

## Transcript and Notes to: The Real Jewish Messiah Part 2

This presentation is a response to Dr. Brown's video on the subject of the Real Jewish Messiah.

Dr. Brown begins his presentation by telling us that he accepts the roles assigned to the Messiah by traditional Judaism, namely; ingathering of Israel's exile, building the Temple in Jerusalem, ushering in an era of universal peace and knowledge of God. But Dr. Brown argues that this is only half of the picture. According to Dr. Brown traditional Judaism has missed a crucial aspect of the Messiah's mission. According to Dr. Brown the Messiah is first supposed to provide atonement for mankind with his vicarious death. Judaism does not accept this function as one of the roles of the Messiah.

But the difference between Judaism and Christianity does not stop there. This is not merely an argument about how many functions are assigned to the Messiah, is it 4 or is it 5, is the Messiah to come once or twice. It is a question of faith and devotion. Dr. Brown believes that all of humanity needs to put their faith and trust in the atoning sacrifice of his Messiah or else they remain unredeemed and unsaved. Let's word this differently, from a Jewish perspective. Dr. Brown is telling us that our love for God is inadequate and that our trust in God is misplaced. According to Dr. Brown, now that his Messiah has died for your sins, your love for God is incomplete without faith in the sacrifice of his Messiah.

The rejection of Dr. Brown's position is not a peripheral aspect of Judaism. It cuts to the very heart and soul of our standing as a covenant nation before God. Isaiah declares that we are God's witnesses (Isaiah 43:10,12; 44:8) and our testimony to the world is that there is but One God, the Creator of heaven and earth. The God that we encountered through the exodus experience and the Sinai revelation is the only one that humanity needs to turn to. Every cause for trust, every reason for love and for worship resides with Him and with Him alone. We testify to the world that everyone and everything is but a subject of God, even the people that are deified by the nations around us. All of man's worship, all of man's trust and hope belong with our God, the God who the Jewish people pray to, and with Him alone. This is what Judaism stands for.

So this is not just a debate about the Messiah, this is an argument about Israel's faith and trust in God. Is this trust inadequate and misplaced as Dr. Brown would have us believe, or is this trust adequate and true, as Judaism affirms.

The prophets have settled this argument a long time ago and they settled it decisively, with clarity and with force. The prophets declared that when the Messiah comes, it will be Israel's trust in God that will be vindicated. The prophets actually took this one step further. The Scriptures tell us that it is precisely through the vindication of Israel's trust in God that the nations will come to know God.

Micah 7 (verses 7-9) tells us that while Israel suffers for her sins, God is her light. Israel hopes to God from the midst of her suffering and that trust will be vindicated to the eyes of her enemies. (There are several Psalms which give voice to Israel's hope to God from the midst of her suffering (Psalms 74, 79, 80 and 83). See also Isaiah 26:8,13,16; 33:2; Psalms 44:18; 102:18; 115:1,9,18; 123:2; 124:8; 130:7; Lamentations 3:24.)

Psalms 102 describes the process through which all the nations will come to knowledge of God. "The nations will fear the name of the Lord and all the kings of the earth His glory. Because the Lord has built Zion, He is seen in His glory. He has turned to the prayer of the destitute, and He has not despised their prayer." It is when God answers the prayer of Israel that all the nations learn to fear Him. And you know exactly Who it is that Israel is praying to and you know who it is that they are not praying to.

This theme is repeated again and again throughout the Scriptures. Not once or twice, but dozens of times. When Israel is comforted and glorified, when God hears their prayer and when their enemies are put to shame, that is when the nations of the world come to know God. (See Isaiah 18:3; 30:26; 35:2; 40:5; 41:20; 42:6; 44:23; 45:6,14; 49:6,13,23; 52:9,10; 55:5; 60:3; 61:2; 62:2; 65:25; 66:18; Jeremiah 3:17; 31:6,9,10; 33:9; Ezekiel 20:41; 36:23,36; 37:28; 38:23; 39:7,27; Joel 4:16; Obadiah 1;21; Micah 4:1; 7:16; Zephaniah 2:11; 3:9; Zechariah 8:23; 13:2; 14:9; Psalm 9:9; 22:29; 46:11; 67:1,2; 69:35; 76:10; 83:19; 96:11; 97:8; 98:3; 108:6; 126:2.)

Because knowing God is not just a matter of knowing about the existence of God. Knowing God means knowing that God hears the prayer of all who turn to Him in sincerity. Knowing God means knowing that you could bring all of your troubles directly to Him, even your worst sins. Knowing God means realizing that you don't need to trust in anyone or anything else because His mercy is all-encompassing. And knowing God means knowing that those who hope to Him, and to Him alone, will not be shamed (Isaiah 49:23).

The prophets made it abundantly clear that it is Israel's trust in God that will be vindicated at the end of the age. Dr. Brown's contention that Israel's trust is inadequate and incomplete is openly refuted by the explicit word of God.

So how does Dr. Brown try to support his position? Where does he see this trust in a particular sacrifice in the pages of Scripture?

There is no explicit passage in Scripture, even according to Dr. Brown's interpretation, that declares that we need to trust in the vicarious atonement of anyone in order to be accepted by God. Dr. Brown is pointing to gaps in the Scriptural narrative and he weaves a multi-stepped interpretation to fill in those gaps. He then presents this theological construct as the only valid interpretation of these ambiguous passages. But again, even according to Dr. Brown's interpretation, there is no clear and unambiguous teaching in Scripture on this subject.

So here we have a clear and explicit teaching, the teaching of the vindication of Israel's trust in God, pitted against a questionable interpretation of ambiguous passages. And Dr. Brown would have us reinterpret all the clear statements of the prophets on the basis of his tenuous interpretation. This is not reading Scripture. This is imposing theology on Scripture.

What are the passages that Dr. Brown is pointing to in his effort to support his theological construct? And what methods of interpretation is he using to justify his far-reaching conclusion?

Dr. Brown points to the suffering servant in Isaiah. Isaiah 52:13 thru 53:12 describes a suffering servant of God who shocks the kings of nations with his sudden exaltation. When the servant is exalted, the onlookers realize that this servant, whom they had despised, was actually bearing their sins. Dr. Brown argues that this servant is the Messiah who suffers for the sins of the world.

Before we point to the flaws in Dr. Brown's interpretation, let us point out what the prophet left unsaid even according to Dr. Brown's understanding of this passage. The prophet did not say that this servant is the Messiah. The prophet did not say that the servant's suffering is the only valid form of atonement. And the prophet did not say that you need to put your faith in this servant in order to be accepted by God. If these teachings are so central to the salvation of humanity, why did the prophets leave them unsaid? Why did the prophets find the time and space to speak at length about the vindication of Israel's trust with clarity and with force, but they couldn't find the words to tell us about the need to have faith in the vicarious atonement of the servant?

Dr. Brown argues that the prophet is speaking of a servant who is perfectly sinless and in this way the prophet informs us of the identity of the servant. Because no one is sinless except for Dr. Brown's Messiah, or so they claim. It is in place to note that it is impossible to know if anyone is sinless so this is an illogical way to identify someone.

Did the prophet really speak of sinlessness? Dr. Brown points to verse 9 where the servant is described as having done no violence and that no deception was found on his lips. And verse 11 uses the Hebrew word "tzaddik," righteous one, to describe the servant. The argument is that this word cannot apply to anyone but to a perfectly righteous individual.

These two arguments have no basis in the reality of Scripture. Verse 9 is not speaking about sinless perfection, it is speaking about an unjust accusation. The verse tells us that the servant was persecuted for no violence that he had done and for no deception that was in his mouth. All the prophet is telling us is that the persecutors of the servant punished him for crimes that he did not commit. This has nothing to do with sinless perfection. And the Hebrew word "tzaddik" is actually used by Isaiah (26:2) to describe the nation of Israel, who is quite sinful, but is righteous to a degree as far as its trust in God goes. This is not the word the prophet would use to tell us the earthshattering news that the servant is perfectly sinless.

So who is this servant? Before I answer this question, I would like to share a thought with you. Did you notice? The prophet did not clearly identify the servant, but the prophet did tell us that the servant has a message for us. This same suffering servant appears in chapter 50 (verses 4 thru 11). The servant tells us that he is assured that he will be vindicated because of his own trust in God and the servant turns to his listeners and encourages them to put their trust in God as well. Whoever you believe the servant to be, his message to you is to trust in the same God that he prayed to. The servant isn't pointing people to his own person, he is pointing his listeners to his steadfast trust in God and encouraging them to follow his example.

But who is the servant? The servant is Israel, not all of Israel, but those amongst Israel who are worthy of being called God's servant, those who have put their trust in God.

But hold on. Didn't Dr. Brown demonstrate that the servant is not Israel? Didn't Dr. Brown show how the references to Israel and Jacob diminish in the chapters leading up to Isaiah 53?

Let me explain this one, because in this situation Dr. Brown is actually using a solid interpretative method. Dr. Brown pointed out that while Isaiah refers to Israel and Jacob many times in chapters 40-48, the references to Israel and Jacob fade away as we approach the suffering servant passage of Isaiah 53. This would be the Author's way of showing us that He has shifted His focus from Israel, which was the center of attention in the earlier chapters, and He is directing our attention elsewhere.

The method that Dr. Brown has used is a good method, but Dr. Brown has applied it incorrectly. The prophet has many ways of referring to the nation of Israel aside from using the words "Israel" and "Jacob." (As an aside, in these chapters of Isaiah these names are often not being used to identify Israel, but rather they are used to identify God; i.e. "the God of Israel.") Zion, Jerusalem, the nation with My teaching in their hearts, seekers of God and followers of justice are all nouns and metaphors that the prophet uses to identify Israel. There are also pronouns that the prophet uses that give us to understand that he is referring to Israel such as a female "you," a plural "you" or "them." In chapters 49 through 52 there are over 150 nouns, metaphors and pronouns referring to Israel. So, according to Dr. Brown's own method of Scriptural interpretation, we see that the prophet is not shifting his focus away from Israel, he is actually zooming in on Israel.

There are other ways that the prophet tells us that he is talking about Israel. The suffering servant passage opens up with the kings of the nations being astonished that the arm of the Lord is revealed upon this servant (53:1). Merely 3 verses before this passage, the prophet tells us that the arm of the Lord is revealed on behalf of Israel to the eyes of all the nations and all the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God (52:10 – compare to Psalm 98:3). A straightforward reading of Scripture tells us that these two revelations of the arm of the Lord are one and the same.

Yet another way that the prophet helps us see that he is talking of Israel is his use of the word “report.” When the kings of the nations see the servant’s exaltation, they exclaim, “Who would have believed our report” (53:1). In chapter 48:20 we learn that the report that goes to the ends of the earth is the report of the redemption of God’s servant, Jacob.

Another way the prophet helps us see that this suffering servant is Israel is the very last description of Israel before the passage in question. In Isaiah 52:11 Isaiah describes Israel as the armor bearers of God, or as the bearers of God’s vessels. The prophet is clearly telling us that the nation of Israel plays an active role in God’s plan for the world. This description is used nowhere else in Scripture except for this passage, in the verses that lead up to Isaiah 53. This brings us to the suffering servant passage, where the prophet tells us that the purpose of God is achieved through the servant’s hand (53:10).

The overwhelming weight of the textual cues that the prophet gives us to help identify the servant point to Israel. Christians cannot dispute the national interpretation of Isaiah 53 on textual grounds. They object to the national interpretation on theological grounds. They cannot fathom how it is that Israel suffers for the sins of others. This is a theological problem, not a textual problem.

The interpretation that Dr. Brown is proposing comes with a slew of theological problems that are far more serious than the arguments that challenge the Jewish position. There is no textual or theological advantage in Dr. Brown’s interpretation.

If you go to the notes on this presentation you will find an interpretation of Isaiah 53 that explains the theological aspect of this passage in a way that harmonizes with the text and with the theology of Scripture. I suggest that you read it.

Let’s move on to another one of Dr. Brown’s arguments. Dr. Brown argued that the Messiah is supposed to be a priestly king and as such he is to provide atonement for all mankind.

I actually accept that the Messiah is supposed to serve in a priestly role. I differ with Dr. Brown on the question of how does the Messiah fulfill this priestly function?

How do I know that the Messiah plays a priestly role? Well, we have Psalm 110 which tells us that the Messiah (or perhaps David) will be a priest forever. But even if I wouldn’t have that Psalm I would know that the Messiah is some sort of priest. After all, as a king of a priestly nation, he would have to be a priest as well. Twice do the Scriptures declare that Israel is a nation of priests (Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6). If the Jewish people are priests, it would follow that their king, the Messiah, is also a priest.

The fact is that the priests served in many roles. If I would follow Dr. Brown’s method of Scriptural interpretation, I could technically pick any one of those roles out of the hat and assign it to the Messiah and to Israel. But this is not a responsible way to read Scripture. It would be best to allow Scripture to tell us which particular priestly function is performed by the people of Israel rather than dictate to Scripture what we want to believe.

The prophet Malachi describes the role of the priest with the words, “the lips of the priest guard knowledge and teaching is sought from his mouth.” One of the functions of the priest is to serve as a repository for the knowledge of God. The Scriptures declare openly and unequivocally that this is one of Israel’s functions as a nation before God (Deuteronomy 33:4; Psalm 78:5; 147:19,20; Zechariah 8:23).

As Israel’s king, David carries the knowledge of God through the corridors of history. David and all of his righteous descendants that sit on his throne, including the Messiah, represent trust in God and they bear the responsibility of carrying this knowledge and holding its banner.

(Let me address one more of Dr. Brown’s arguments. Dr. Brown asserted that Haggai and Malachi both say that the Messiah will come while the Second Temple was still standing.

They said nothing of the sort. Had they said, “This generation shall not pass until all of these things come to be”, I would perhaps understand Dr. Brown’s argument. But they did not say that, and their words can be understood as a reference to a future Temple, not necessarily the Second Temple.

How about Daniel 9? There we have a specific time limit for the ushering in of everlasting righteousness. How do the Jewish people explain that prophecy?

Look, everlasting righteousness has not been ushered in by any stretch of the imagination. Both Christians and Jews recognize that the prophet was referring to the launching of God’s program that will ultimately usher in everlasting righteousness. The argument between the Christian and the Jew revolves around the nature of this program. But the Bible makes God’s program very clear.

God’s program for the ushering in of everlasting righteousness is that God will take the nation that has hoped to Him through 2000 years of pain and exalt them and vindicate their trust. All the nations will then see that Israel’s trust is not misplaced and is not inadequate. And the nations will hear the message of God’s servant, which is simply to put their trust in the same One who he, the servant, has put his trust.)

Dr. Brown’s primary message is that Israel’s trust is inadequate. The trust that David had for God is not enough for Dr. Brown. Dr. Brown contends that if we limit ourselves to the trust that David articulated in his Psalms we will remain unsaved. The Message of David, the message of Israel and the message of the Messiah refutes Dr. Brown’s argument. The God of Israel is all the trust that your heart needs.

And when you taste this truth you will join our king in declaring, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). You will realize that you are missing nothing.

#### **Notes:**

#### **The theological explanation of Isaiah 53**

The suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is said to be suffering for the sins of others. This seems to conflict with those passages that affirm that each individual suffers for his own sins (e.g. Exodus 32:33; Ezekiel 18:20). Even without these conflicting passages, if Isaiah 53 is indeed speaking of vicarious atonement it would stand out as a sore thumb on the landscape of Scripture. The atonement offerings of Scripture were not truly vicarious. The Temple offerings were acts of obedience on the part of the sinner and the sinner incurred a monetary loss in the process. So how are we to understand Isaiah 53 which has the servant suffering on behalf of people who despise him? How can we understand this passage in a way that harmonizes with what we are taught throughout the Scriptures?

It is not coincidental that the very last description of Israel before Isaiah 53 portrays Israel as the bearers of God’s vessels. Those who carried the vessels of the Tabernacle bore a heavy responsibility. They

were bearing the holy vessels and such activity demanded a higher level of duty. The slightest error would incur God's wrath (Numbers 4:17-19; 1 Samuel 6:19; 2 Samuel 6:6,7).

The entire community benefited from this activity but it was the bearers of the vessels who bore the brunt of the responsibility. Those bearers of God's vessels who erred and were punished were obviously suffering for their own sin; however, they were also suffering on behalf of the community, because the very act of carrying the vessels was an act that brought blessing for the entire community, not just for the vessel bearers. Ideally, the responsibility of carrying the vessels should have been equally apportioned amongst all the members of the community. The fact that the responsibility of carrying the vessels was concentrated on one family made the burden lighter for the rest of the community.

The same concept is repeated with the priesthood in general. The priests were the guardians of the Temple. They carried the burden of protecting the sanctity of the Temple precincts by themselves (Numbers 18:1). If they were lax in their responsibilities, they would be punished for their sin, but it would also be true to say that they were suffering for the community. The reason for this is because the Temple was a blessing for the entire community, not only for the priests, but the priests bore the responsibility of preserving its sanctity by themselves.

Another function of the priesthood requires that the priests be the guardians of God's truth (Leviticus 10:11; Ezekiel 44:23; Malachi 2:7; 2 Chronicles 31:4). This is a heavy responsibility, and if the priests fall short, they get punished (Malachi 2:8,9). Yet they are bearing this responsibility for everyone.

What the Levitical priests do for the nation of Israel, the nation of Israel does for the world. The nation of Israel is the guardian of God's truth (Isaiah 51:7). Israel bears the message of One God and that all of mankind's trust and devotion belong to that One God and to Him alone. This is a heavy responsibility and it comes with a price, the slightest disobedience is punished to a degree that Israel suffers far more than the other nations of the world (Amos 3:2). But they are bearing this responsibility for the benefit of the world, because it is the truth that Israel carries that will ultimately elevate all of the nations.

Until the nations of the world understand Israel's role in God's plan, they see Israel's suffering as a sign that Israel is more sinful than the other nations. They see Israel's suffering as a sign that Israel's trust in God is inadequate and misplaced. But when the nations come to understand that Israel was bearing God's truth all along, they will realize that the burden that should have been shared by all was carried by Israel alone. And the burden that Israel carried was the burden of the sins of the world.

In a world without sin, all of us would trust in God, and there would be no need for one nation to carry this message for all of mankind. It is only in a world darkened by sin that this message needs to be sustained. And Israel sustained this message with its very life-blood.

This is the realization that is described so vividly by the prophet Isaiah. This is the understanding that will come to the nations of the world when they see God's arm revealed on behalf of the people that bore His truth through the darkness of a world filled with sin.

### **Does Israel trust in God?**

Does Israel really trust in God? Aren't there so many passages in Scripture which speak of Israel's lack of trust in God? Some of these passages describe Israel putting their trust in other gods (such as Deuteronomy 32:35). How can Israel be carrying a message of trust in God?

The answer is that these passages only tell half the story. The other half of the story is clearly affirmed throughout the Scriptures. The primary purpose of Israel's exile is that they be refined and that they learn

to put their trust in God. That was the purpose of Israel's wandering through the desert for 40 years in the days of Moses (Deuteronomy 8:3) and that is the purpose of Israel's suffering in exile (Leviticus 26:41; Isaiah 48:10, where Israel's suffering is described as a refining process, see also Deuteronomy 4:20; Isaiah 40:2; Jeremiah 11:4; Ezekiel 20:37; Zephaniah 3:11,12; Daniel 11:35; 12:10).

And there are dozens of passages that clearly affirm that while Israel is suffering in exile their trust is in God. Micah 7 stands out where Israel declares that it bears the wrath of God because of its sins but it still trusts in God and this theme is repeated again and again throughout the Scriptures with clarity and force (Isaiah 26:8,13,15; 33:2; 40:31; 49:23; Psalm 9:9; 10:17; 33:20; 44:18; 62:10; 69:34; the prayers of Psalm 74, Psalm 79, Psalm 80 and Psalm 83 are prayers of a suffering nation who hopes to God, 102:18; 115:1,9,18; 123:2; 124:8; 130:7; Lamentations 3:24.)

Another way that the Author of Scripture brings this truth to light is in the way He describes the comfort of Israel. Isaiah tells us, "How beautiful are the footsteps of the one who brings the news to Israel" (Isaiah 52:7). What news is Israel going to hear? Two words, and no more. And with those two words all of Israel's pain will turn to joy; and those two words are "Malach Elokayich," - your God has reigned. All that Israel needs to hear is that the God of Isaiah, the God of David has made His sovereignty manifest to the eyes of the world and their deepest yearning has come to fruition (Isaiah 52:7; 40:9). Isaiah tells us that when Israel rejoices at the glory of God revealed they will say "This is the God we had hoped to" (Isaiah 25:9) and the nations will praise Israel as a righteous nation that has kept its faithfulness (Isaiah 26:2).

So the Author of Scripture left us no room to doubt this truth, that Israel trusts in God and it is when this trust is vindicated to the eyes of the nations that the nations will know God.

#### **Additional Notes:**

In the following notes I respond to those arguments and Scriptural quotations that Dr. Brown raised in his first presentation (The Real Jewish Messiah part 1) that I did not respond to in my video rebuttal.

##### **1. Is the promise to Abraham limited to the tribe of Judah?**

Dr. Brown describes how God's promise to Abraham passed on to Abraham's descendants. Dr. Brown states, "God then chose Isaac, then Jacob, then Judah." By placing the choice of Judah in the same line as the choice of Isaac and Jacob Dr. Brown seems to be saying that just as Isaac was chosen to the complete exclusion of Ishmael, and Jacob to the exclusion of Esau, so was Judah chosen to the exclusion of his brothers.

This premise is demonstrably false. Throughout Scripture, it is the entirety of Israel that is God's chosen nation, not only the tribe of Judah. Here are some of the Scriptural references: Genesis 28:13,14, 35:12, 48:4,16,20, 50:24, Exodus 2:24, 3:8,17, 4:11,22, 6:4,7,8, 9:19, 11:7, 15:16,17, 16:12, 19:5,6 24:8, 25:8,22, 29:45, 31:12-17, 33:1,16, 34:10,27, Leviticus 11:45, 15:31, 19:2, 20:3,24,26, 22:33, 26:44, Numbers 15:41, 22:12, 23:21, 24:9, 33:53, 35:34, Deuteronomy 1:8, 4:7,20,31-39, 6:10,18, 7:6-8, 8:1, 9:5,26,29, 10:11,15, 11:12,31, 14:1,2, 21:8, 23:6, 26:15-19, 27:9, 29:11-14, 32:9-12, 33:28,29, Joshua 1:6, 5:5, 22:41, 1Samuel 12:22, 2Samuel 7:23,24, 1Kings 8:13,51-53, 9:3, 10:9, 11:36, Jeremiah 2:2,3, 10:16, 12:14, 14:9, 31:2,8,34-36, 33:19-26, 46:27,28, 50:33,34, 51:5, Ezekiel 11:16, 16:60, 37:28, Isaiah 41:8-16, 43:1-21, 44:1-8,21-23, 45:4,14-17, 46:3,4, 48:12, 49:14-16, 51:7,15,16,22-52:12, 54:10, 55:5, 59:21, 60:1-3,12,21, 61:6,9, 62:1-12, Hosea 2:1,21,22, Joel 4:17,20,21, Zephaniah 3:20, Zechariah 2:12, 8:20-23, Malachi 1:2, Psalms 28:9, 29:11,38:12, 44:18, 47:4,5, 48:9,15, 50:7, 68:35,36, 74:2, 78:5,69, 79:13, 89:16, 94:14, 95:7, 98:1-3, 100:3, 105:8-45, 111:4-9, 125:2, 132:13-18, 133:3, 135:4, 144:15, 147:19,20, 148:14, 149:2,4, Nehemiah 1:10, 9:7,8 1Chronicles 15:2, 16:15-22, 17:21,22,24, 23:13,25, 2Chronicles 6:6, 7:16, 9:8, 20:7

**2. Is the Messiah to be a light to the nations before the physical salvation of Israel?**

Dr. Brown states that the Messiah is to be a light to the nations before the physical redemption of Israel. There is not one passage in all of Scripture that can be misconstrued to support Dr. Brown's position. There are numerous passages in Scripture which openly declare that God will use the physical salvation of Israel to bring the nations to knowledge of God. See Isaiah 18:3; 30:26; 35:2; 40:5; 41:20; 42:6; 44:23; 45:6,14; 49:6,13,23; 52:9,10; 55:5; 60:3; 61:2; 62:2; 65:25; 66:18; Jeremiah 3:17; 31:6,9,10; 33:9; Ezekiel 20:41; 36:23,36; 37:28; 38:23; 39:7,27; Joel 4:16; Obadiah 1:21; Micah 4:1; 7:16; Zephaniah 2:11; 3:9; Zechariah 8:23; 13:2; 14:9; Psalm 9:9; 22:29; 46:11; 67:1,2; 69:35; 76:10; 83:19; 96:11; 97:8; 98:3; 108:6; 126:2.

**3. How do we know that David was a priestly king?**

I affirmed in my video presentation that I accept that the Davidic dynasty plays a priestly role in God's plan. I accept that this is taught in Psalm 110 and in the fact that as king of a priestly nation, David and his descendants ought to be priestly kings. But in his zeal to emphasize the priestly role of David, Dr. Brown has misunderstood several passages in Scripture.

Dr. Brown points to 2 Samuel 24 (verse 25), where the prophet describes how David offered sacrifices to God. Dr. Brown argues that this role was limited to the priesthood and if David offered sacrifices, he must have been a priest.

Dr. Brown's argument has no basis in Scripture. It is only on the special altar of the Tabernacle or of the Temple that the service is limited to the Aaronic priests (Numbers 18:7). Outside of the Temple precincts, anyone may bring up an offering, even a gentile. There is no statement in the entire Torah which would have us believe otherwise. The episode described in 2 Chronicles 26:16-20 clearly refutes Dr. Brown's contention. In that passage we learn how a king of the Davidic dynasty tried to usurp the office of the Aaronic priesthood and was consequently punished by God. The Aaronic priesthood belongs to Aaron's descendants, not to David. (See also Jeremiah 33:17-26 where God reaffirms His promises to David and to Aaron, clearly distinguishing their roles one from the other).

**4. Does Zechariah 6:9-15 teach us that the Messiah will be a priestly king?**

Dr. Brown points to this passage in Zechariah, where a crown is placed on the head of the high-priest, as a teaching on the priestly role of the Messiah. Dr. Brown is reading the passage as if the prophet is pointing to the priest and telling his audience that this priest is representative of the Messiah (or Zerubbabel, the Davidic ruler). This is inaccurate. The prophet is informing the high-priest about the role that the Davidic ruler will play. The prophet is not making the priest a representative of this Davidic ruler.

**5. Which servant in the book of Isaiah is sent on a mission to the people of Israel?**

In the later chapter of the book of Isaiah, we encounter a servant of God. At times it is clear that the servant is the people of Israel. Yet in some passages, the servant is sent on a mission to Israel. Dr. Brown argues that one who is sent on a mission to the nation cannot be the nation itself, Dr. Brown concludes that the servant is the Messiah.

It seems that Isaiah 51:12-16 has escaped Dr. Brown's attention. In this passage the servant is sent on a mission to Israel ("and to declare to Zion; you are My nation;" verse 16), yet the servant is a plural entity who has forgotten God and needs to be reminded to put his faith in God (verse 13).

The fact is that the servant who is sent on a mission to Israel is never clearly identified by the prophet. It is not clear if it is the same servant throughout (49:1-3; 50:4-9; 51:12-16; 61:1-9) or if these are different servants. If they are indeed one entity throughout, then the plural reference in

chapter 51 demonstrates that this is not the Messiah. The simple reading would tell us that these are the righteous of Israel. The body of the righteous includes the prophet Isaiah and the Messiah. See - <https://judaismresources.net/2012/07/24/armor-bearers-isaiah-5211/>

A plural entity within the nation figure prominently throughout the closing chapters of Isaiah (40:1 is a message handed to a plural entity commissioning them to comfort the nation; 44:26 speaks of a plurality of messengers; 51:12-16; 54:17 refers to servants in the plural, perhaps a reference to the nation as a whole; 65:8,13-15;66:5,14).

#### 6. Who is speaking in Isaiah 53:1-9?

Dr. Brown argues that the suffering servant will be rejected by Israel. He bases this contention on the assumption that those who are speaking in these verses (Isaiah 53:1-9) are the people of Israel.

If the speakers of this passage are the people of Israel, then where does Dr. Brown see in the Scriptures that the Messiah is to suffer for the sins of the nations? And if the speakers in these verses are the kings of the nations (as a simple reading of the text would indicate) then he has no basis for this contention (that Israel will reject the servant).

#### 7. Is the question; "Who does this describe?" a valid interpretative method?

Dr. Brown reads from Isaiah 53, he then turns to his audience and asks them; "who does this describe?" Dr. Brown seems to be impressed by the fact that many people immediately associate this scriptural passage with the person of Jesus from Nazareth .

Let us step back and examine the facts. The prophet presents certain physical details that mark the servant's history enabling us to identify the servant. Then there is the theology of the servant. The prophet gives us a theological explanation to help us understand the suffering of the servant. The spiritual explanation for the suffering of the servant is not something that can be seen in the world of objective reality. The description of the servant's suffering, on the other hand, can be measured in the realm of objective reality. Upon examining the identifying details of the passage, it will become apparent that there is another subject that would more readily correspond with Isaiah's description. It is the invisible theology of the passage that causes people who read this passage to think of Jesus. No other figure in history is more closely associated with the theology of this passage than is Jesus. It is not the man, Jesus, whom people see in this passage; rather, it is Christianity.

Is this so impressive? Christianity has erected her theology on the non-contextual meaning of this passage, and has vociferously spread her doctrines to the ends of the earth. The 2000 years of missionary activity have publicized the Christian claim that Jesus fulfilled the theology of Isaiah 53. Upon reading Isaiah 53, many people do indeed make the association with the theological claims of Christianity. But did anyone see Jesus fulfill the theology of Isaiah 53? Did anyone see Jesus die for the sins of the world? The fact that Isaiah 53 is associated with Jesus testifies to the success of the Christian effort in promulgating their intangible theology. This association is not rooted in an objective observation of the real world, nor is it supported by the text of Isaiah 53. Let us see how the prophet describes the servant's suffering and his rejection. The prophet describes the servant:

*"his visage is disfigured in a manner that marked him as less than human, and his form is marred from that of men" (52:14).*

The prophet continues to tell us that the servant:

*"Has no form or comeliness that we should look at him and no countenance that we should desire him" (53:2)*

Did anyone ever associate unsightliness with Jesus? Was Jesus ever put into a class of creatures that is less than human? There are countless pieces of art that demonstrate that the

European mind saw the Jew as a repulsive creature whose appearance set them apart from the rest of humanity.

*"Despised, isolated from men"*

How was Jesus "isolated from men"? Was he confined to ghettos as were the Jews for centuries upon centuries? Was he barred from interacting freely with the citizenry in dozens of countries as were the Jews? How many places of habitation were "off-limits" to Jesus?

*"A man of pains and acquainted with sickness"*

The Christian scriptures report that Jesus was crucified, but does that make him stand out as - "a man of pains and acquainted with sickness"? Many people were crucified and many individuals suffered so much more than Jesus. But the suffering of the Jewish people sets them apart from any other national entity.

*"we hid our faces from him and we esteemed him not" (53:3)*

When did mankind hide their faces from Jesus? Mankind certainly did hide their faces from the Jews while the most horrid crimes were being committed against them.

*"we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted" (53:4)*

Did the suffering of Jesus ever play a role in the theology of those who rejected his claims? But both Christianity and Islam focus on the suffering of the Jewish people in their theological assessment of the Jew. According to both of these belief systems, the suffering of the Jewish people is the evidence of their lowly status in God's eyes.

*"His grave is with the wicked, and his deaths are with the rich." (53:9)*

The servant of God is buried with the wicked, but the Christian scriptures tell us that Jesus was buried with the rich and not with the wicked. God's servant is to die with the rich, yet the Christian scriptures tell us that Jesus did not die with the rich, but with the wicked. It is obvious that Isaiah did not have Jesus in mind when he uttered these words.

The prophetic description clearly applies to the persecution of the Jewish people. Throughout the generations, the enemies of the Jew characterized the Jew as both rich and wicked. They justified the murder of the Jews because they believed that the Jew swindled the world of its wealth. The imagined wealth of the Jew triggered many pogroms and massacres. The preconception of the Jew as a criminal served as the basis for the disrespect that the killers showed for the Jewish dead.

When we focus on those verses which describe the servant's physical attributes, it becomes clear that the prophet foresaw the suffering of the Jewish people. The suffering servant is the persecuted Jew.

#### **8. How can the servant be Israel if the nations will be punished for persecuting Israel?**

Dr. Brown argues that the servant cannot be Israel. The suffering of the servant is to be a blessing to the nations but the prophets tell us that the nations will be punished for persecuting Israel.

It is hard to take this question seriously from someone who argues that Psalm 110, a Psalm describing the destruction of nations, is the same Psalm that proclaims the "blessing of Jesus' suffering."

I also find it incredible to argue that Jesus brought blessing to the nations when it is in his name that the nations became such haters of God's first-born son; Israel (Exodus 4:22; Jeremiah 31:8). It is clear from the prophets that the nations will be blessed through the knowledge that Israel carries. This is in accord with Isaiah's depiction of the servant justifying the many through his knowledge (Isaiah 53:11), not through his blood. So the persecutors of Israel will suffer destruction, but the rest of the nations will be blessed through the knowledge that Israel carried through their excruciating exile.

**9. Does Ezekiel 39:23,24 refute the national interpretation of Isaiah 53?**

These verses in Ezekiel tell us that in the Messianic era the nations will come to realize that Israel was exiled for her sins. Dr. Brown argues that this prophecy refutes the explanation which posits that Israel is the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. According to Isaiah 53, the nations will come to realize that the servant had been suffering for the sins of the nations and not for his own sins, or so claims Dr. Brown. How then can the nations realize that the servant had been suffering for his own sins and the sins of the nations?

The obvious question to ask when we read Ezekiel 39 is, "What were the nations thinking before they realized that Israel was suffering for its sins?" There is not one reference in Scripture, nor is there a reference in history, where we find the nations assuming that Israel had been suffering for the sins of others. This is pure fantasy. Dr. Brown himself asserts that Israel suffers because of its rejection of Jesus (Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus, Volume 1, page 107).

Throughout the Scripture we find that the nations assume that Israel suffers because her God is inadequate, or because God has cast her away (2 Kings 18:35; Isaiah 36:20; Jeremiah 30:17; Joel 2:17; Micah 7:10; Psalms 42:11; 79:10; 115:2; 2 Chronicles 32:15,17). It is these notions that will be refuted in the Messianic age. The nations will realize that Israel had been trusting in the right God and that God had not abandoned them. It was their behavior that was wrong, not their message.

**10. Does Psalm 22 describe a righteous sufferer?**

Dr. Brown claims that Psalm 22 describes a righteous sufferer. In the context of his argument it is clear that Dr. Brown assumes that the sufferer of Psalm 22 is perfectly sinless.

The Psalm says nothing about the righteousness of the sufferer, only about his trust in God.

Psalm 22 is actually mirrored by Psalm 69 where the sufferer's salvation also brings knowledge of God to the world (described by the Psalmist as the heaven and earth praising God – verse 35). Only the sufferer in Psalm 69 is clearly NOT sinless (see Psalm 69:6). It is also clear from Psalm 69 that it is not only the salvation of one sufferer that brings knowledge of God to the world, it is the salvation of Zion as a whole (verse 36). Psalm 22 only speaks of the knowledge of God spreading to the ends of the earth after Israel praises God (Psalm 22:24-28). This refutes Dr. Brown's model which has the knowledge of God coming to the nations before the salvation of Israel.

Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 describe David's deliverance, which in turn, inspires Israel. It is when Israel absorbs David's message and falls in step to David's song that the nations of the world come to knowledge of God.

**11. Does Zechariah 12:10 teach that Israel will repent for rejecting the Messiah?**

Dr. Brown points to Zechariah 12 as a prophecy that predicts Israel's "repentance" for having rejected the Messiah.

This interpretation fails for two reasons. Firstly, the mourning is described as the mourning for a lost child, and not as a cry of shame. (For a scriptural description of an admission of shame, see Micah 7:7-17.)

Secondly, the missionary interpretation ignores the context of the verse. The chapter in Zechariah in which this verse is found, speaks of the siege of Jerusalem. The prophet describes how the nations will besiege Jerusalem, but they will not succeed. The prophet describes how a Jewish contingent in the besieging army will do battle against the nations that have come to besiege Jerusalem. The Jewish warriors will succeed, and the nations besieging Jerusalem will be destroyed. It is in this context that there will be a great mourning for the "one who was pierced." The Talmud (Succah 52a) understands that this verse is a reference to the death of a Messiah from the tribe of Joseph. This leader, who successfully led the Jewish people in battle against their enemies, will fall at the hands of the nations. At the time of the ultimate victory (under the

leadership of Messiah from the lineage of David), the people will mourn for the loss of their former leader. The fact that their leader had died in battle will generate a spirit of repentance and turning back to God. Thus the prophet declares in the name of God that the people will look to Me (God) on account of the one that was pierced.

This is obviously parallel to the first events of David's monarchy. The first activity that David engaged in as King of his people was to mourn for Saul (2 Samuel 1:17). In fact, the only two people in Scripture who died through piercing, and were mourned, are Saul and the unspecified person in this verse in Zechariah. Although David (and his descendant the Messiah) is the ultimate leader chosen by God to guide the nation, the Davidic Kings recognize the sacrifice of the leaders that preceded them and that laid the groundwork for their kingship. Their first act as leader of their people is to mourn for those who suffered and died before they reached that ultimate victory.

**12. Did Haggai predict that the Messiah must put in an appearance before the destruction of the Second Temple?**

Dr. Brown argues that the prophecy of Haggai 2:6-9 tells us that the Messiah must appear while the Second Temple is still standing.

There is no basis to this claim. The prophet says nothing about the Messiah. The prophet speaks of the glory of the Temple. Dr. Brown argues that Jesus' career brought the promised glory to the Second Temple.

This is the same Dr. Brown who claims that the disciples of Jesus' found strength in the destruction of the Temple and that the destruction of the Temple brought them into a richer spiritual experience (Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus, Vol. 4, pg. 209). If this is glory for the Temple, then what is shame?

**13. Did Malachi predict that the Messiah must put in an appearance before the destruction of the Second Temple?**

Dr. Brown claims that the prophecy of Malachi 3:1 proves that the Messiah must put in an appearance before the destruction of the Second Temple.

This argument has no basis in the reality of Scripture. The prophet speaks of a purging of the Levites, rendering them pure and acceptable to God. Their offerings on behalf of Judah and Jerusalem will then be pleasing to God as in the days of old. But Dr. Brown tells us that with the advent of Jesus, the Levitical priesthood was set aside because it was weak and useless (Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus, Vol. 4, pg. 263). How can the abolishment of the Levitical priesthood be considered a fulfillment of a prophecy which looks forward to its restoration?

**14. Does Daniel predict that the Messiah must put in an appearance before the destruction of the Second Temple?**

Daniel 9:24-27 tells us that the end of transgression, the forgiveness of sin and the ushering in of everlasting righteousness will take place during the Second Temple period. Dr. Brown claims that this prediction was fulfilled in the death of Jesus.

But this claim has no basis in fact. As we can all see, everlasting righteousness has not been ushered in and no end has been made to transgression. Both Jewish and Christian commentators understand that the prophet was referring to the launching of God's program to accomplish all of these, not to the completion of the program. The difference between Jewish and Christian commentators relates to the nature of the program. And Scripture affirms that God's program for the expiation of sin, putting an end to transgression and ushering in everlasting righteousness is Israel's exile and suffering. That process began with the destruction of the Second Temple, exactly as Daniel foretold.

**15. Does the supposed contrast between Zechariah 9:9 and Daniel 7:13 support the theory that the Messiah must come twice?**

Dr. Brown argues that the Scriptures present us with two pictures of the Messiah; One lowly and meek, riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9), while the other portrays the Messiah high and exalted, riding on the clouds (Daniel 7:13). Dr. Brown argues that this tells us that the Messiah will come twice, once in a lowly form and a second time in an exalted manner.

The fact is that Zechariah 9:9 speaks of a king that rules from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth, hardly a fitting description of Jesus' career. And Daniel 7:13 is not speaking of the Messiah. The Scriptures itself explain that the one riding on the clouds in Daniel's vision represents the people of Israel (Daniel 7:18,27).

These Scriptural passages do not support Dr. Brown's rendition of the role and function of the Messiah.