

Pastor-teacher Don Hargrove
Faith Bible Church
July 11, 2011
<http://fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (84)
Answering Jewish Objections to Isaiah 53 as a Reference to Jesus

Objection #68: If you want to know what Isaiah 53 is talking about, just read Isaiah 52 and 54. The context is the return of the Jewish people from Babylonian exile, 550 years before Jesus

Brown's short response to this objection:

There is some truth to what you are saying. The prophet saw the future glory of Israel and the work of the Messiah against the backdrop of the end of the exile. But the context is larger—beginning in Isaiah 40. It spells a new beginning for Israel, a new creation and a new exodus, a time when all the world will ultimately see the glory of the Lord. The events predicted in Isaiah 53 are far greater than the return of about forty-five thousand Jews from Babylon in the sixth century B.C.E. Rather, in these passages in Isaiah, the exile serves as a symbol of the spiritual bondage of the Jewish people, while the return from exile serves as a figure of their redemption. These prophecies of redemption culminate in the glorious Messianic prophecy found in Isaiah 52:13-53:12.¹

In his longer response he adds,

Interestingly, the national interpretation is not found once in the Talmuds, the Targums, or the midrashim (in other words, not once in all the classical, foundational, authoritative Jewish writings). In fact, it is not found in any traditional Jewish source until the imte of Rashi, who lived in the eleventh century C.E. That is saying something! For almost one thousand years after the birth of Yeshua, not one rabbi, not one Talmudic teacher, not one Jewish sage, left us an interpretation showing that Isaiah 53 should be interpreted with reference to the nation of Israel (as opposed to a righteous individual, or righteous individuals, within Israel), despite the fact that these verses from Isaiah are quoted in the New Testament and were often used in Jewish-Christian debate.²

¹Michael L. Brown, *Messianic Prophecy Objections —Volume 3*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 40--49. In his book, Brown lists the objection and then gives a short response which is followed by a more developed response. This DDR series, for the most part, tracks the objection and his *short* response after which you will find my comments. I highly recommend his book if you are interested in his longer responses (there is far too much material to include in the DDRs).

²Ibid., 41.

Contending for the faith !

Pastor Don

Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.