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<http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/Jewish-Apologetics90.pdf>

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (90)

Answering Jewish Objections to Isaiah 53 as a Reference to Jesus

Objection #75: Isaiah 53 cannot refer to Jesus because it says no one was interested in the servant of the Lord or attracted to him, yet the New Testament records that large crowds followed Jesus.

Brown's short response to this objection:

Actually, the New Testament record agrees with the picture of the servant of the Lord described in Isaiah 53, despite the fact that great crowds did follow Jesus at numerous times during his ministry. This is because he spent most of his life almost unknown, and then once he became popular, he became the center of controversy and was vehemently rejected by many religious leaders and influential leaders, ultimately dying a criminal's death on the cross. This is certainly in harmony with Isaiah 53.¹

The key relevant verses are Isaiah 52:14; 53:2-4.

Isaiah 52:14 Just as many were astonished at you, *My people*, So His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.

Isaiah 53:2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.³ He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.⁴ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Note how the prophecies of the Messiah perfectly match up with life of Jesus Christ:

1. The Messiah would have a humble, inauspicious origin, verse 2. This agrees well with the humble, inauspicious origins of Jesus. He was raised by poor parents in Nazareth. There is only one mention of Jesus doing anything of prominence in his first thirty years of life (Luke 2:41-51; 3:23a).

¹Michael L. Brown, *Messianic Prophecy Objections—Volume 3*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 67-71. 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).

2. The Messiah would be like a tender shoot, like a root out of dry ground. Note how this was fulfilled in

Matthew 13:55-57 "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man *get* all these things?" ⁵⁷ And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town, and in his *own* household."

John 1:45-46 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

3. The Messiah would have no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him (Isa. 53:2). As Brown notes, "This accords well with the Gospel witness, since there is not a single reference to Yeshuah's having a stately appearance or imposing physical presence."

4. The Messiah would be "despised and rejected by men." This was perfectly fulfilled in the life of Christ (cf. John 8:48; Mark 3:1-6) culminating in the crowds crying out "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

5. The Messiah's appearance would be disfigured and marred as he bore the sins of many. Jesus was savagely beaten and then nailed to a cross for your sins, my sins, and the sins of the world.

How could it be any clearer?

Pastor Don

1 PETER 2:24 AND HE HIMSELF BORE OUR SINS IN HIS BODY ON THE CROSS, THAT WE MIGHT DIE TO SIN AND LIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS; FOR BY HIS WOUNDS YOU WERE [SPIRITUALLY] HEALED.