ashamed of all their might. They will put their hand on their mouth. Their ears will be deaf."

The key to understanding the fifty-third chapter in the Book of Isaiah is to realize that it's a continuation of the end of Chapter 52, where the nations of the world and the kings will be shocked, will be startled at the sudden elevation of the Jewish people at the climax of their history.

These are the people who express their shock in chapter 53 when they say in verse 1, "Who would have believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed". They're shocked when they see the arm of the Lord which, throughout the Bible speaks of the physical redemption of the Jewish people at the hands of those who oppress them.

They go on to say in succeeding verses that the Jews were constantly despised and rejected, constantly persecuted, having emerged as a humble nation wandering the desert after Egyptian exile.

The kings and nations begin to confess in verse 4 that the Jewish people were the scapegoats throughout their history. That whenever things are going bad with the nations of the world, either economically or politically, they would take it out on the Jews as a way of relieving their pains. And they begin to admit in verse 5 that the Jewish people suffered because of their sins.

This is normally translated as "He was wounded *for* our sins." However, the Hebrew here indicates that he, the servant, was wounded *from* our sins. The nations admit here that because they were so sinful throughout history, the Jewish people suffered. We see this, for example, in the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 10 verse 25, and chapter 50 verse 7. The nations admit that they were the cause of Jewish suffering. They are the ones that went astray. We just use the Jews as a scapegoat to cover up our own corruption and problems, to distract the masses. We thought we could solve our national problems by persecuting the Jews. And we gave the excuse that Jews were being punished because they were smitten of G-d because G-d hated them.

Isaiah goes on to say in verse 7 that the Jewish people were led like lambs to the slaughter, yet they didn't protest or reject G-d. We see this in Psalms, chapter 44. Like the Jews who sang of their faith in G-d as they were being led into the gas chambers of the Nazi Holocaust. Or Rabbi Akiva, who recited the Sh'ma, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord Our G-d the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your G-d with all your heart and all your soul and all your might"-- as his

skin was being scraped off with an iron comb by his Roman torturers (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 61b). In verse 10 Isaiah explains that oftentimes, the purpose of Jewish suffering is a test from G-d to see if the Jewish people would remain faithful.

We see this exemplified in Genesis, chapter 22, where Abraham is tested by G-d. And this testing serves to purify the Jewish people. If they accept the suffering as having a higher purpose, and don't reject G-d, G-d will reward us. And G-d's purpose of messianic perfection will be realized through the Jewish people. The Jews, the chosen people, will serve as a light unto the nations and will help lead the world to G-d and cause them to be just and righteous.

We see this, for example, in the eighth chapter in the Book of Zachariah, verse 23, which says that "in those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying "let us go with you for we have heard that G-d is with you."

It's interesting that many non-Jewish commentaries to the Bible have come to agree with this Jewish understanding of the meaning of Isaiah, chapter 53. Although we haven't had the time in this program to go through a comprehensive, detailed explanation of this passage in Isaiah, it should be clear that it's impossible for it to function as a conclusive proof for the Christological claims made for Jesus.

SIN AND ATONEMENT

One of the most common claims made by Christian missionaries is that Jewish people are unable to achieve salvation or forgiveness for their sins without a blood sacrifice. Christians believe that Jesus served as their blood sacrifice. Missionaries will claim that this idea is based upon a passage in the Jewish Bible, which says that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness. This passage doesn't appear anywhere in the Jewish Bible - it's a verse in the New Testament, Book of Hebrews, chapter 9 verse 22. Christian missionaries will claim that the idea is also found in the Jewish Bible in the Book of Leviticus, chapter 17 verse 11, which says: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls. For it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul."

If you read Chapter 17 in the Book of Leviticus in context, it's not speaking about the topic of atonement from sins, but rather the prohibition against consuming blood. Also, the passage doesn't say that blood is the

only way of achieving atonement. It says that a blood sacrifice is an atonement. It's one of the ways of getting atonement for sins.

If you insist that the only way of achieving forgiveness from sins in the Jewish Bible is through bringing a blood sacrifice, there are several major problems. First, what happens to the Jew who can't afford to bring an animal sacrifice? Does that mean that G-d is not going to allow this person to be forgiven for his sins because they're poor? The Bible itself raises this question in the fifth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, and it says that if a person is too poor to afford to bring an animal sacrifice, he can bring either two turtledoves or two young pigeons (verses 7-10).

But what if he's too poor to bring even these birds? The Bible then says that he can bring a handful of fine flour as his sin offering (Leviticus 5:11-13). So, we see that it's possible to achieve forgiveness in certain cases by bringing flour. And throughout the Bible, there are many different types of sacrifices that achieve forgiveness for sins without blood. For example, in the seventeenth chapter in the Book of Numbers, Aaron takes incense, which makes atonement for the people (verse 12). In the Book of Exodus, Chapter 30, verses 11-16. and in the Book of Numbers, chapter 31, verse 50, giving charity is a way of achieving forgiveness.

There's a second problem with the Christian claim that without blood there can be no forgiveness. According to the Bible you're only allowed to offer sacrifices in the Holy Temple (Leviticus 17:1-9). What happens if the Jewish people don't have a Holy Temple? What happened, for example, to the Jewish people after the year 586 BCE, when the Babylonians destroyed the Temple and took the Jewish people into captivity? Does that mean that the Jewish people in Babylonia had no way of getting forgiven for their sins?

The Bible asks this question and answers it in the first Book of Kings, chapter 8. When King Solomon is building the temple and giving a dedication speech, he asks the question: What happens if the Jewish people are taken away from Israel into captivity? How do they atone for their sins in that case? And he says in verses 48-50 that if they repent and turn to G-d and pray to G-d, then G-d will forgive his people and He will pardon them from their transgressions. And we see this throughout the Bible. Through prayer and repentance, it's possible to achieve atonement for all our sins.

The prophet Hosea was writing to the Jewish people in the northern kingdom of Israel, the ten northern tribes who were not able to go to Jerusalem because of the civil war that was going on. In the fourteenth chapter, verses 1 and 2, Hosea says: "Israel, return to the Lord your G-d, for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words and turn to the Lord. Say unto Him take away all iniquity and receive us graciously for we will render the calves of our lips". That is, through prayer it's as if we're offering sacrifices to G-d.

In the second Book of Chronicles, chapter 7 verse 14, G-d says: "If My people which are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from Heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

In the Book of Ezekiel, chapter 18 verse 21, G-d says: "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed and keep all of my laws and do that which is lawful and right, he will surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him. In his righteousness that he has done he shall live."

In the Book of Jonah, chapter 3, the prophet comes to the city of Nineveh and warns the people that G-d is about to destroy them. But Jonah doesn't tell them that they must start offering blood sacrifices. The people take his warning seriously and they begin to repent of their evil and they turn from their evil ways and G-d does not destroy them and He accepts their repentance.

In the Book of Daniel, chapter 4, verse 24, Daniel tells the king to break off his sins by righteousness and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. And yet Christian missionaries insist that G-d cannot forgive the Jewish people unless they bring sacrifices. They actually limit the power of G-d. We know from the Bible that G-d is a G-d of mercy and oftentimes will forgive people even though they don't repent properly.

For example, in the Book of Micah, chapter 7 verse 18, we're told: "Who is a G-d like unto You that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage. He retains not His anger forever because He delights in mercy." Psalm 78, verse 37 says, "For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not. Many a time He turned His anger away and did not stir up all His wrath. For He

remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away and comes not again."

In the forty-third chapter of the Book of Isaiah, the prophet tells the Jewish people that even though they didn't offer their offerings properly and they didn't bring the proper sacrifices, G-d blots out their transgressions for His own sake and He won't remember their sins anymore (verses 22-25).

It's clear throughout the Bible that the real focus of our spiritual relationship with G-d is not in bringing sacrifices but in maintaining a proper relationship with G-d by obedience and by listening to G-d.

Hosea, chapter 6 verse 6 says: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and a knowledge of G-d more than burnt offerings."

In Psalm 51, verses 16-19, David says: "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O G-d, G-d of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice or else I would give it. You delight not in burnt offering. But the sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. G-d, you will not despise these."

In the Book of Proverbs, chapter 21 verse 3, we're told that to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to G-d than sacrifices.

In the famous first chapter of the Book of Isaiah, the prophet asks the Jewish people: What is the purpose of all the sacrifices they're bringing? He says in verse 18, "Come, let us reason together, says G-d.

For your sins be as scarlet, they shall become as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." Finally, in verse 27, G-d says: "Zion will be redeemed with judgment and her repentant people with righteousness."

If Christian missionaries insist upon reading Leviticus, Chapter 17 verse 11 literally, they come into some tremendous problems. The passage says that only blood offered on the altar can serve as an atonement for sins. Since at the time of Jesus the altar was standing in Jerusalem and his blood was not offered on the altar, he could never really serve as an atonement for sin.

We hope that this e-book will prove useful for your studies and if you have any questions concerning Judaism and Christianity and how to answer

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