

Over the past two months, we have covered Isaiah 53, the suffering servant – the suffering Messiah.

Throughout the Old Testament, there are many messianic passages.

There are two kinds of messianic prophecies:

- 1) a suffering servant who would die for the sins of the people
- 2) a Messiah that ruled and reigned on the throne of David forever

The ancient rabbinical writers agree to the two kinds of prophecies of the Messiah.

However, they rejected the notion that one individual, in one lifetime, could both rule and reign on the throne of David forever and ever and yet be despised, rejected, suffer and die.

So many Jews believe in 2 Messiahs:

- 1) one Messiah suffers for the sins of the world.
- 2) and the other rules and reigns forever.

Christians believe in one Messiah that comes two times:

- 1) Jesus came to fulfill the prophecies of the suffering servant
- 2) Jesus will come again (the 2nd coming) to fulfill the prophecy of ushering in an eternal kingdom to eternally reign on the throne of David forevermore.

Now who is right?

If you look at the Messianic prophecies in the Bible, whether it be a "suffering servant" prophecy or a "ruling and reigning" prophecy in Scriptures, we find that there is no place where a plural personal pronoun is used in reference to the Messiah.

All of the Messianic prophecies use the singular pronoun.

A case in point, Deut. 18:15-19: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from among your own people, like myself; him you shall heed... I will raise up a prophet from them from among their own people, like yourself: I will put my words in his

mouth and he will speak to them all that I command him; and if anybody fails to heed the words he speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account." Deut. 18:15-19

In this Messianic prophecy from Deut. 18, do you see singular or plural personal pronouns?

Yes, only singular personal pronouns. What are they? "he," "him," and "his." Singular personal pronouns signify one Messiah, not two.

Let us look at the first Messianic prophecy of the Bible,

And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring^[a] and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel." Gen. 3:15

Is "the seed" of the woman a singular personal pronoun or a plural personal pronoun?

In another undisputed prophecy of the Messiah, Micah 5:2:

And you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, least among the clans of Judah, from you one shall come forth to rule Israel for me. One whose origin is from old, from ancient times. Micah 5:2

In this prophecy of the birth place of the Messiah, God says through the prophet Micah that "one shall come forth." ONE is indicated here -- not TWO.

Looking at all Old Testament Messianic prophecies, we find that there is no scriptural evidence for a plurality of the Messiah.

In each prophecy of the Messiah, only singular personal pronouns are used to describe the origin -- His birth; the ministry -- His life; and the destiny -- His death and resurrection -- of the Messiah.

So according to the OT prophecies of the Messiah,

one had to suffer and die and one would rule.

How could you die and rule at the same time? The only way for ONE messiah to fulfill all the prophecies is that the Messiah

must first suffer and die for the sins of the world and then He must come again to rule and reign in peace forevermore.

Now, looking at Psalm 22, we notice that it is similar to Isaiah 53 –

they both describe the Messiah's torment, rejection and death.

Already from vs. 1, we see that King David (who wrote Psalm 22 under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) predicted that the Messiah – who would be his descendant – would suffer, be rejected and killed.

When Jesus was on the cross, He cried out the first line of Psalm 22, *“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”*

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

By crying out the first line of Psalm 22, Jesus was actually announcing to the world that He is the suffering Messiah.

Psalm 22 foretells how God had to separate from the Messiah.

God turns His face away from the Messiah so that, as he suffers and dies,

He may take the sins the world upon Himself.

Why does God turn his face away from the Messiah?

God is holy, set apart from sin.

1 Samuel 2:2 states,
There is none holy like the Lord:
for there is none besides you.

In Psalm 22:16 it states,
Dogs surround me,
a pack of evildoers encircles me.

Who are the dogs, who are the pack of evil doers that surround the suffering Messiah?

This is the image of Golgotha -- at the cross.

Who was there? Who surrounded the suffering Jesus at the cross?

Jews and Gentiles.

The Jews included religious leaders such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, but also there were some of Jesus' followers, including Mary his mother and John the Beloved, the disciple. The Gentiles were also there – Roman soldiers. Remember Gentiles were called dogs – unclean animals. If only God is holy, then both Jews and Gentiles – all those who surrounded Jesus as evildoers, including all of us were responsible for putting him up on the cross – ultimately because of our sins. Our sins killed the Messiah. And that is why we – both Jews and Gentiles -- are all murderers – with bloody hands. The Bible affirms our sinfulness all throughout Scripture – multiple times!

Their feet are swift to shed blood —(Proverbs 1:16; Isa 59:7; Rom. 3:15)

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you... For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things. No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity... Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways... So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. ... we are like the dead. ... For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. ... The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice.... He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. Is. 59:2-16

You will notice, Isaiah 59 highlights that “No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. God saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one on earth to intervene and so God’s own arm and righteousness worked and sustained salvation.

If no one is righteous and if we are all sinners – quick to shed blood – should it not be a surprise that both Jews and Gentiles put Jesus on the cross

as stated in vs. 16,

... they pierced my hands and my feet. Psalm 22:16

This seems to be a clear allusion to the cross. Who in history died with hands and feet pierced for the transgressions of the many?

Only Jesus.

Hands and feet pierced must be talking about Roman crucifixion.

Skeptics asserted, for a long time, that no evidence of crucifixion was used in Jesus' time

They claimed Romans used crucifixion earlier to kill slaves in a slave revolt led by Spartacus but abolish its use before Jesus time, thereby disclaiming Jesus's crucifixion.

These critics of the Bible made bold assertions that Jesus couldn't have been crucified because 100 years before Jesus, they believed that the Romans had abolished the practice of crucifixion.

So, by the time of Jesus, there could be no Roman crucifixion, thereby invalidating the historicity of the Gospel.

But recently, however, archaeologists have actually discovered evidence that substantiates the historicity of the Bible.

This discovery was so compelling that it forced critics of the Bible to yield to the evidence of crucifixion that was found at

Givat HaMivtar

Some of you may recall, about 2 years ago, I went to Israel to study Biblical archaeology and modern Hebrew.

And close to Hebrew University on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem, in 1968, they found some Circumstantial evidence: Archaeology Of a crucified man in 1968.

They found remains of a flat piece of olive wood were found to be located between the lateral aspect of the calcaneus and the head of the nail.

Which bone? The bone in which the foot and ankle meet. Contrary to what we see in medieval, Roman Catholic paintings of crucifixion, what we can surmise from the remains of the crucified man was that the feet were nailed -- not on the top of the feet -- but from the side.

This claim is explained to us by the highly revered,

Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine

Calcaneus transfixed by an iron nail, from a first century AD Jewish tomb at Giv'at ha-Mivtar. Excavated bone on the right, model reconstruction on the left.

To give you an idea of the size of the iron spikes that went into Jesus' feet, I have a Roman nail, given to me from a pastor I know who lives in Israel.

This Roman nail was found in Caesarea Maritima, the most Roman city in Judah at the time of Jesus.

This nail is probably from the Roman or early Byzantine time.

With spikes of approximately this size, according to

Psalm 22:16

... they pierced my hands and my feet. Psalm 22:16

Just imagine, Jesus having nails of this size pierced into his hands and feet.

Jesus suffered greatly for us.

Now if you look at the word pierced in vs. 16, you will notice a superscript next to the word pierced.

The reason is that the states that there are differing renderings of this verse – what we call variants.

1,000 years ago, the Jewish Masoretes who made the "Masoretic text," which is the Hebrew Bible Jews use to this day, translates the text differently from other variants of the Bible. The Masoretes render it the following:

יָאֲרִי (ka'ari)

Like a lion

"like a lion, [they] are [at] my hands and my feet"
(Masoretic text, Jewish version of the Bible).

But in Christian Bibles, the Hebrew word is rendered

כָּאָרוּ (ka'aru)

verb כרה

•to dig

•to make a hole or dig a pit in the ground

to pierce/bore

"they have bored/pierced my hands and my feet"

Just to give you another example of the use of the verb כרה
Let's look at another passage -- Psalm 40:6

The verb כרה in Psalm 40:6

חִפְצֶת אָזְנוֹיִם כָּרִיתָ לִּי עוֹלָה

[literally dug open]

It is translated in Bibles, My ears You have opened

So the the verb כרה literally means dug open or open –

kind of like when you pitch a tent,

Have you ever gone camping?

I mean real camping, sleeping in a real tent.

When you pitch a tent, you nail the tent pegs into the four corners of the tent into the ground.

Think of it like this, when Jesus came to the world to tabernacle with us,

both his wrists and both his feet were nailed to the cross,

pierced like a tent spiked on all four corners into the ground.

If this is the correct interpretation,

how did the Jews end up with such a weird rendering of Psalm 22?

The Jews – namely the Masoretes -- changed one single letter in this verse to get that interpretation.

יָאָרָוּ (They pierced) → יָאָרִי (Like a lion)
VAV (ו) → YUD (י)

You see, they shortened the last letter VAV (ו) in (*ka'aru*)

into the shorter letter YUD (י) to make יָאָרִי (*ka'ari*)

But anti-Christian Jewish rabbis, like Rabbi Tovia Singer, claim that “Christian translators deliberately twisted their translations of this text in order to produce a Christological reading.”

Rabbi Tovia Singer even claims the Christian rendering of the word יָאָרָוּ (*ka'aru*) is Hebrew gibberish.

Now who's right?

Is the Christian rendering the original or the Jewish Masoretic version the original?

The Jewish Masoretic text dates to about the 9th, 10th century A.D – about 1000 years after Christ.

Although I admit overall the Masoretic text is a very good transmission from the original, the Masoretic text's transmission of one letter in Psalm 22:16 may be in error.

So how can we know if the Masoretic text is in error?

We can look at a recently unearthed Jewish text dating about 900 years earlier than the Masoretic text.

Just recently -- within just a couple of decades -- something very exciting was excavated in a newly discovered cave near the Dead Sea Cave and guess what?

We have discovered now our earliest Jewish manuscript of Psalms 22.

It was found at the Nahal Hever Cave by the Dead Sea.

This cave was occupied by Jews – not Christians.

These Jews were fleeing Roman persecution some time between the 2 Jewish wars, so we can date the writings of the manuscripts with precision: between 70 CE and 135 CE.

And this **Psalms scroll from Nahal Hever**, do you know which version it supports?

Is the 9th century A.D. Jewish Masoretic rendering of “like a lion” supported or the Christian reading of “pierced”

As you can see from the picture – the last letter of this word is long – indicating it is a vav, not a yud.

Therefore, even the earliest Jewish ancient document -- the Nahal Hever manuscript -- testifies to a Messianic death on a cross!

But, in spite of the smoking-gun evidence, counter missionary **Rabbi Tovia Singer** stubbornly clings on to his bias. He dismisses the obvious evidence and dogmatically asserts, “**Despite these claims, the passage ... does not read ‘pierced.’ ... Christian translators deliberately twisted their translations of this text in order to produce a Christological reading.**”

But he is misleading his audience. The reason: We have a Bible translation that match Christian translations centuries before the time of Christ – namely the Septuagint Bible (LXX).

How can Christians twist the bible when the Septuagint was written centuries before Christians existed?

The Septuagint,

- a Jewish translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek written before Jesus
- written 2nd and 3rd century BC by 70 Jewish scholars, hence the name 70.
- [oruksan chairas] ωρυξαν χειράς μου και πόδας "they have dug my hands and feet".

Rabbi Singer is suspect because he deliberately and deceitfully does not address the Septuagint.

So, without all the facts, his unsuspecting followers blindly believe his unfounded claims.

If the Septuagint is written in the 2nd and 3rd century BC by 70 Jewish scholars, how can Christians who came in the 1st Century AD twist the text?

Did Christians take a time machine and travel back a couple of hundreds years to the past and twist the text?

Of course not!

The fact of the matter is, the rendering “pierced” was already in the Bible.

Hence, it is safe to say the Jewish Masoretes centuries later had to have either accidentally – or dare I say? -- deliberately -- change the text.

Now why is this significant?

If Psalm 22, truly speaks of a crucifixion – it proves that Jesus is the suffering Messiah as it states in Isaiah 53:5:

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

This means that Jesus truly died for our sins and by his wounds we are healed. We have hope for the atonement of our sins, hope of forgiveness, hope of resurrection.

In addition to this, we can say with confidence that the Bible is divine – it is God-inspired because David who wrote Psalm 22, 1000 years before Christ was inspired by the Holy Spirit to prophecy about a death penalty that had not yet existed. The crucifixion was not invented until several hundred years after David. The crucifixion was perhaps invented by the Persians, but the Romans perfected this form of punishment. A millennium after David made this prophecy, Jew and Gentile would crucify Christ exactly as David wrote in Psalm 22. Again this prophecy is amazing considering that David lived hundreds of years before the crucifixion was invented and a thousand years before Jesus. Only God who is omniscient could have told David to write Psalm 22:16-18:

Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.
All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.

They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.

Only one messianic figure satisfies all the prophecies made by David and Isaiah, as well as the prophecies of other prophets in the Bible.

Only Jesus Christ!

The true Messiah and Savior suffered unbearable agony and was pierced in his hands and feet, tortured and killed, but He rose from the dead. Jesus not only risked His own life for His people, but He GAVE His life – for us all – Jew and Gentile -- so that we can be saved of our sins! I believe in the future, the house of David will repent and come to saving faith in the suffering Messiah.

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit-of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.” Zech. 12:10