

JESUS FOR JEWS

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5.1 The Jewish Messiah

That Israel needs a dramatic salvation at the present time is evident to all; time and again the Old Testament prophets remind us that " It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" ; the arm of flesh cannot save man. There is in the Old Testament scriptures much teaching about a Messiah who will save Israel politically and the seed of Abraham spiritually. It is therefore of the utmost importance for all of us, not least the Jewish race to whom the Bible primarily refers, to search those Scriptures to find the Truth about Messiah's identity.

The importance of the subject is well summarized by two Jewish writers, Chaim Pearl and Reuben Brookes, in 'A Guide to Jewish Knowledge': " The belief in the Messiah...is as fundamental to us in our modern world as ever it was in days gone by. It is this Jewish teaching on Messiah which gives Judaism its character of optimism and which must inspire us to achieve national redemption...when the Law of God will reign supreme...Jews who remain faithful to this teaching of their ancient faith have constantly before them an ideal which can fill their days with a practical programme of noble activity, which will help towards ...the Kingdom of God on earth" .

But just desiring the coming of Messiah isn't enough: " Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him...the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come...even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Amos 5:18,19; Mal.3:1,2). There are inherent problems with any religion which seeks the salvation of man

from the Mosaic system. The point must be made that even within the Old Testament there is ample indication of a recognition of these problems, as we will now proceed to show.

The New Covenant

" Behold, the days come saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with them in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer.31:31-34). The fact that a new covenant is spoken of indicates that the first covenant had some weaknesses; if it was all that man needed for salvation a second covenant would not have been necessary. There is therefore the implication that this new covenant was to be better than the first. Jer.31 goes on to say that this new covenant would be established with Israel when laws of God are written on the hearts of Israel, and all Jews know God " from the least to the greatest" . It will also be at a time when Israel's sins are forgiven - and therefore have been confessed: " All shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" . A massive repentance of Israel, and Jewry in totality knowing the ways of God, has not yet occurred since the time of Jeremiah. Today many Jews living in the land are atheists. There is a time in the future, therefore, when after a massive national repentance this new covenant will be established with Israel.

This new covenant replaces the animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant, and must therefore be based around the sacrifice which superseded them. Seeing that " the life is in the blood" and that sin brings death, it follows that the only way to properly make amends for sin under the Old Covenant was for the sinner to die. However, God was prepared to accept the offering of animal blood to represent the sinner's recognition that he deserved death. This was by reason of the fact that it pointed forward to a greater, more effective sacrifice, on account of which God was willing to forgive men's sins. That sacrifice must therefore have been of a perfect human being. This was prophesied in Gen.3:15 - the " seed of the woman" would overcome permanently the seed of the serpent, i.e. sin, although at the same time himself being temporarily wounded by sin. The means of victory over sin was therefore to be through one individual. The victory over sin which he was to win would be at a certain point in time, when he would be " bruised" , or temporarily wounded, and sin thereby overcome. Therefore after this sacrifice the animal sacrifices could be suspended. It is this total access to forgiveness of sins which the new covenant speaks of. Thus Zech.9:9-11 speaks of Messiah coming into Jerusalem " lowly and riding upon an ass" - just as Jesus did. Speaking of him we read there : " By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" . Thus the new covenant made through Messiah would be through his blood, which would enable victory over sin to the extent that there could be escape from permanent death, the result of sin, by means of resurrection. Isaiah 49 is a marvellous prophecy of how Messiah was rejected by Israel, and therefore offered to the Gentiles. He is encouraged in language which has links with the passage just considered in Zech.9: " I will give thee (implying 'in sacrifice') for a covenant of the people...that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; and to them that are in darkness (spiritually? In death?), Shew yourselves" (Is.49:4-9). This precisely fits the case of Jesus - rejected by Israel, accepted widely by the Gentiles, whose blood is the means of a new covenant. The destruction of the Temple, priesthood and altar soon after his death shows the impossibility of continuing any longer under the Old Covenant. The blessings of that new covenant are there for the taking by any who wish to associate themselves with Messiah's sacrifice by baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Now consider Hos.3:4,5: " The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice...Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king...in the latter days" . This same total Jewish repentance is here said to be after being a long time without offering the animal sacrifices of the law, and without a king or member of the royal (Davidic) line as their leader. Surely that time is now - " the latter days" of Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, when Israel will be regathered and invaded in a final holocaust before Messiah's coming.

The watchful Bible reader will notice a sharp difference between the promises to Abraham and the Mosaic law. Abraham was promised a seed who would inherit the earth for ever (Gen.13:15-17; 22:17,18; 17:8). He was promised eternal life because of his faith. Faith may be hard, but it is something we are capable of. To keep every little command of the Mosaic law in perfection was almost impossible - and " Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Deut.27:26). Thus Habakkuk commented " The just (justified in God's sight) shall live by faith" (Hab.2:4). The Old Covenant's emphasis on works (e.g. Lev.18:5) was unrelated to this requirement of faith. The very existence of Divine Law results in our warped, sinful human nature being unable to totally obey it. Our very nature leads us to disobey whatever God clearly tells us. The fact that the Law did not promise salvation but the promises to Abraham did suggest that the Old Covenant of the law was a temporary measure until the coming of the promised seed of Abraham. We either keep the sacrifices and every letter of the Old Covenant, or accept that Messiah, the seed of Abraham, has come.

The Day Of Atonement

On the day of atonement the High Priest entered the Most Holy place to make a covering for the sins of Israel. That place was the supreme place of God's manifestation to man, and yet man generally could not enter it; he could not go beyond the veil. The High Priest had to offer blood for his own failures and those of the people, and he could not remain in that place. His brief, annual visit thus showed how close access to God was possible, but was yet to be more comprehensively developed. The offering for the sins committed by Israel during the past year meant that the sacrifices for sins which had been offered during that time were not sufficient. And of course how could they be, seeing they were the blood of animals? It is a Divine principle that the life is in the blood. Sin results in death. Sacrifice for sins therefore necessitates the death of the sinner; a substitute animal will not do. But if the sinner were to literally pour out his own blood in death, then he would be dead and without salvation. The Mosaic Law made no promise of eternal life or resurrection, only of long life now. Thus the Mosaic system could not offer eternal life - i.e. salvation. But it was appointed by God, and those sacrifices were acceptable to God to some degree. There was purpose in their being offered, but of necessity they must have been a temporary measure, suggesting that what was required was a human offering who could somehow overcome death and make a sacrifice from which he and others could benefit.

This point is made explicit by the prophecy of Ps.40:6-8, a clear prophecy of the Messiah: " Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" .

This describes Messiah as being totally obedient to the word of God, coming specifically to end the system of sacrifices which were not ultimately what God wanted; a human offering was necessary.

The Melchizedek Priest

If our reasoning so far has been followed, then it is to be expected that Ps.110 should speak of an everlasting priest " after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps.110:4) - a priest to whom even Abraham paid tithes, and who had no proven genealogy - i.e. he was not a priest under the Old Covenant. The person David is speaking of is his great descendant who was promised to him; and David was of the tribe of Judah. Therefore his Messiah-descendant would be a priest but not of the tribe of Levi, showing that Messiah was to bring in a new priesthood. Seeing that all records of genealogy were lost soon after the time of Jesus, it was impossible for the Levitical priesthood to operate after him, seeing that priests had to be able to prove their genealogy (Ezra 2:62). This all strongly suggests that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah who established a new priesthood and therefore a new covenant on his death. " Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps.110) shows that Messiah was to be declared an immortal priest at a certain point in time; therefore he could not have always had immortality. In the light of all this, it is not surprising that David describes this great Messiah as " my Lord" (Ps.110:1), who was to sit on the right hand of the throne of God in Heaven (he would not have spoken in such a way concerning his son Solomon). Thus Messiah was to be greater than David, and all men. For of no other person are such high honours spoken as sitting in Heaven on the right hand of God.

Prophecies Of Messiah

So far we have shown it was necessary for Messiah to be:

- An acceptable offering for sin whose sacrifice benefited others
- A man, whose blood was shed.
- A man totally obedient to the Word of God.
- The seed of Abraham whose coming would end animal sacrifices and reliance on the Mosaic system for those who recognized Him.

These things are amplified and repeated in many other prophecies of Messiah. The Old Testament speaks so much of Messiah so that there would be no excuse for him not being recognized when he came. The fact that Jewry disagrees within itself about what Messiah will be like, indicates that they need to apply themselves more fully and on a personal level to Bible study of the prophecies of Messiah.

Zechariah 3

Zechariah 3 is a vision of Messiah in the presence of a number of Angels who " stand by" (v.1,4). He is clothed with " filthy garments" which are then changed to priestly robes, and he is promised that if he is obedient " I will give thee places ...among these (Angels) that stand by" . Messiah was thus capable of failure; he had a change of nature, to that of Angels', after first bearing the " filthy" human nature. An Orthodox Jewish commentator has paraphrased the passage as, " In the resurrection of the dead I will revive thee, and give thee feet walking among the Seraphim" - i.e. the Angels. That commentator was correct in reasoning that a change of nature from human to Divine involves death - the end of the sinful, human nature - and resurrection and transformation in order to exist in the new immortal nature.

The Promises To David

That Messiah would be subject to a resurrection was hinted at right back in the promises to David: " I will set up thy seed after thee...I will establish His kingdom" (2 Sam.7:12). For the phrase " set up" the Septuagint uses a Greek word elsewhere translated 'resurrect'. This great seed of David was to be the son of God (2 Sam.7:14) and also a literal descendant of David (v.12). Thus Messiah was to have one Divine and one human parent, as prophesied in Is.7:14 " A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" - God with us. The meaning of the child's name being related to the means by which he was born, it follows that a 'virgin' here does not just mean a young woman. The Septuagint translation of the Bible, made by Egyptian Jews 200 years B.C., uses the word 'parthenos' for " Virgin" , which definitely means a virgin in the sexual sense. Thus we have here a prophecy of a virgin birth of Messiah, by the direct activity of God upon the virgin rather than that of a man.

David himself recognized that the promise about his seed was not just relevant to his natural son Solomon: " My house is not so (at the moment)...Thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come" (2 Sam.23:5; 7:19). Psalm 16:10 describes Messiah's brief death and resurrection: " Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" - i.e. he would be raised before decomposition of the body set in. And after this, he was to ascend to Heaven: " In thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps.16:11). This cannot apply to David, seeing he died and has been buried many years.

Other hints at a virgin birth are to be found in the description of David's Messiah-seed as the begotten son of God (Ps. 2:6,7; 89:26,27). For God to beget a son involves His action upon a woman to make her conceive His son, without the intervention of a man. This is exactly how millions of people believe and have believed since the first century that Jesus of Nazareth came into existence.

It is a consistent Divine principle that sin must result in death. In order for Messiah to resurrect from death to eternal life and ascension to Heaven (" pleasures for evermore" , Ps.16:11), he must therefore have been sinless. This is confirmed by a number of other scriptures. Thus Messiah is called by God " the man that is my fellow" (Zech.13:7) - a man can only be called God's " fellow" due to his supreme righteousness. Messiah " is just (righteous), and (therefore) having salvation" (Zech. 9:9). Thus he was to bring salvation to others through his own righteousness.

For this reason Jer. 23:5,6 calls Messiah " The Lord our righteousness" , showing that through that one man's perfect character, God's righteousness would be imputed to His people. He was to be the promised seed of David: " I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper...he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" . The fact that the Targums apply this to Messiah shows that the promised seed of David was not just Solomon, as many Jews claim, seeing that he can hardly be called " The Lord our righteousness" due to his later apostasy.

Isaiah's Suffering Servant

This prophecy has several descriptions of a man who has to suffer greatly in order for salvation to be attained. The following points about Messiah emerge from Isa.52:13-53:12:

- He was to suffer physically more than any other human being will ever do (52:14).

- His suffering would result in 'sprinkling' " many nations" (52:15). The idea of sprinkling recalls the sprinkling of the blood in order to atone for sins under the Law, perhaps specifically referring to the sprinkling of the water of separation for cleansing (Num.19). The blood of his sufferings would therefore enable people from many nations to have forgiveness of sins.

- The news about him would be widespread, but be disbelieved by the Jews (52:15; 53:1-3).

- Messiah's own people would deliberately stop themselves perceiving his Messiahship: " We hid as it were our faces from him...we esteemed him not" (53:3). This recalls the language of Lev.13:44,45, suggesting that Israel would perceive Messiah as smitten with the leprosy of sin. The record of the New Testament, along with the commentaries of the Talmud, show that many Jews have branded Jesus as a sinner unfit for their association.

- One of the reasons for this would be because of his sufferings (53:2,3). " There is no beauty that we should desire him...we did esteem him smitten of God" ; i.e. Israel generally would not be able to accept the idea of a suffering saviour/Messiah. This is a frequent Jewish objection to Jesus.

- He would have a distinctive hallmark of not speaking up in his own defence (53:7).

- He was perfect, although he died with wicked men (53:9). The idea of a Messiah who dies is also expressed in Mic.5:1 and 2 Sam.23:7, both admitted by Rabbis to be Messianic passages.

- God worked through Messiah's death to make it a sacrifice for sins, as a result of which he obtained eternal life for himself and carried away the sins of " his seed" (53:10,11). Messiah was " bruised" to overcome sin - as prophesied of the Messianic " seed of the woman" in Gen.3:15. Therefore the once-off victory over sin prophesied back in Gen.3:15 was fulfilled in the death of Messiah described in Is.53.

- Through his suffering and death, " he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (53:12). " Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed...he shall see (the result) of the travail of his soul" (v.10,11), indicating that Messiah was to be resurrected.

Murdered Messiah

So many other prophecies speak of this suffering Messiah in language which does not ring totally true of those characters, e.g. David and Hezekiah, to whom they may primarily refer. Thus Ps. 22 speaks of a group of men mocking the Messiah as he stood in agony, his bones sticking out (v.17), God appearing not to respond to his prayers(v.1-3), his hands and feet pierced (crucifixion is about the only form of death or torture which could be described like this,v.16), his clothes parted amongst his persecutors (v.18), and then many people worldwide coming to praise God because of His vindication of His servant by answering his prayers for deliverance from death (v.22-31).

This indication that Messiah was crucified needs to be coupled with passages which speak of Israel rejecting their Messiah, to show that Jesus is the only likely candidate. No other person claiming to be Messiah has been so consistently rejected by all Jewry. Ps.118:22 speaks of Messiah as the stone that the Jews rejected (He is called " the stone" in Gen.49:24; Dan.2:43,44; Zech.3:8,9). Isa.8:14 speaks of Him as the stone which Israel will stumble at. It is also worthwhile considering how many of those who typified Messiah such as Moses, David, Joseph and several of the judges were initially rejected by their brethren, although later accepted.

The Repentance Of Israel

We have outlined so many characteristics of Messiah from the Old Testament that to anyone with a fair general knowledge it must be evident that there is great similarity between the Jewish Messiah and the claims made about Jesus Christ. So far we have made no reference to the New Testament, although much of our reasoning can be found there too. The Christian account of Christ dying as the perfect, sinless sacrifice for sins, a man of our nature who managed to overcome sin and through whom salvation from sin is now available to the whole world, all chimes in so accurately with the Old Testament record of the Jewish Messiah. The Jewish attitude to Messiah in rejecting him due to his suffering and lack of worldly appeal was and is definitely true of the Jewish attitude to Jesus Christ. This cannot be the result of a forgery by Christians. Especially telling is Zechariah's prophecy of the Jews weeping as a man for his only child, when at his second coming they see the marks in the hands where they crucified Christ (Zech. 12:10; 13:6). The style of their weeping will help them realize how God felt at the (temporary) loss of His only son at their hands through the crucifixion. These references to the fact that Israel were to reject their Messiah and then eventually accept him after a long time is surely one of the clearest indicators that Jesus Christ is indeed their Messiah. Time and again Israel are reminded that the Messianic Kingdom can only come on a major repentance of Jewry (Lev. 26:40-42; Dt. 30:1-3; 1 Kings 8:47,49; Jer. 3:12,13; 4:1,2; Zech. 6:15; Is. 59:20; Ps. 81:13,14; Acts 3:19,20 R.V.; Rom. 11:15). That Kingdom will be when Israel nationally accept the New Covenant. This has already been made, seeing that Israel have broken the Old Covenant by their disobedience, resulting in God's divorcing of them, and the destruction of the temple and priesthood make it impossible to keep the Old Covenant. It therefore follows that Israel's repentance and their acceptance of the New Covenant are the same thing. We have shown above that their repentance will be for killing their Messiah, through whom the New Covenant was made. All logical analysis points to this Messiah being Jesus- and the sooner Israel accept him, the quicker His Kingdom will be established.

Farewell...

Finally, may I say that if only the idea of accepting Jesus as Messiah can be accepted as possible, so many familiar Scriptures will open to you as having echoes of the crucifixion; e.g. Isaac carrying the wood of his own sacrifice and obediently allowing himself to be offered as the first seed of Abraham so clearly points forward to the record of Jesus Christ's crucifixion. May we also say that the popular idea that Christ was God and existed before his birth destroys the purpose of Messiah as outlined in Scripture. The seed of David and Abraham can hardly have existed before their time; and to be a good, powerful High priest he had to be of our nature, able to sin, but yet completely overcoming our fleshly nature which he shared to open a way for us to join him in being given God's nature, which cannot sin and therefore die.

But above all, pray for humility and understanding so that the Scriptures themselves can give you that courage and ability to accept that which has seemed impossible for so very, very long.

5-1-1 Appendix: Jesus Of Nazareth Is The Messiah Judaism Expected

Risto Santala has extensively documented how the writings of the Rabbis actually paint a picture of Messiah which is exactly in accordance with who Jesus of Nazareth actually was⁽¹⁾. He shows how the various Midrashim pointed forward to a singular Messiah figure who would be called by the name of the Lord, who would unite grace and truth, be conceived by the Holy Spirit, do signs and wonders, be called "the truth" and give Israel a new Torah. They even predicted that there would be

2000 years of Torah [following 2000 years since creation], and then 2000 years of Messiah, followed by a 1000 year sabbath on earth. This all makes perfect sense if Jesus is indeed Messiah. And most significantly, the Jewish prayerbook *Sidur ha-Shalem* contains a prayer for the Jewish New Year which speaks of Messiah as “Jesus, the Prince of the Countenance”.

The New Testament describes the work of Jesus through allusions to the Psalms. But each of the passages alluded to had in fact already been interpreted by the rabbis in their various Targums and Midrashim as applying to Messiah. Messiah was to be despised (Ps. 22:6; 69:19-22); rejected (Ps. 118:22); mocked (Ps. 22:7,8; 69:8,20; 89:51,52); whipped (Ps. 129:3); impaled on a stake (Ps. 22:1,2,14-17); thirsty (Ps. 22:16); given wine mixed with gall (Ps. 69:20-22); have lots cast for his clothes (Ps. 22:18,19); have unbroken bones (Ps. 34:21); rise from the dead (Ps. 16:10); ascend to Heaven (Ps. 68:19); be at the right hand of God (Ps. 80:17; 110:1); be High Priest (Ps. 110:4); judge the nations (Ps. 89:3-5); reign eternally (Ps. 89:35-37); be the Son of God (Ps. 2:7); speak in parables (Ps. 78:2); calm a storm (Ps. 89:10); have Hosanna sung to him (Ps. 118:25,26); be blessed for ever (Ps. 45:1-4,8,18); and come in glory at the Last Day (Ps. 102:6-23). *The picture which the rabbinic writings had created of Messiah was exactly the person whom Jesus was and whom the early church preached.* Santala’s writings give all the actual rabbinic references.

Further, Santala shows how the idea of a *suffering Messiah* (so difficult for modern Judaism to accept) was initially taught by the rabbis in their commentaries upon Zech. 12:9-14; 13:6,7 and Isaiah 53. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced” was understood by RaShi, RaDaq and Ibn Ezra as referring to Messiah; and the Talmud [*Sukka* 52b] agrees with this. The fact the atoning sacrifice spoken of had to be without sin precluded, in earlier Jewish interpretation, any reference to the nation of Israel in this passage; and yet this is how it is now understood in Judaism. A. Lukyn Williams quotes even 16th century rabbis [Rabbi Elia de Vidas and Rabbi Moses Alshekh] as admitting about Isaiah 53: “Our ancient sages have preserved for us the witness of tradition that this refers to the Messiah.... Thus the Messiah suffered on account of our sins, and was wounded” [\(2\)](#).

The Biblical record in Luke 2, as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls literature, all indicate that there was a strong wave of Messianic expectation around the time of Jesus’ birth. Yet Israel would not recognize Him. And the Rabbis after the time of Christ began to change their position on Messiah, saying that he would not be a singular person, but rather an idea, a personification, etc. It’s not surprising, therefore, that there is definitely a ‘bad conscience’ within Jewish people about Jesus; hence their anger when you try to share Jesus with them. If you preach Christianity to a Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu or atheist, you receive a quite different reaction to what you receive when preaching to a Jew. There is evidently a pang of conscience within the Jewish people, prefigured by the bad conscience of Joseph’s brothers, until they finally accepted Joseph as their Lord. That conscience is surely indicated by the way in which Isaiah 53 is omitted from the Synagogue’s yearly *haphtarot* readings, and how it is markedly absent from the mediaeval commentaries. There is simply the statement in brackets: “Some things are missing here”. And indeed they are... One rabbi even admitted that Is. 53:2, which speaks of Messiah as being born from land that had not been ploughed and in which no seed had been planted, was clearly a reference to the Virgin Birth of Jesus.

The following bullet point questions can usefully be put to Jews- many of them are discussed within Orthodox circles anyway:

- Can the Torah liberate man or give him salvation?

- What is the basis of salvation?
- Were all of Moses' laws intended to be eternally binding?
- Where do we make a difference between the commandments of God and those of men?
- Will Messiah give a new Torah?
- How can Torah be kept today if animal sacrifices aren't offered? The contradictions within Judaism are especially apparent when one considers what it teaches about the impossibility of now keeping the laws about making animal sacrifices: "Keeping the law is worth many offerings" (Ecclus. 35:1-5). But the law of Moses includes the commands about making offerings- so how can this law be 'kept' and then such 'keeping' of it be declared as better than making those offerings?

Notes

(1) Risto Santala, *The Messiah In The Old Testament In The Light Of Rabbinical Writings* (Kukkila, Finland: BGS, 1992). See too his *The Messiah In The New Testament In The Light Of Rabbinical Writings* (Kukkila, Finland: BGS, 1992).

(2) A. Lukyn Williams, *A Manual Of Christian Evidences For Jewish People* (London: SPCK, 1919).

5.2 The Historicity of Jesus of Nazareth

The Historicity Of Jesus And The New Testament: Objections

- a) The Christian "proof" for Jesus' Messiahship rests upon circular reasoning - they reason, "The Old Testament says this about Messiah: the New Testament says Jesus fulfilled this, so Jesus is the Messiah". But the historical accuracy and truth of the New Testament cannot be proved.
- b) The historical evidence for the existence of Jesus is too weak to prove he ever existed. "Even Josephus...barely makes mention of Jesus. In his *Antiquities of the Jews*...there is one small, lonely paragraph about Jesus...this is a very meagre comment to make regarding a 'king of Israel'" (Samuel Levine, 'You Take Jesus, I'll Take God', 1980).
- c) The implication of Matt. 27 is that Pilate was peace-loving and just, but Philo and Josephus paint a reverse picture. The New Testament record is framed to make the Jews look guilty.

Comments:

If, as some Jews claim, there is no evidence that Jesus of Nazareth ever existed, then the very existence of Christianity is difficult to explain. It is asking an awful lot to expect anyone to believe that millions of people over the last 2,000 years have based their beliefs on someone who never existed, and to have such an intense faith in him that they were motivated to spread their faith in him worldwide, often at the risk of persecution and death. Christians and Jews generally have no difficulty accepting that Mohamed once lived, whilst rejecting his claims and teaching. Indeed we accept that most famous historical characters existed without demanding a critical review of the

evidence. Frequently analysis has been made of widely accepted historical events, e.g. that the battle of Hastings was in 1066, and have found the concrete evidence relatively hard to come by.

The fact some Jews so intensely deny the very existence of Jesus of Nazareth is surely indication of an over reaction, a desire to find a convenient excuse not to face up to the reasons for accepting his Messiahship. This appears especially true when it is appreciated that the early Jews themselves accepted that a person called Jesus had existed in the first century. The following historical evidences for the existence of Jesus of Nazareth show that in no way can he be dismissed as a theological invention of men. Much helpful information in this section has been gleaned from Gary Habermas, 'Ancient Evidence For The Life Of Jesus'.

1) Tacitus was a Roman historian whose two major books about the first century (" Annals" and the " Histories") both mention Jesus and Christianity. He wrote in the " Annals" (about 115 AD):

" A class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate" .

The emperor Tiberius reigned from 14-37AD, during which period Christ was killed, according to this record. Tacitus also describes how the beliefs of this group " Broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of (these ideas), but even in Rome" , and he goes on to describe how the Christians were widely hated, and many put to death in Rome. All this accords with the New Testament record of Jesus, the disciples and the apostles first spreading their teaching in Judaea, and then throughout the Roman world, including Rome, with great opposition to them.

2) Suetonius, another Roman historian, commented on the reign of Claudius (41-54 AD): " Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from the city" . " Chrestus" is another spelling of " Christ" . Incidentally, Acts 18:2 describes how a Jewish couple named Aquila and Priscilla had to leave Rome because of the persecution of the Jews there.

Suetonius comments later about the persecution of Christians at the time of Nero: " After the great fire at Rome...Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief" . This reference to the existence of a group called " Christians" in the first century suggests that a person called " Christ" existed earlier in that century.

3) F.F.Bruce (" Christian Origins" p.29,30) draws attention to the fact that there are references to a history of the Eastern Mediterranean written by a historian called Thallus about 52AD. Bruce shows elsewhere (" The New Testament Documents" , p.113) that a scholar named Julius Africanus quoted from Thallus, mocking his description of the darkness at the crucifixion of Jesus as due to the eclipse of the sun. This suggests that Thallus wrote an account of the crucifixion of Jesus which occurred some years before he wrote his history in 52AD.

4) Pliny, a Roman Government official, mentions at length the existence of a very active group of people called Christians in the latter years of the first century. Their keeping of the memorial service is referred to by him: " They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ" (" Letters of Pliny" , translated by W.Melmoth, Vol.2, X:96). The Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian both mentioned the problem of dealing with Christians. For references to this, see " Letters of Pliny" , Vol.2, X:97 and Eusebius' Ecclesiastical

History, IV:IX respectively. The existence of this group since the first century and their extraordinary tenacity during persecution would suggest that they were followers of a real historical character who lived in the first century.

5) Most significantly, the Talmud itself in Sanhedrin 43a refers to the death of Jesus, and it is acknowledged that this part of the Talmud dates from the early period of that book's compilation (i.e. 70-200AD):

" On the eve of the Passover Yeshu (Jesus) was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward in his behalf'. But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover" .

" Hanged" can be an idiom for crucifixion - it is used like that in the New Testament (Gal.3:13; Luke 23:39). This passage describes the Jews wanting Jesus stoned (in accordance with Mosaic law, presumably?), but mentions that actually he was hung. The explanation for this is given by the New Testament description of how the Jews had to use Roman law to effect the death of Jesus - which would have been by hanging.

Sanhedrin 43a also describes how five disciples of Jesus were judged and sentenced to death, again showing that the Jews traditionally have believed in the existence of the historical Jesus. Sanhedrin 106b even says that Jesus was 33 years old when he died; exactly as required by the New Testament. Maier (" First Easter" , p.117,118) quotes from the fifth century Jewish document " Toledoth Jesu" , which claims that the disciples tried to steal the body of Jesus after his death, but a gardener named Juda heard of their plans and removed the body of Jesus elsewhere, handing it over later to the Jews. Justin Martyr writing in 150AD records that the Jews sent out special messengers to claim that the body of Jesus had been stolen (" Dialogue with Trypho" , 108), and Tertullian (" On Spectacles" ,30) has a similar account when he wrote in 200AD.

Between them these strands of evidence show that the Jews of the early centuries AD believed in the existence and violent death of the historical Jesus.

6) The Greek playwright Lucian, writing in the second century, pokes fun at the Christians who " worship a man to this day (who) was crucified" (Lucian, The Death of Peregrine, 11-13, in " The Works of Lucian" , vol.4, translated by Fowler and Fowler.

7) Josephus is the most well known historian of the first century. In his " Antiquities" , written 90-95AD, he mentions James, " the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ" . He also speaks in another section of the same book in terms which clearly corroborate the New Testament picture of Jesus:

" Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man...For he was one who wrought surprising feats...He was Christ...he appeared to them alive the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him" .

So pointed is this passage that some have claimed that it is an interpolation. That there is still reason for using this passage to support the contention that there was a man called Jesus of Nazareth who lived in the first century is provided by the following considerations:

- Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History, 1:XI) quotes this section of Josephus.
- Respected scholars support this first reading as being original, and can show that this section is written in the same style as the rest of Josephus' work (See Daniel Rops, " The Silence of Jesus' Contemporaries" , p.21; J.N.D. Anderson, " Christianity: The Witness of History" p.20; F.F.Bruce, " The New Testament Documents" p.108,109).
- There is no textual evidence for this being an interpolation
- Professor Schlomo Pines claims that the Arabic edition of Josephus' works had been discovered which was almost certain to be the original. The passage referred to above occurs there, but without the obvious doctrinal statements concerning the resurrection and Messiahship of Jesus which were made in the extract given above. This seems reasonable, seeing Josephus was a Jew. Pines first made his findings public in articles in " The New York Times" , Feb.12 1972, in which he quotes the debated passage of Josephus about Jesus from the Arabic version: " At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous. And many people among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders" .

This account fits in admirably with that of the New Testament.

5.3 Jewish Objections to Jesus

Sayings of Jesus

a) Jesus accused God of forsaking him on the cross (Matt. 27:46), therefore he did not expect to die. So if he claimed to be Messiah he did not think Messiah had to die. He clearly didn't think it was God's will that he should die.

Matt.27:46 could be translated 'My God, how hast Thou forsaken me!'; remember that there are no punctuation marks in the original Greek manuscript; those we have are inserted by the translators. If we accept this equally permissible translation, the problem disappears. If Jesus died, it would be obvious that he would have felt forsaken by God; God may 'leave' us to see how we will cope with a trial. It does not necessarily show His rejection of us. Thus of Hezekiah we read " In the business of the ambassadors...God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chron.32:31). The original Hebrew word translated " left" here is also frequently translated " forsake" . As Hezekiah was " left" or 'forsaken' by God to prove how strong his spirituality really was, so Jesus was 'forsaken' on the cross, so that God could see what was in his heart.

Jesus was actually quoting from the prophesied words of Messiah in Ps.22:1. This shows that there was no indication of weakness on His uttering those words, and the fact he was quoting from the Psalms shows that he was not speaking those words due to surprise at being faced with death. We have shown elsewhere how many passages indicate that Messiah would have to die. Therefore Jesus did expect to die, which is abundantly proved by even a cursory glance at the New Testament: Matt.16:21,27; 19:28; 20:18,19; 26:27-29,31,32,64.

b) Jesus said he had not come to destroy the law (Matt. 5:17), but his followers, e.g. Paul in Acts 15, said he did. (See S.Levine, p.80).

Jesus said that he had come not to destroy the Law but to fulfil it (Matt.5:17). The Greek for "destroy" here means strictly to unloose or start to disintegrate. He fulfilled the law in his death as the perfect sacrifice on the cross, but until then he never advocated the unloosing or negating of even the smallest commandment: "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all (i.e. of the law) be fulfilled" (Matt.5:18). However, His speaking of fulfilling the law implies that the Law was a prophecy which he was soon to fulfil. Therefore there would be no point in continuing to try to keep the law if its object was now fulfilled.

Paul's objection was to Gentiles being saddled with the ceremonial (but not the moral) aspects of the Mosaic Law. It should be noted that no words of Paul are cited in Acts 15. Paul did keep parts of the Law (e.g. Acts 21:20-25), but this seems to have been to placate some of the early Jewish Christians whose consciences were weak. He quite clearly teaches that the Old Covenant laws have been done away (Col.2:13-16), and that through association with Christ there is no spiritual difference between Jews and Gentiles (Gal.3:27-29) - they are under the same covenant and therefore have the same responsibilities of service towards God.

c) Jesus' command not to resist evil (Matt. 5:39) is unrealistic and contrary to the Old Testament.

The spirit of the Law was one of love and self-subjugation. It did not teach that in private life one should actively resist evil. Christ's law is intended for individuals, whereas some of the injunctions of the Old Covenant were for the whole nation of Israel. Nationally, Israel were never told that once settled in the land they ought to resist evil. They were promised that if they were obedient, then God would look after them from any evil that might be ranged against them. There are many examples of people not resisting evil in Old Testament times - e.g. David's attitude to Saul and to his family later; Joseph's passive submission to the evil of his brethren and willing forgiveness of them. Thus in their individual lives, Jews under the Old Covenant did practice Jesus' policy of non resistance to evil, and his teaching about this summed up the spirit of the Old Covenant.

d) The words of Jesus in Matt.10:34-37, Luke 14:26 etc. contradict the spirit of the passages which speak of Messiah as talking words of peace (e.g. Isa. 11).

Once the idea of two comings of Messiah is appreciated (see comments on Zech.9:9 regarding this), such apparent contradictions fall into place. If Messiah was to die and be persecuted at his first coming and then return to establish the Messianic Kingdom of peace at his second coming, then it is to be expected that those who accepted him at his first coming would be at variance with those who rejected and persecuted him. If they persecuted him, they would persecute those who accepted him too. Therefore to accept him would result in a certain degree of division within Israel, to whom Jesus was primarily talking in the verses cited.

e) Jesus did not preach to the Gentiles, as Messiah was to do (e.g. Zech. 9:9). Both Jesus (Matt. 14:24) and Paul (Acts 13:46) " made it clear that the message was to go to the Jews only" (Levine).

It is hard to believe that such a conclusion could be drawn by someone who had read the New Testament only once. Paul called himself " the apostle of the Gentiles...a teacher of the Gentiles"

(Rom.11:13; 2 Tim.1:11); and Jesus gave his followers the great commission of preaching the good news about Him worldwide (Mark 16:15), having earlier stated that whoever heard them effectively heard him. Isaiah 49 describes the depression of Messiah at the failure of Israel to respond to his preaching, but he is encouraged by God telling him that due to this he has been given as a light to the Gentiles. Jesus must have been aware of this, seeing that he often hinted at the future response of the Gentiles to his message (John 10:16; Acts 1:8; 9:15). However, it is true that the general principle of New Testament preaching was to appeal to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 18:4-6; 26:20; 28:23-28). The fact that Christianity is a worldwide religion shows that Christ certainly has been preached to the utmost ends of the earth.

f) Faulty statements were made by Jesus, e.g. Matt. 16:28. Jesus expected to have a quick kingdom; when this was not to be Christians invented their second coming doctrine. Also quoted is Matt. 24:34.

Jesus' statement that some of those with him would live to see him coming in his Kingdom occurs immediately before the record of his transfiguration. It seems fair to conclude that he was referring to this when he spoke of 'coming in his kingdom'. "Coming" would have been a familiar Old Testament idiom for some form of manifestation - e.g. God "came down" to see the tower of Babel and Sodom, but this does not necessitate a literal coming of God in terms of physical movement. The vision which the disciples saw at the transfiguration was of Jesus in glory, with his face shining brighter than the sun and with dazzling white clothes. This would have taken their minds back to the visions of glory of the Old Testament and the description of Messiah in his Kingdom as "the sun of righteousness" (Mal.4:2), making them realize that Jesus of Nazareth really was the Lord of glory, the supreme manifestation of God Himself, and this was how he would be revealed in the day of his Kingdom (Matt.17:2 cp. Dan.10:5,6; 7:9).

Matt.24:34 says that the generation who sees the sign Jesus had just described of the fig tree putting out leaves would not pass until all was fulfilled. He was not necessarily speaking of the generation that were then present. The fig tree being either barren or fruitful is a symbol of Israel's spiritual state (Hab.3:17,18; Jer.24:2-5; Mic.7:1-4; Hos.9:10; Is.30:17; Joel 2:22). Jesus prophesied that the Jewish tree was to dry up after his death, i.e. spiritually wither (Luke 23:31). Therefore he was not speaking of the tree's bearing of leaves being in the time of that immediate generation that heard his words. However, he knew that eventually they would repent, and the generation which saw that would also see His return to establish the Kingdom. This is in line with the many Old Testament prophecies that speak of Jewish repentance (i.e. spiritual fruit) before the revealing of Messiah to them.

The Personality of God

Objection:

Judaism claims that "God is not physical" (S. Levine 'You take Jesus, I'll Take God', p. 93), so it is not possible for God to have a son, seeing He is not corporeal. If Messiah is to be a human being, he cannot be the begotten Son of God.

The nature of God is fundamental to appreciate if we are to have any true understanding of what Bible based religion is all about. The Old Testament consistently talks of God as if He is a person; the person to person relationship with God which both Old and New Testaments speak of is unique to the true Jewish hope. It was largely through the influence of Maimonides in the twelfth century

that the concept of a non-personal God became popular in Judaism; Biblically this is not even hinted at in the Old Testament scriptures. The following are strong arguments in favour of a personal, corporeal God:

- " God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). Thus man is made in the image and likeness of God, as manifested through the Angels. These words cannot apply to man's mental image, because by nature our minds are totally distanced from God and in many ways fundamentally opposed to His righteousness. " For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is. 55:8,9). Therefore the image and likeness which we share with God must be in physical image. Whenever Angels have been seen on earth they are described as having the form of men - e.g. Abraham entertained Angels unaware, thinking that they were ordinary men. Our creation in the image of God surely means that we can infer something about the real object of which we are but an image. Thus God, whom we reflect, is not something nebulous which we cannot conceive of.

- The Angels themselves are a reflection of God. Thus God could say of Moses " With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently...and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold" (Num. 12:8). This is referring to Moses' instruction by an Angel which carried the name of the Lord (Ex. 19:5,6). If the Angel was the similitude of the Lord it follows that God is in the same form as the Angels- i.e. in human shape physically, although with an infinitely higher nature than flesh and blood. " The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33:11; Dt. 34:10) show that the Lord was manifested in His Angel, whose face and mouth reflected that of the Lord Himself.

- Because we are in God's image, " He knoweth our frame" (Ps. 103:14); He wishes us to conceive of Him as a personal being, a Father to whom we can relate. This would explain the many references to God's hands, arms, eyes etc. If God were a wisp of essence somewhere in the heavens - which has to be our conception of God if we reject His being personal-then these references are misleading and serve no teaching purpose.

- Descriptions of God's dwelling place clearly indicate that " God" has a personal location: " God is in Heaven" (Ecc.5:2); " He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from the Heaven did the Lord behold the earth" (Ps. 102:19,20); " Hear Thou in Heaven Thy dwelling place" (1 Kings 8). Yet more specifically than this, we read that God has a " throne" (2 Chron. 9:8; Ps.11:4; Is.6:1; 66:1). Such language is hard to apply to an undefined essence which exists somewhere in Heavenly realms.

- This reasoning is all confirmed by Ezekiel's vision of the Heavenly organization; having described the cherub-chariots of Angels around the throne, " above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne...and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it" (Ez. 1:26). With the utmost reverence we suggest that here we have a dim vision of the throne of God itself, with the likeness of God Himself in human form sitting upon it. Note the emphasis of the word " likeness" - this was not a vision of Heaven itself.

- Isaiah 45 is full of God referring to His personal involvement in the affairs of His people: " I am the Lord, and there is none else...I the Lord do all these things...I the Lord have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his maker...I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens...look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" . This last sentence especially shows the personal

existence of God - He desires men to look to Him, to conceive of His literal existence with the eye of faith.

- God is revealed to us as a forgiving God. Yet forgiveness can only come from a person: it is a mental act. Thus David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam.13:14), showing that God has a mind (heart), which is capable of being replicated to some limited degree by man, although man by nature is not after God's heart.

If God is not a real, personal being, then the concept of spirituality is hard to grapple with. If God is totally righteous but is not a material being, then we cannot really conceive of His righteousness manifested in human beings. Both apostate Christendom and Jewry have the notion that God's righteousness enters our lives through a nebulous 'holy Spirit' that somehow makes us into God's mental image, and acceptable to Him. Conversely, once we appreciate that there is a personal being called God, then we can work on our characters, with His help and the influence of His word, to reflect the characteristics of God in our beings.

God's purpose is to reveal Himself in a multitude of glorified beings. His memorial name, Jehovah Elohim, indicates this ('He who shall be mighty ones', in approximate translation). If God is not a physical being, then the reward of the faithful is to have a non-physical existence like God. But the descriptions of the faithful's reward in God's coming Kingdom on earth show that they will have a tangible, bodily existence, although no longer subject to the weaknesses of human nature. Job longed for the "latter day" when he would have a resurrection of his body (Job 19:25-27); Abraham must be one of the "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth (who) shall awake...to everlasting life" (Dan. 12:2) so that he can receive the promise of eternal inheritance of the land of Canaan, a physical location on this earth (Gen. 17:8). "Saints shall shout aloud for joy...let them sing aloud upon their beds...and execute judgment upon the heathen" (Ps. 132:16; 149:5,7). A failure by both Jew and Gentile to appreciate passages like these, as well as the fundamentally literal, physical import of the promises to Abraham, has led to the wrong notion of an "immortal soul" as being the real form of human existence. Such an idea is totally devoid of Biblical support. God is an immortal, glorious being, and He is working out His purpose so that men and women might be called to live in His future Kingdom on this earth, to share His attributes, expressed in a bodily form.

It should be evident that there can be no sensible concept of worship, religion or personal relationship with God until it is appreciated that God is personal, that we are in His image physically, albeit a very imperfect image, and need to develop His mental image so that we may take on the fullness of His physical image in the Kingdom of God. So much more sense and comfort can now be gained from the passages which speak of God as a loving Father, chastening us as a Father does his son (e.g. Dt. 8:5). In the context of Messiah we read that "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Is. 53:10). We have shown elsewhere how God's promise to David of a seed who would be God's son also required the miraculous birth of a human being; once the corporeal, personal nature of God is appreciated, then this becomes logical to accept.

5-3-1 Jewish Objections To The Ancestry Of Jesus

The great amount of energy devoted by Jewish critics to objecting to the genealogies of Jesus as found in the New Testament (Mt.1 and Luke 3) fail to take into account that whilst such genealogy is not without value, there is a major example in the Old Testament of a case where genealogy was quite an irrelevant issue. Melchizedek, king of Jerusalem and early High Priest (Gen. 14:18-20) has not received the attention from Judaism which he deserves. He was greater than Abraham, seeing

that Abraham paid tithes to him, although it can be taken as certain that Abraham himself as the head of his household would have been a priest. Remember that he offered Isaac as a sacrifice without recourse to any other priest. Yet Melchizedek was clearly far superior to him, seeing that he pronounced the Divine blessing upon Abraham (Gen. 14:19). The observant reader of Genesis cannot fail to be struck by the laboured emphasis on genealogy for all the characters that are introduced. But this is not given us for Melchizedek; the record is framed so that he appears on the scene without reference to his parents or descent. Yet he was arguably the greatest priest brought before our attention in the Old Testament. Thus questions over the genealogy of Jesus should not affect our judgment of his priesthood. Nothing whatsoever is known nor can be known of the genealogy of Melchizedek, and yet no questions are raised by the Jews over the validity of his priesthood. Therefore the arguments over the genealogy of Jesus are not particularly relevant.

The Ancestry of Jesus: Objections

a) The New Testament genealogy traces the ancestry of Jesus through his mother's line, but genealogy is not reckoned through women, therefore this provides no evidence that Jesus was the seed of Abraham and David.

It should be noted that Luke's list is composed of males (with the exception of Mary). Therefore she was clearly a descendant of David and Abraham. Today Jewish descent has to be through the mother - something which those Jews who use this objection must find hard to answer? Gen. 3:15 describes the Messiah as the seed of the woman; it is fitting, therefore, that Messiah's matrilineal genealogy should be provided, and that his Messianic descent (i.e. as the seed of Abraham and David) should be shown through his mother's line. It should be remembered too that the daughters of Zelophehad had inheritance rights and were allowed to trace their inheritance, showing that it is not an immutable Divine principle that inheritance cannot go through women (consider Num. 26:33; 27:1-7; 36:2-11).

There are other examples of this. Jair's father was of the tribe of Judah (1 Chron.2:22); yet in Num. 32:41 he is described as " the son of Manasseh" , showing that his mother must have been of the tribe of Manasseh. His descent was reckoned for some reason through his mother rather than his father. 1 Chron. 2:34 records that Sheshan " had no sons, but daughters" . According to the Jewish objection that genealogy cannot be reckoned through the woman, Sheshan would have no subsequent genealogy. However, he is described in 1 Chron. 2:31 as having a son, presumably from the fact that he gave his daughter in marriage to his Egyptian servant (1 Chron. 2:34). Thus his seed was still reckoned through a woman. Hiram is described as " the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan" (2 Chron. 2:14). Other examples of this could be given.

b) Jesus was not a true descendant of David - the genealogy through Joseph is irrelevant because Christians say that Joseph was not the real father. Jesus was not a proven descendant of David so he was not the Messiah.

The genealogies do prove that Joseph was a descendant of David, indeed the rightful king of Israel had there been a monarchy at the time of Jesus. Jesus was his adopted son; he was " as was supposed" , or 'as was reckoned by law', the son of Joseph (Luke 3:23). The record in Luke appears to be that of Mary; Joseph being " the son of Heli" was probably by reason of marrying Mary, the daughter of Heli (Lk.3:23); the Talmud speaks with gross vitriolic about Mary the daughter of Heli going to hell for her blasphemy, referring to Mary the mother of Jesus. This shows that the Jews

accept that Mary was the daughter of Heli. Heli's father was Matthat, who can be equated with Matthan the grandfather of Joseph. Thus a family tree can be constructed:

Thus Mary and Joseph were cousins (hinting at an arranged marriage?), and therefore Jesus was a son of David through both his mother and father by adoption. In the light of this it is evident that the question mark over the validity of a genealogy through Joseph is an irrelevancy, seeing that Joseph and Mary had a common grandfather. The point has to be made that a humanly fabricated genealogy would be sure to make some glaring errors, especially if it was produced by simple, uneducated men as the Jews claim the New Testament was. The wonder of the New Testament genealogies is that closer study reveals ever more intricate internal evidence for their truth and reliability, rather than exposing more problems.

If Jews will only accept " a proven descendant of David" as their Messiah then they will never accept him, seeing that there is now no proof of Jewish genealogies at all, let alone going right back to David. In view of this, surely Jewry should not make questions of genealogy a touchstone of whether they will accept Jesus as their Messiah.

c) Jeconiah is mentioned in Matthew 1 as an ancestor of Jesus but in Jeremiah we read of Jeconiah being cursed. It was prophesied that his seed would never sit on the throne, so Messiah cannot be Jesus if he was a descendant of Jeconiah.

This objection accepts for sake of argument the truth of the genealogies recorded in the New Testament. They show that Jeconiah was in the royal line, and was therefore a direct descendant of David, to whom it was promised that a descendant of his would be Messiah (2 Sam.7:12-16). Jews accept that Messiah is still to come; they therefore must accept that a descendant of David, and therefore Jeconiah, will be Messiah. Therefore they cannot truly believe that Jeconiah's descendant will not be Messiah. The great Jewish thinker Maimonides reasoned that Messiah must come from the line of Solomon - which passed through Jeconiah.

The curse on Jeconiah reads: " Write ye 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" (Jer. 22:30). The Hebrew word translated " childless" comes from a root meaning 'demolished', suggesting that his children would be destroyed, rather than that he would have no children; he would be 'written childless' by reason of his children being destroyed. The reference to his " seed" is to be taken as parallel to the 'children' who were to be 'demolished'. The curse was therefore limited only to his immediate children, who were not to reign on the Davidic throne as originally intended. This is confirmed by Jer. 22:28 asking the rhetorical question: " Wherefore are they cast out, he (Jeconiah) and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?" . This confirms that Jeconiah did have " seed" , he was not literally childless, but they were " cast out" and taken to captivity in Babylon. The phrase " cast out" begs the question 'cast out from what?'. The answer surely is 'From reigning on the throne of David'. A tablet has been discovered in Babylon mentioning five sons of a man named Coniah - the same person mentioned in Jer. 22? It is worth remembering that Jeconiah's grandson was Zerubbabel, whom God was clearly willing to see reigning over Israel (see the many references to him in Zechariah).

Of additional interest is the fact that Jeconiah is mentioned in Matthew's genealogy, which we have suggested is showing Christ's ancestry going back through Joseph. Joseph was his adopted father. Jesus was therefore associated with the curse on Jeconiah through his adopted father, although it was not personally applicable to him because he was God's son rather than Joseph's. Thus he was

associated with the curses that were to come on Israel without being personally deserving of them; he was "made a curse for us", thereby redeeming us from the curses of God on sinful man. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13).

5.4 Jewish Objections To The Christian Doctrine Of Atonement

Reconciliation with God:

Objections

The Christian argument that a truly acceptable sacrifice for sin requires the shedding of blood is invalid because there are examples of God providing forgiveness without the shedding of blood, provided there was genuine repentance. From here the Jews go on to justify their idea that they can now be acceptable to God, despite having no sacrifices and no temple. They quote a number of passages which seem to suggest that forgiveness has been granted without shedding of blood.

Comment:

If the Jewish arguments are true and there is no need for sacrifices to gain forgiveness, then the obvious question arises "Why were they instituted?". It is a fundamental principle of sacrifice, misunderstood by both Jews and apostate Christendom, that the animals offered were representative of the offerer and God's requirements for sacrifice, rather than substitutionary. The mere offering of the blood of bulls and goats could not of themselves remove the individual's sin; yet seven times in the Pentateuch the Jews were forbidden to eat blood because "the life of the flesh is in the blood...for it is the blood that maketh atonement" (Lev.17:11). If the sacrifices were substitutionary, then any animal would have done- and it should have died instead of the offerer. The fact that the offerers still died indicates that they were not substitutionary. Also worthy of consideration is the fact that the laws concerning animal sacrifices were designed to highlight certain characteristics of that sacrifice; it could not be an animal that had died naturally or had been hunted to death (Lev.17:15), but one willingly led to sacrifice. All sacrifices had to have no blemish, thus excluding many animals. They therefore pointed forward to an ideal sacrifice which was to be willingly made, representative of the offerers. "It is the blood that maketh an atonement" -to argue that sacrifice is not necessary for forgiveness is to contradict this basic principle.

However, some of the verses quoted by Jewish objectors which show that forgiveness was possible without actually killing an animal, indicate that this statement about blood making atonement is a general principle; it does not mean that the blood of the slaughtered animal itself made atonement. In any case, it should be obvious that the blood of a senseless, amoral animal is hardly a meaningful atonement for human sin consciously committed. Sin is the transgression of the law of God, and therefore any representative sacrifice had to be someone subject to God's law. Animals do not fit this. Seeing that "the life is in the blood", life must atone for life, and blood must be shed to atone for blood that ought to be shed. Sin brings death. Therefore salvation of a man from sin requires the death of a man; the death of an animal is really an unacceptable sacrifice if that animal points forward to nothing else. Once it is appreciated that those slaughtered animals pointed forward to a perfect human sacrifice, then it is understandable that they provided a temporary covering of sin.

Gen.3:15 says that sin must be overcome (hit on the head, in the terms of that verse) through the seed of the woman -not through an animal sacrifice. Isa.53 also speaks of Messiah, a human being, bearing sins. The fact that there was a Day of Atonement also needs to be considered. Whatever the

circumstances of individual cases, the nation as a whole was utterly dependent on the sacrificial ritual of the day of Atonement for God's forgiveness; thus it was a continual statute for them every year (Lev.16:34), and not keeping it properly was punishable with death or excommunication (Lev.23:29), so important was it. Whenever the ark was separated from the tabernacle, as in Eli's time, or when the temple was destroyed, this law could not operate. Strictly speaking, Israel were, and still remain, an unforgiven nation whilst they seek their forgiveness through the Old Covenant system. The only way out of this predicament is to accept a new covenant which does not rely on a day of Atonement ritual to gain forgiveness; one which is " established upon better promises" . The very fact that a New Covenant is mentioned implies that there were problems with the previous one.

It must also be remembered that sin offerings were obligatory under the Mosaic Law; if only repentance was required, this would not have been the case. It must also be recognized that God has the prerogative to forgive without requiring a blood sacrifice to be immediately made; He is not subject to strictures which men may try to place upon His love. However, seeing how much the importance of blood offerings is emphasized, it is surely presumptuous to conclude that if we are still under the Old Covenant we can claim that such offerings are no longer necessary for us to perform. The Jewish conscience is not totally clear on this point, seeing that in some Jewish traditions a rooster is killed on the day of Atonement and swung round the head to associate it with themselves. And every Jew who ponders the deliverance from Egypt at Passover, must reflect on the fact that it was only due to the Angel seeing the blood associated with the household that they were saved from death: " When he seeth the blood...the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you" (Ex.12:23). Because of this they were to remind their children each year of " the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover" (Ex.12:27) which saved them from death.

Putting all this together a more accurate picture of God's way of reconciliation emerges. The animal sacrifices themselves could not take away sin; this is confirmed by the examples quoted of forgiveness being possible without slaughtering an animal. But without the principle of blood there can be no atonement. As sacrifices are representative, those slain animals represented an ideal sacrifice yet to come. In this we see the purpose of the sacrifices -to point forward to a perfect sacrifice, which passages like Isa.53 and Gen.3:15 make clear was to be a human being, a " seed of the woman" . Thus when we read " It is the blood that maketh atonement" (Lev.17:11), there is reference here to the blood of the future sacrifice which the animal offerings typified, rather than to the blood of the slaughtered animals itself. Most of the examples of forgiveness quoted relate to those in God's covenant, which was confirmed and validated by the shedding and sprinkling of animal blood. We have shown that this blood was not effective in itself, it relied for its efficacy on " the blood" of the covenant to which it pointed forward. Therefore that future blood of sacrifice would have enabled the forgiveness of those who had lived within the covenant previously, seeing that " the blood" was ultimately what that covenant depended on for its efficacy. The New Testament expounds this at length (see Heb.9:15 R.V.; Rom.3:25; 5:17).

The fact that atonement was possible without sacrifice of animals but still needing " the blood that maketh atonement" clearly shows that the sacrifices made were pointing forward to a one off, specific offering of " the blood" . Other passages indicate that this sin bearing offering was to be of a human being, who to fulfil the type of the animal sacrifices would be without moral blemish, and would not die naturally. The true Christian understanding of the atonement fits in precisely with this.

All the specific verses quoted in the following list can be understood against this background; but further attention will now be given to each one.

a) Solomon's prayer told the Jews that if they were scattered and then repented, they only needed to pray towards the temple and they would be forgiven.

The temple made prayers acceptable (1 Kings 8)

There is now no temple, so Israel in their present dispersion cannot take comfort from this passage that the Old Covenant does not require animal sacrifices. Careful examination of the record of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple reveals that it is highly likely that the dedication was on the day of Atonement. The following points are not conclusive in themselves but added together make a fair case:

- The day of Atonement was in the seventh month (Lev.16:29); Solomon's dedication was held " at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month" (1 Kings 8:2).

- Apart from keeping this feast, the people stayed behind afterwards to keep another feast which lasted seven days (1 Kings 8:65). This corresponds beautifully with the fact that the day of Atonement was on the tenth day of the seventh month, followed five days afterwards by the Feast of Tabernacles, which lasted for seven days (Lev.23:27,34,41). This certainly suggests that the dedication of the temple was at the day of Atonement; and what more fitting than for the people to remain behind to keep Tabernacles centred around their new temple?

- Solomon's prayer of dedication is evidently shot through with allusions to the curses that would come upon Israel if they disobeyed, as recorded in Lev.26 and Deut.28. Solomon speaks as if these curses will definitely come upon Israel, and he is praying that God will shorten the punishments when they come for the sake of prayers made " toward" (or 'in') the temple. An example: " When Thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy...when Heaven is shut up, and there is no rain" (1 Kings 8:33,35; clearly referring back to Lev.26:17 and Lev.26:19 respectively). Repentance and forgiveness is a major theme in his prayer; indeed, the density of reference to these ideas in this passage is the highest in the Old Testament. This all fits into place if this prayer is being offered on or around the day of Atonement, when Israel were to confess their sins.

- The first day of Atonement seems to have been held when the tabernacle was re-dedicated after its desecration by Nadab and Abihu; the feast was a memorial of this (Lev.16:2,8,17,18,21,29 and context). It was therefore fitting that the dedication of the temple should also be on the day of Atonement.

- " All the men of Israel...all the children of Israel...all Israel with him (Solomon), a great congregation" (1 Kings 8:2,63,64) emphasizes what a major gathering this was. The gathering of Israel to the feasts such as the day of Atonement could be described in similar words.

- The Hebrew word Solomon uses for " forgiveness" in the prayer means literally 'to send away, to let go' (Dr. Young, Analytical Concordance). This immediately suggests the scapegoat that was 'let go' into the wilderness on the day of Atonement, bearing Israel's sins.

If Solomon's prayer and dedication of the temple was indeed on the day of Atonement, we can understand why " Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:22) to make his prayer. Numerous animal sacrifices had just been made on that altar (v.5), which were followed by this prayer for forgiveness, and then followed by peace offerings (v.63), representing the fuller fellowship with God now possible due to the atonement that had been made. It is against this

background that we can consider Solomon's prayers for Jews who might be scattered abroad, unable to present themselves before the Lord at the day of Atonement in the Jerusalem temple. He is asking God to extend the blessing of forgiveness which was made available to the congregation present on that day to those who were far away, by reason of their prayers for forgiveness still being acceptable on account of God's eyes and presence being upon that altar within the temple. Remember that Solomon was standing in front of it as he offered that prayer, showing that the blood of the sacrifice that was accepted for atonement was central to the temple and Solomon's requests. Thus their forgiveness was on account of the sacrifice made on that altar, so that their sins would be 'let go', or " forgiven" , as the scapegoat was 'let go', even though they were not physically present at the ceremony. Thus closer examination of this case confirms that forgiveness was still not possible without association with the shedding of " the blood of the atonement" , which we have shown elsewhere pointed forward to a perfect human sacrifice, on whose account God was willing to pass over sin.

b) God ultimately prefers obedience rather than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22).

" To obey is better than sacrifice"

The context of this verse needs to be considered: " Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the word of the Lord...but the people took of the spoil...which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord...and Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam.15:20-22).

There is nothing here to indicate that animal sacrifices were not required under the Old Covenant to gain forgiveness. The sacrifices the people were making were probably not sin offerings, but some form of dedication or peace offering. Saul and the people were clearly disobeying the specific command of God to destroy the spoil from Amalek; but instead they were keeping it for themselves, justifying this by offering some of it in sacrifice to God. Samuel was saying that careful obedience to God's word must precede acceptable sacrifice; the 'work' of sacrifice in itself was meaningless without an obedient heart first of all. Some years later, David perhaps alluded back to this incident in his own reflections on his sin with Bathsheba, which he suggests was as bad as Saul's sin of rebelling against the word of God concerning Amalek: " Thou desirest not sacrifice...the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit...then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering, and whole burnt offering" (Ps.51:16,17,19). Thus God does not desire the sacrifices of an unrepentant sinner; but once there is a broken, repentant spirit, then their sacrifices are a pleasure to God.

Most powerful of all is the fact that these words of Samuel are quoted by Messiah in Psalm 40, a passage which describes Messiah as superseding the animal sacrifice system. It describes how many tried to kill Messiah (v.12,14), and how he was resurrected by God: " He (God) brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay" (v.2). The spirit of Messiah is clearly in this passage. Having reflected on his deliverance like this, Messiah states: " Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened (Heb. 'dugged', referring to the practice of 'digging' a servant's ear, Ex.21:2-6, showing that Messiah was to be a slave to God's word): burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book (i.e. all through the Old Covenant) it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Ps.40:6-8). Thus through His perfect obedience to the word of God, Messiah was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind. We have explained earlier the reasons why God had no " desire"

for animal sacrifices in themselves to atone for sin, and how these were only effective by reason of the perfect sacrifice to whom they pointed forward. The emphasis here on Messiah's total obedience to the word of God explains the allusion to the example of Saul, who was a classic example of disobedience to the word. We may be meant to infer that the example of the first king of Israel stands in total contrast to that of Messiah, the last and greatest of Israel's kings. The Hebrew word for "delight" in "Hath the lord as great delight in ...sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" is the very same word translated "desire" in Ps.40: "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire". Messiah saying that he "delights" to do God's will (Ps.40:8) is also the same word.

God did not "require", or 'request' (Hebrew) animal sacrifices but rather the offering of a perfectly obedient man. The question naturally arises 'For what did God not request animal sacrifices?'. The answer must be 'To be a totally acceptable covering for sins'; otherwise there would have been no need for this person described here to say that he came to provide the sacrifice which God required. If this person was perfect, as Ps.40 requires, then it follows that although by reason of having human nature he would have to die, his death would not be because he had sinned, which is the fundamental reason for death. Seeing there was no reason apart from the physical constitution of his body why he should have to die, it would follow that God would raise him from the dead, which is what v.2 of the Psalm describes. It should be noted that "in the volume of the book" of the covenant this person was hinted at. Therefore any system of interpretation of the Old Covenant that denies that all its laws and sacrifices point forward to this perfect sacrifice must be faulty. The intricacy with which the offering of Jesus and the exposition of it by the Christian writers of the first century fulfils these types is surely proof enough that Jesus was that perfect sacrifice.

c) The scapegoat on the Day of Atonement was the sin-bearer for Israel, and it was sent away alive, therefore a sin-bearer does not have to be sacrificed.

The scapegoat

To infer from the fact that one animal was sent away into the wilderness alive at this ceremony that animal sacrifices were not needed to gain atonement disregards the whole theme of this feast, which is the great emphasis that is placed on "the blood" in the record of the feast in Lev.16. The High Priest had to kill a bullock to atone for the sins of himself and his family, and then present two goats before the Lord. Through a system of lots (i.e. the Urim and Thummim?) one goat was chosen to be sacrificed, whilst the other was let go into the wilderness. Notice that they are described as "two kids of the goat for a (singular) sin offering" (Lev.16:5). The fact one of them was sacrificed shows that atonement was not possible without the shedding of blood. As Israel watched the terrified scapegoat running off into the wilderness they would have beheld a powerful cameo of how far God was willing to put away sin from man. We have shown in our comments on Ps.40 above that it was necessary for a perfect Messiah to be resurrected for his offering to be complete. The sin offering being comprised of a dead and living goat suggests that the true atoning sacrifice would be so on account of both its death and subsequent (resurrected) life. Paul seems to be alluding to the day of atonement when he writes: "We were reconciled (Greek: 'atoned') to God by the death of His Son (and) being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life... by (which) we have now received the atonement" (Rom.5:10,11). The Christian understanding of Jesus thus clearly fulfils these types of the day of Atonement.

There seems to be good reason to interpret the Most Holy place as representative of Heaven. "The Lord is in His Holy Temple (in the Shekinah of the Most Holy), the Lord's throne is in Heaven" (Ps.11:4). David's plea "Send Thee help from the sanctuary" was answered: God "will hear him

from His holy heaven" (Ps.20:2,6). He describes the place where the ark dwelt, i.e. the Most Holy, as God's habitation (2 Sam.15:25), which is language elsewhere used about Heaven (1 Kings 8:30). The High Priest had to lay aside his High Priestly robes when he entered the Most Holy, showing that there was something lacking in the system of Levitical priests. It was there that he obtained atonement for Israel's sins, and then went outside to the masses of expectant worshippers to pronounce them a forgiven people. We have seen that Messiah is the one who obtains true atonement, and is therefore able to enter Heaven itself as a result of his sacrifice, to obtain forgiveness for his people. As the High Priest came out of the most holy and then blessed the people, so Messiah must return from Heaven (having ascended there first) to pronounce His people's forgiveness. When God's people are eagerly awaiting His appearance and have made suitable confession of sins, then Jesus will return from Heaven, having obtained eternal redemption.

d) Nathan could immediately assure David that his sin was forgiven - without any sacrifice. David said in Psalm 51 that after he was forgiven, then he would sacrifice.

David's forgiveness

David as an adulterer and murderer should have been stoned to death, according to the law. When he departed from Jerusalem after Absalom's rebellion, Shimei " cast stones at David" and taunted him by shouting " Thou man of blood, and thou man of Belial" (2 Sam.16:6,7). It appears that Shimei was reminding David of the Mosaic command to stone adulterers to death (Deut.22:24); doubtless for this reason David replied " So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" (2 Sam.16:10). The fact is that this commandment was not enforced by God, on His prerogative. This does not mean that the command about stoning was invalid, or that it had been superseded by another command. Similarly, God went outside of the Old Covenant to grant forgiveness to David, yet His doing so does not mean that animal sacrifice was unnecessary under that system. Jews at present claim they are still under the Old Covenant, and therefore there can be no forgiveness without sacrifice until they accept a New Covenant, with better promises of reconciliation with God. David's clear faith in Messiah as his promised descendant must have been one of the reasons for God overlooking his sin. Many of the Psalms which foretell Messiah's sufferings (e.g. Ps.22,69,32) have links with Isa.53 and other Messianic passages. Yet these Psalms were primarily written by David during his time of suffering after his sin with Bathsheba; thus David may have been well aware that he was now experiencing some of the sufferings of his great Messiah-descendant, on account of whom forgiveness was possible. There are copious indications that these Psalms had a major fulfilment in the crucifixion and sufferings of Jesus.

It is also objected that David says that once he is forgiven, then he will offer sacrifice. However, by contrast what David appears to be saying is that God does not want to receive sacrifice from someone who is living in guilty conscience of sin through refusing to repent, but that rather there must be a humble spirit of repentance, after which sin offerings can be meaningfully offered: " Thou desirest not sacrifice...the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit...then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness" (Ps.51:16-19). To interpret this as meaning God does not require sacrifices at all under the Sinai covenant, is to fly in the face of the multitude of commands which show God did require animal sacrifice under that covenant.

Repentance alone is not a sufficient basis for forgiveness; God's pronouncements in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3) require death as a result of sin; death is the only way through which God will forgive sin. If the sinner dies to make amends for his own sins, then he is dead and has no way of

reconciliation or salvation. Therefore a representative sacrifice was needed through which the sinner could be saved by associating himself with it. These principles applied to David too. Animal sacrifices are not suitable representatives of sinful man, and therefore it is vital to associate ourselves with the atoning sacrifice of the one perfect man, Jesus, through baptism into his death and resurrection, and partaking of the symbols of that sacrifice in bread and wine as he appointed.

e) Hosea says that prayer, not sacrifice, would atone for Israel's sin (e.g. 6:6 & 14:2).

Prayer gaining forgiveness

" I have desired mercy and not sacrifice" (Hos.6:6) is another expression of the issue considered in b). It is possible that Hosea is referring back to Samuel's very similar words in 1 Sam.15:22, although as we have seen in our consideration of that passage above, this does not provide support for the thesis that forgiveness is possible for those under the Old Covenant without sacrifice.

The repentant sinner was to " confess that he hath sinned in that thing; and he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin which he hath sinned" (Lev.5:5,6). Such confession of sin would have involved prayer to God; but it was followed by sacrifice. The rising up of fragrant incense towards Heaven was symbolic of the prayers of the people, offered through the mediatorship of the priests. Seeing Israel have no priesthood now, they are without any means of entering the presence of God; hence the importance of accepting Jesus as the true intercessor and High Priest in Heaven itself, clothed with the white linen of a perfect character. The incense altar on which the incense was offered had to be sprinkled with blood, both at its dedication and on the day of atonement (Lev.16:18 cp.v.12). We have shown previously that " the blood" of the animals on the day of atonement was not efficacious of itself, but represented the blood of the future perfect sacrifice. Thus Israel's prayers were acceptable to God by reason of that blood. It should be noted that it was the altar of incense rather than the altar of burnt offering which was sprinkled with blood on the day of atonement. That day was a day of remembering of Israel's sins of the past year, and its very existence indicated that the animal sacrifices were not totally efficacious. Similarly, the prayers of Israel for forgiveness were only given some form of acceptability by reason of the shed blood that was sprinkled on the incense altar on that day.

Hos.14:2 is mentioned in this objection as proof that prayer alone could bring forgiveness without reference to sacrifices: " Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips" . The Hebrew word for " calves" means a young bullock or ox, and this is how the word 'par' is elsewhere translated. Thus there is definitely a connection here between the idea of animal sacrifice and their words. This suggests reference back to Hos.6:6 " I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" . We have explained previously that verses like this do not mean that the animal sacrifices were unnecessary. It would appear from the context of Hosea 14 that it is speaking of the final repentance of Israel, when they finally reject the worship of " idols" of all kinds for good (14:8). Earlier in the prophecy God has announced that His married relationship with Israel as His wife has ended (2:1-5); to this day many Rabbis teach that God and Israel are still separated, although the marriage contract between them still stands. However, on a wholehearted repentance of Israel in the last days (as a result of Elijah's second ministry, Mal. 4:5,6), God promised in Hosea to take Israel back as His wife. Hos. 14 refers to this: " I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away" (v.4). Therefore it is not possible to take these words of Hos.14 and say that they can apply to Israel at any time before this final repentance. Their final repentance as outlined in passages like Zech.12:10 will involve remorse for having persecuted their

Messiah. For this Messiah to be Jesus perfectly fits the bill in this respect. In that day they will no longer trust in the Old Covenant and its animal sacrifices, but rather pray for forgiveness trusting in Jesus' atoning blood; which is why they will be heard.

f) Prov. 16:6

" By mercy and truth iniquity is purged" (Prov.16:6)

This does not necessarily disprove the necessity of animal sacrifices under the Old Covenant; as we have shown previously, there had to be an acceptable attitude both to God and to others before God was prepared to accept their sacrifices. Proverbs is often a practical commentary on the Mosaic Law, and this would be an important point to make with regard to the attitude they had towards animal sacrifices. It must be remembered that sacrifice does not force God into forgiving sin; it makes the forgiveness of sin possible, and this is granted as a result of God's mercy, not just the sacrifice alone. " Mercy and truth" is used earlier in Proverbs with reference to the correct way of keeping the spirit of the Law: " Forget not My law...let not mercy and truth forsake thee...write them upon the table of thine heart" (3:1-3). This last phrase refers back to the ten commandments written on the tables of stone, suggesting that " mercy and truth" refers to an acceptable keeping of the spirit of the law. This was necessary in the offerer before making sacrifices for forgiveness.

However, letting Scripture interpret Scripture suggests a further meaning of " mercy and truth" . The phrase often refers to the promises made to Abraham and the patriarchs concerning their seed having eternal life on earth, one of his seed being Messiah, and through him the seed being delivered from their enemies. Mic.7:20 makes the link obvious: " Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old" . Other examples of this are Gen.24:27; 32:9,10; 2 Sam.7:15; 15:20; Ps.115:1. The passage in Proverbs would therefore be saying that on account of the promises to Abraham, sin would be forgiven. The offer of salvation from mankind's enemies (Gen.22:17,18) must surely refer to salvation from sin -what greater enemies do we have? This was to be through Abraham's seed, Messiah, indicating that he was to provide salvation from sin. We have shown previously that this was only possible through a perfect human sacrifice. It is understandable, therefore, that the New Testament interprets the Abrahamic promise of blessing to come upon all families of the earth (Gen.22:17,18) as meaning the forgiveness of sins made possible through the perfect sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 3:25,26), the benefits of which have been offered to all the world. Thus " mercy" is a relevant word to associate with the promises once it is realised that they speak of forgiveness; and " truth" is also pertinent seeing that the promises were confirmed by God's remarkable guarantee: " By Myself have I spoken" .

Many other passages use the word " blessing" in a context of forgiveness, and by so doing connect the Abrahamic promise of forgiveness through the seed of Abraham with forgiveness. Ps.32:1 is a clear example: " Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" . David is speaking here about the forgiveness he had experienced after the Bathsheba incident, which we have shown in d) above was forgiveness made possible outside of the Old Mosaic covenant. Therefore the promises to Abraham were part of a different covenant to that made at Sinai. The new covenant of Jer.31 was for the forgiveness of sins (" I will make a new covenant...for I will forgive their iniquity" ,v.31,33), and as such it was based on the Abrahamic promises. Thus the Old Covenant made with Israel at Sinai was a temporary arrangement, made until the confirmation of the promises made to Abraham concerning forgiveness. True forgiveness can only come through a perfect offering, and therefore when that offering was made the Abrahamic promises were confirmed, and

the Old Covenant ended. This is what happened on the death of Jesus, the perfect sacrifice who took away the sin of the world. Because the Abrahamic promises offered true forgiveness, they also offered eternal life: " The land of Canaan for an everlasting possession" (Gen.17:8). This was in no way offered by the covenant made at Sinai. In no way can the Jewish concepts of Messiah cope with all the requirements of the Abrahamic promises.

It is noteworthy that the next verse in the Proverbs passage also has an allusion to the Abrahamic promises: " When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov.16:7, cp. " Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" , and the patriarchs finding peace with the hostile tribes which surrounded them). The references in other scriptures to God saving Israel from their sins by His mercy no doubt refer to His keeping these same Abrahamic promises.

g) Isa. 27 (destroying the idols led to forgiveness).

Forgiveness due to repentance alone? (Isa.27:9)

Isa.27:9 is interpreted as suggesting that forgiveness is available just on repentance, rather than requiring blood sacrifice. If this is true, then all the emphasis on blood in the Mosaic rituals is pointless. The translation in the A.V. is obscure, so we quote from the Septuagint (translated by Orthodox Jews before Christ): " Therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be taken away; and this is his blessing, when I shall have taken away his sin; when they shall have broken to pieces all the stones of the altars as fine dust" .

This seems to be saying that the blessing of forgiveness will come upon Israel when they destroy their idols. We could justifiably argue that the mention of " blessing" takes us back to the promises to Abraham and the new covenant (see f) above), and that therefore this promise of forgiveness on realistic repentance is only true for those Jews who chose to be under the new covenant, and thereby reject the system of reconciliation with God offered by the Old covenant made at Sinai.

The reference here to breaking in pieces the altars and groves refers in the context of Isaiah to the " high places" which had been set up to replace the Divinely appointed altar at Jerusalem. Hezekiah, in whose time Isaiah prophesied (Isa.1:1), was notorious for his systematic destruction of these altars (2 Chron.29:16; 31:1; 2 Kings 18:4), so much so that even the invading Babylonians had heard about it (2 Kings 18:22; Is.36:7). It is therefore fair to assume that this is the fulfilment of this prophecy of Isaiah. However, Hezekiah prefaced his purges with a public ceremony of sin offering at the beginning of his reign (2 Chron.29:21); he then went ahead and made his purges of the illegal altars etc. Thus the taking away of Jacob's iniquity referred to in Isa.27:9 was due to blood sacrifice followed by their actual destruction of the altars. Obviously the sacrifice alone would not have made atonement without there being some sign of repentance in practice.

h) Miriam was smitten with leprosy and was healed without sacrifice.

The healing of Miriam (Num.12:9-15)

Miriam was smitten with leprosy for her part in the rebellion against Moses' authority. The living death of leprosy is an obvious type of sin. Moses prayed " Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee" . However, it can be inferred that God was not happy to grant immediate reconciliation: " If her father had but spit in her face (cp. Deut.25:9 -suggesting she was unwilling to build up her brother's

house?), should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. And Miriam was shut out from the camp: and the people journeyed not, till Miriam was brought in again" .

It is fair to assume that Miriam had to go through the ceremony of cleansing for leprosy as outlined in Lev.14:1-8. This was a ritual based very much on that of the day of Atonement; two birds (cp. two goats on the day of atonement) were taken, one was killed and the blood sprinkled on the ex-leper, and the other let " loose into the open field" , as the scapegoat was. It was not until this was done that Miriam could return to the congregation, and therefore to fellowship with God. Thus blood still needed to be shed to make atonement for her. The camp of Israel only moved on when they were led on by the guiding Angel. The fact that the point is emphasized that they remained stationary for 7 days may possibly suggest that the Angel would not lead them onwards towards the promised land whilst Miriam was still in her state of separation from God, which was only resolved by the sacrifices outlined above.

i) Abimelech was forgiven by Abraham's prayer, without shedding blood.

Abraham's prayer for Abimelech (Gen. 20:7,17)

Abimelech and his household were cursed by God with the inability to produce children as a result of Abimelech's relationship with Sarah. He was advised to ask Abraham to pray for him so that this curse would be taken away now that he was no longer intending to take Sarah as his wife. However, that prayer was not for forgiveness, because Abimelech did not know that Sarah was married; he was not knowingly breaking God's laws. That he did not sin is made quite clear by God: " God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against Me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (Gen. 20:6). Therefore Abraham's prayer was for God's curse on Abimelech of infertility and eventual death to be lifted, not for his forgiveness (20:7).

j) In Ezra's time the Jews separated from their foreign wives, thereby gaining forgiveness without shedding blood.

Separation from sin brings forgiveness

The contention that in Ezra's time the Jews only had to separate from their foreign wives to receive forgiveness fails to appreciate that blood sacrifices were only acceptable once the sin had been repented of and rectified where necessary. And Ezra 10:19 is conclusive: " They gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for a trespass offering" .

5.5 Jewish Objections To Christian Usage Of Old Testament Passages

1) Psalm 2 - This is about David, not Jesus. Psalm 89 is parallel to Psalm 2 and supports this. The concluding verse " Kiss the son..." should be translated " serve with purity" .

This Psalm speaks of the Lord's " anointed" , who was also to be His begotten son (v.2,7,6, where " set" is " anointed" in Hebrew). 'Mashiach', the Hebrew for 'messiah' means literally " an anointed one" , and therefore it is reasonable to interpret this Psalm as speaking of Messiah. It has definite allusions to the promise to David about his great descendant:

Ps.2

2 Sam.7

" Yet have I (God) set My king upon My holy hill of Zion"

" I will set up thy seed after thee..

Ps.2 describes how all opposing kings will be overcome by God.

establish the throne of His Kingdom...

" Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee"

" I will be his father, and he shall be My son" -only possible by God begetting a son of an unmarried woman.

This shows that Ps.2 is not about David, but about his promised son. That this did not only refer to Solomon is shown by David's comment that " Although my house (immediate family) be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant" (2 Sam.23:5). This indicates that David looked for a future, eternal fulfilment of the promise of his seed, unrelated to any primary fulfilment it might have in Solomon. David's description of the promise as speaking of his house " for a great while to come" (1 Chron.17:17) would be irrelevant if it only had fulfilment in Solomon. Any parallels with Ps.89 are by reason of that Psalm being a commentary on the promises to David which Ps.2 also refers to. It is difficult for Jews to argue that Ps.2 has had any major fulfilment so far; David's messiah/seed was to be surrounded in Jerusalem by many armies who will resent his rule over them (v.2,3), and who will be destroyed by God's intervention on behalf of Messiah, with the result that his Kingdom is then worldwide (" the uttermost parts of the earth" , v.8). It is easy to see how this will occur when Jesus returns to earth to reign in Jerusalem as David's seed.

2) Psalm 22

a) Ps. 22 refers to the Jewish people collectively; the references to parting of garments and bones sticking out sounds like Auschwitz.

b) Jesus did not expect God to deliver him. The person in Ps. 22 did. Jesus expected to be crucified (Matt. 20:19).

This Psalm contains much language which it is impossible to apply to a group of people. It is a Psalm of David, and therefore refers primarily to the sufferings which he endured, perhaps during the time of Absalom's rebellion. In view of this, it is hard to make it refer to a group of people. If it does do so, then this must be by reason of very indirect allusion. The person referred to was surrounded by jeering spectators, who in particular mocked his spiritual claims(v.8), leading him to reflect that it was God who created him in the womb (v.9,10). The man's bones suffered greatly (v.14), burning thirst tormented him (v.15), his hands and feet were nailed (v.16), his garments were parted (v.18). The rest of the Psalm then describes how God vindicates and rescues this man from death, so that he promises to " declare Thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee" (v.22). This last verse makes it hard to interpret this person as a group of people, seeing that he declares God to " the congregation" of his brethren. The Jews admit in the Talmud

that Jesus was crucified. This prophecy in Ps.22 undeniably fits the scene of crucifixion, especially of Jesus. Verse 30 mentions how " A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation" , which is very much the language of Isa.53 concerning God's suffering servant/Messiah who would save Israel from their sins by his sacrifice. This connection confirms that Ps.22 is about an individual rather than Israel generally.

However, it is true that some of the descriptions of Messiah's sufferings do have faint echoes in them of the sufferings of Israel. Jewish prison art discovered at Auschwitz indicates that many Jews who suffered there came to appreciate that what they were going through had a remarkable similarity with the sufferings of Jesus on the cross. And in their holocaust to come this will be repeated on a much greater scale, until they mourn for their Messiah whom they pierced in crucifixion (Zech.12:10). It is worthwhile highlighting the extent to which the punishments of apostate Israel came upon Jesus on the cross, seeing that there he was Israel's sin bearer, whom they only need to identify themselves with to gain the benefit of His atoning sacrifice.

Judgments on Israel

Experienced by Jesus on the Cross

Hos.2:3,6 = Matt.27:27-29; Jn.19:28

Josh.22:13 = Lk.18:33

Ps.89:30-32; Is.28:18 = Mt.27:30

Ez.22:1-5 = Jesus mocked by Gentile Roman soldiers, Mt.27:27-31

Is.50:2,6 = Mt.26:67; 27:30; Lk.18:32

Jer.18:16 = Mt.27:39

These similarities are too close to have been engineered humanly; if it is accepted that Jesus was crucified, it does not seem unreasonable to accept that the sufferings of Jesus described in the New Testament really did happen. It therefore follows that Jesus of Nazareth did bear the sin and judgments of Israel, and therefore he is their saviour-Messiah.

The claim that " Jesus did not expect God to deliver him" reveals a poor knowledge of His words. He definitely did expect God to deliver him: Matt.16:21,27; 19:28; 20:18,19; 26:27-29,31,32,64.

3) Psalm 110:1 - " The Lord said to my lord" . The Talmud interprets David's lord as Abraham, not Jesus. The rest of the Psalm refers to God's advice to Abraham before his battle with the four kings in Gen. 14.

To say that this refers to Abraham is ludicrous. " The Lord (God) said unto my (David's) Lord, Sit thou at my right hand" (110:1). The person referred to is therefore David's 'lord', who was asked to sit at the right hand of God, in Heaven. There is no record of Abraham ever being promised that he would go to heaven. This person was to be ordained a priest by God : " Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (v.4). Yet we are told that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek and

was blessed by him (Gen.14:19,20), showing that Melchizedek was both separate from and superior to Abraham. " Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Ps.110:2) recalls the promise to Abraham that his seed would " possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen.22:17,18). Again, Ps.110 must refer to Abraham and David's seed, who would be a king-priest after the order of Melchizedek, rather than to Abraham personally.

The seed of Abraham sitting at God's right hand in Heaven, until He is revealed in glory to rule a world now subdued under God's command, fits in neatly with the Christian concept of Jesus having ascended to Heaven, where he now sits awaiting His return to the earth to establish God's perfect Kingdom here. At that time " Thy people (Messiah's people of Israel) shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning" (110:3), suggesting a major repentance and spiritual rebirth of Israel at this time. Again, this undeniably ties up with Jesus returning from Heaven to be accepted by a repentant Israel.

8) Micah 5

a) Micah 5:1,2 parallels 1 Sam. 17:12 - it is saying that David, the ancestor of Messiah, was born in Bethlehem.

b) Micah 5:5 says Messiah is to bring peace - which Jesus did not.

This passage is widely recognized amongst Jews as having application to Messiah, the great seed of David. To argue that it is only about David is surely just being contrary. The Jewish Soncino commentary is explicit in its support of a Messianic meaning. It says the chapter is " A prophecy of the Messianic King and Israel's destiny among the nations" , further commenting on verses 1-5: " This prophecy of the Messiah is comparable with the more famous 'shoot out of the stock of Jesse' prophecy in Isaiah 11. To hearten the people in their calamitous plight, Micah foretells the coming of one from Bethlehem (i.e. of the house of David) who, in the strength of the Lord, will restore Israel to the land and rule over them in God's name in abiding peace" .

The Midrash (Breishis Rabba 2:4) interprets this passage (correctly, from the Christian viewpoint) as meaning that the concept of Messiah has always been with God from the beginning.

Micah 5 is speaking of Messiah in the future tense: " Thou, Bethlehem...out of thee shall he come forth unto me (i.e. as God's very own son, implying a virgin birth?) that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting" (Mic.5:2), showing that this is about a future person, although his ancestry (" goings forth") goes far back. 1 Sam.17:12 just makes the point that David was from Bethlehem Ephrathah -and because Messiah is to be the great descendant of David, it is fitting that he should have been born in David's city. The Hebrew phrase " mikedem" which is translated " from of old" recurs in Mic.7:20, speaking of the promises to the patriarchs (also of the seed/Messiah) " which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" . " From everlasting" (Heb.'mime olahm') means " from ancient times" (see R.V.margin; N.I.V.). This idea of things being done from " everlasting days" occurs in Isa.63:9,11 concerning the Exodus from Egypt; in Amos 9:11 concerning David and Solomon's time; and in Mic.7:14 concerning the time of the Assyrian invasion. Thus it does not necessarily mean from eternity in absolute terms.

We have mentioned elsewhere that to fulfil all the Messianic promises, Messiah must have two major comings. Verse 1 describes how this Messiah will be treated: " They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek" . Verse 2 then refers back to how despite this (" But thou,

Bethlehem...") He will have been born as the descendant of David who was to be Israel's king/Messiah. The prophecy continues " Therefore (because of their smiting of Messiah in v.1?) will He (God) give them (Israel) up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel...(then) he shall be great unto the ends of the earth (the Messianic Kingdom). And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Mic.5:3-5). From all this it should be clear that there are two comings of Messiah; one at which he is persecuted by Israel after having been born as their Messiah at Bethlehem, followed by a period in which Israel are rejected by God until they repent, at which time Messiah will come again to save Israel from an Assyrian invasion and establish the Messianic Kingdom worldwide. Assyria has its modern counterpart in the Arab powers surrounding Israel. At any moment we will see a massive Arab invasion of Israel, and the horrors of the ensuing holocaust will lead Israel to repent of their rejection of their Bethlehem-born Messiah, Jesus. Due to this, He will then intervene on God's behalf to save them from the 'Assyrian' invasion, and then establish God's eternal Kingdom worldwide.

5-5-1 Christian And Jewish Interpretation Of Isaiah 53

6) Isaiah 53

a) This shows that suffering leads to purification, but there is no hint here that it is speaking of a sacrifice which will provide future atonement.

(b) Parts of Isaiah 53 are in the past tense, e.g. " Who hath believed our report?" . Therefore it cannot be a prophecy of the future. Phrases like " He hath borne our griefs" occur, rather than " he shall bear our griefs" . The present tenses in Isaiah 53:3 show that at least part of that prophecy is referring to the times of Isaiah. There are some future tenses in Isaiah 53 showing that the whole passage cannot refer to the future; only parts of it can.

(c) The " servant" of Isa. 53 refers to the Jewish people as a whole - the term " My servant" is used like this in Isa. 49:3.

(d) Isa. 53:7 says that the servant would not open his mouth, yet Jesus did do so in his sufferings (Matt. 27:46). By contrast, the Talmud (Berochos 61 b) gives examples of how Jewish martyrs died in silence.

(e) Isa. 53:10 describes the servant having children and living a long life. This does not apply to Jesus.

This passage was discussed earlier in the transcript, and therefore only the specific objections raised will be discussed here:

a) Isa.53 does speak of sacrifice; God would make " his soul" , i.e. " him" , " an offering for sin" (v.10). The Law required that the offerer lay his hand on the sin offering before it was killed, to associate himself with it (Lev.4:4,15,24,29). In this way the animal bore the offerer's sins, in the same way as the scapegoat bore Israel's sins on the day of Atonement. This fact is definitely alluded to here: " Bearing their iniquities" (v.11), " He bare the sin of many" (v.12), " the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (v.6). These verses are conclusive that a human offering and sin-bearing sacrifice is being described here . It is noteworthy that the bullock's blood was to be " sprinkled" seven times before the Lord to make atonement (Lev.4:6,17); and the same Hebrew word occurs

earlier in this same suffering servant prophecy: " My servant...his visage was so marred more than any man...so (on account of his sufferings) shall he sprinkle many nations" (Is.52:13-15).

We have shown earlier that the blood of the slain animals was not in itself a valid way of atoning for sin -it pointed forward to " the blood" of the perfect sacrifice. That perfect sin-bearing sacrifice, which Isa.53 shows was to be made by the willing death of the suffering servant, therefore gained forgiveness of sin for all time. The seed of the woman was to destroy sin, the seed of the serpent, through his own temporary sufferings (the bruising on the heel, Gen.3:15). " Sin" in this context must include all the transgressions which have ever been committed, and all those which ever would be after the time that perfect sacrifice was made on Calvary's cross. This perfect sacrifice would not be so if there were other sacrifices still needed after it had been made. Therefore this perfect sacrifice which the " volume of the book" of the Old Covenant constantly pointed forward to (Ps.40:7), would provide atonement for future sins. Thus in the same way as the efficacy of the perfect sacrifice reached back to provide forgiveness of the sins committed under the Old Covenant, so its efficacy reaches forward as well. It is noteworthy that the Orthodox Jewish book of Zohar interprets Isaiah 53 by saying that it illustrates how God chooses to smite one just man in order to save many others.

b) Unlike tenses in the Greek New Testament, tenses in the Hebrew Old Testament are frequently used as part of linguistic idiom. To accept arguments based upon them is something very few who appreciate Old Testament Hebrew would be willing to do. A good example of the problem with Hebrew tenses is found in Gen.17:5,6: " Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee (past tense). And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will (future) make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee" . The use of the past tense in " a father of many nations have I made thee" shows that this tense can be used to show Divine intention. The same principle is applicable in Isa.53 -the past tenses there indicate God's intention to do things which elsewhere in the same prophecy are spoken of in the future tense.

This " prophetic perfect" tense in Hebrew grammar is definitely recognized by Jewish expositors (e.g. A. Cohen in the Soncino Commentary on Obadiah 2). The apparent use of past and then future tenses is surely to teach that there was to be a certain order in Messiah's work as outlined in this passage -first sacrifice, and then honour. We have shown elsewhere that Messianic prophecies normally had a primary fulfilment; in this case the minor fulfilment was in Hezekiah, and therefore it is fitting that there is a mixture of tenses, as parts of the prophecy are more specifically relevant to him than others.

Another significant example of this is found in Ps.110:1: " The Lord (God) said to my (David's) Lord (Messiah), Sit thou at my right hand" . Seeing that Messiah was to be a descendant of David, it follows that he could not have existed before he was born, and therefore God could not have literally spoken to him. Thus David is using the past tense (" the Lord said") in a prophetic sense.

It is also evident that the present tense is also used in Old Testament prophecy to describe future events: " Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa.60:1) describes Israel's future glories; similarly Isa.9:6 " For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" . Due to His foreknowledge God can speak of things which are not as though they are.

c) We have shown in our comments on Ps.22 how on the cross Jesus bore many of the punishments for disobedience that were to come on Israel.

Therefore Christians see in this a confirmation of the fact that the suffering servant prophecies do often have a dual application to both Messiah and the people of Israel. However, the Targums interpret Isa.53 as specifically referring to Messiah (Sanhedrin 98b); there is good reason to support their implication that not all references to the " suffering servant" are to the people of Israel. Isa.49 speaks of the servant being called by God out of the womb (hinting at a virgin birth?), and being " His (God's) servant to bring Jacob again to him...to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel" (v.1,5,6). This clearly differentiates the " servant" and the people of Israel. The " we" referred to in Isa.53 is Israel: " When we shall see him (the servant) there is no beauty that we should desire him (as Jews today claim that they see nothing attractive in Jesus)...we esteemed him not...for the transgression of My (God's? Isaiah's) people (Israel) was he (the servant) smitten" . Similarly the same servant in Isa.49:7 is described as " him whom man despiseth... whom the nation abhorreth" when he came to save them from their sins. This is further proof that the Jews were firstly to reject their Messiah and subject him to tremendous mockery and death. No other individual has been so mocked by the Jews as Jesus. Israel desperately need a Messiah now -and that Messiah must be one whom previously they rejected, mocked and killed. The only candidate is Jesus Christ. There are many connections between the language used of the suffering servant in Isa.53, and that of Ps.22:6 and Ps.69:7,10,19 which also describe the suffering of Messiah. These verses again show how one individual is mocked by his Jewish brethren; seeing that the person spoken of here is the same as in Isa.53, this further proves that the person there is not the nation of Israel.

It must also be borne in mind that notable Rabbis have interpreted Isa.53 as referring to a personal Messiah:

- The Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel, a Rabbi broadly contemporary with Jesus, comments on Isa.53: " Behold, my servant, the Messiah, shall prosper..." . Aben Ezra writes: " Jonathan ben Uzziel has interpreted it (Isaiah 53) of the Messiah who is to come, and this is also the opinion of wise men of blessed memory (i.e. Rabbis), in many of their Medrashes" .
- The book of Zohar and also Solomon ben Isaac make the same identification.
- Jarki, the 12th century Rabbi, comments on Isa.53: " King Messiah was among the generation of the wicked....as it is said, 'He was wounded for our transgressions'" .
- Rabbi Moses Alshech of the 15th century comments on the passage " Our Rabbis, with one mouth have reverently received by tradition that King Messiah is here spoken of" .

d) This quotation from Matt.27:46 concerning Jesus speaking during his sufferings supposes a certain degree of acceptance of the New Testament record. By this token it must be significant that Matt.27:12,14 emphasize how Jesus remained silent before his accusers " insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly" . Isa.53:7 is specifically speaking about Messiah's attitude before those who condemned Him: " He opened not his mouth...as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" . That Messiah was to speak during his sufferings is shown by Ps.22:1-4 describing his agonized prayers during this time; Ps.69:3 is similar, describing how " I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried" . This definitely implies a verbal expression of prayer. We have mentioned above that there are many linguistic and conceptual links between Isa.53 and these Psalms, showing that prophetically they speak of the same suffering servant. Therefore it is to be expected that he was silent before his accusers, but later cried mightily unto God whilst enduring the sufferings they inflicted on him. This is precisely what the New Testament records of the passion of Jesus.

e) This verse 10 seems to be teaching a death and resurrection of Messiah; he would be "bruised" (cp. Gen.3:15 -i.e. to conquer sin), so that "his soul (was) an offering for sin", entailing his death. But then the verse continues "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days", implying that he is then given eternal life and many children (compare Ps.45:16). The fact that Jesus died young without literal children therefore fits the requirements of this verse, because Messiah was only to be given those things after his death and resurrection. To take "children" here as literal children tends to do violence to the fact that most of the other 37 references in Isaiah to children refer to them in a figurative, often spiritual, sense. To suddenly insist on a literal application here is quite out of keeping with this. It is understandable how through Messiah's perfect offering to overcome sin, he should be able to beget a new generation of men and women, figurative children, who would also overcome sin through his sacrifice. Hence the New Testament's emphasis on the doctrine of the new birth, as a result of hearing and responding to the word of Christ's Gospel (John 3:3-5; 1 Pet.1:23; 2 Cor.5:17).

5-5-2 Zechariah 9 And The Two Comings Of Messiah

9) Zechariah 9: The Two Comings Of Messiah

a) The description of a man riding on a donkey in Zech. 9:9 is very vague. Many men rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and just because Jesus did is no proof that he is Messiah.

b) There is no indication that Messiah will have two comings. The Talmud in Sanhedrin 98a says that if the Jews were worthy then Messiah would come in the dramatic way described in Dan. 7:13,14; if unworthy, they would see Him coming in a lowly form, riding on a donkey as outlined in Zech. 9:9.

a) This part of the objection contradicts the quotation from the Talmud in b), which accepts the possibility of Zech.9:9 having a Messianic application. The argument is frequently used by Jews that the opinion of the Rabbis should be followed; but it seems here that objections are being made which contradict Rabbinic teaching. This in itself shows a desperation that is altogether illogical, and indicates that an appeal to rational logic is not enough to disprove the Messiahship of Jesus. If indeed the prophecy is as vague as this objection claims, then surely there was no point in Zechariah being inspired to write this. The New Testament records how when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, the people immediately recognized this as a Messianic action, because they then lined the streets and shouted their praise of "the son of David", i.e. Messiah (Matt.21:9).

b) Putting all Messianic prophecy together, it would be impossible for it all to be fulfilled in one coming of Messiah. We have mentioned in the transcript the prophecies of Messiah's rejection by Israel; they would hardly have done this to a Messiah who came in glory and irresistibly established His Kingdom on a perfected earth. It therefore follows that they did so to Messiah when he came in a lowly form, with no natural attraction for Israel (Is.53:2). However, there are other prophecies of Messiah coming in power and glory (Dan.7:13,14). This must refer to His second coming, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth in fulfilment of the many prophecies about the Messianic Kingdom, not least in the promises to Abraham and David (Gen.22:17,18; 17:8; 2 Sam.7:12-16; Ps.45,72; Isa.11 etc.).

The quotation from the Talmud made in this objection, if it is true, opens up a great spectrum of doubt as to the validity of God's word. If some prophecies of Scripture will never be fulfilled due to Israel's unworthiness, then those parts of God's word are untrue. This seems an all too convenient

way of overcoming a difficult problem for Judaism to grapple with. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and very soon afterwards was crucified by the Jews, followed 40 years later by the destruction of the temple and therefore the end of the Old Covenant. If what is suggested in the Talmud is true, then Israel are therefore declared unworthy -by reason of crucifying Jesus. However, there may well be a principle of deferment- that prophecies have their fulfilment deferred depending on the spiritual state of those with whom the prophecy deals. The case of Jonah's prophecies against Nineveh well indicate this. Thus the coming of Messiah in glory may be delayed (in human eyes) due to Israel's unworthiness, but the prophecy of it in Dan.7:13,14 will never be negated -otherwise we have the frightening prospect of God's word not being totally true, and being prone to failure. David so often expressed the opposite view in the Psalms: " For ever, Lord, Thy word stands fast...Thy word is pure from the beginning...therefore Thy servant loveth it" . With this principle of the infallibility of God's word established, the Jews have to accept that the two different comings of Messiah which the prophecies speak of must both be fulfilled; and this can only be by Messiah having two comings.

The quotation from the Talmud shows that the Jews recognize that there are Messianic prophecies which cannot be fulfilled at the same coming of Messiah. If they accept that God's word is inspired and therefore certain to be eventually fulfilled, they will accept that there must be two comings of Messiah.

We have shown in the latter part of our comments on Dan.9 that two comings of Messiah are hinted at there, seeing that he is called " Messiah the prince" , whereas elsewhere it is quite clear that Messiah is to be a king, reigning on David's re-established throne in Jerusalem (2 Sam.7:12-16; Ps.72,89). It is also instructive to consider the typical pattern set by many of Israel's previous saviours:

- Moses was rejected by Israel at his first coming and appeal to them; but on his return 40 years later he was accepted by them.

- David was rejected by his brothers.

- Joshua (same word as 'Jesus') approached the promised land with Israel, but due to their faithlessness in his report they failed to enter it; 40 years later they approached the land a second time with Joshua-Jesus, and entered it. We have shown earlier that Isa.53 is a prophecy of the suffering of Messiah; it is prefaced by the complaint " Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm (that Hebrew word is from the same root as that translated " seed" , alluding to the promised Messiah/seed of the promises) of the Lord revealed?" (Isa.53:1,2). This is alluding to Israel's disbelief of Joshua and Caleb's report concerning the promised land. This resulted in their wilderness sufferings for 40 years until they summoned enough faith to enter and inherit the land, having accepted the testimony of Joshua-Jesus. So Israel too have suffered and will yet suffer in the " wilderness of the people" (Ez.20:35) due to their rejection of the promised rest offered in Jesus, although afterwards they will be pleased to enter that rest under Jesus' leadership. The conquest of Canaan under Joshua has many connections with the latter day prophecies of Israel's future victories over their Arab neighbours under the leadership of Jesus.

- Joseph was rejected by his brethren due to his claims of special Divine revelation, as Jesus was by Israel. However, in their time of crisis they threw themselves at his feet, and after battling within themselves to have faith in his love and forgiveness, were saved by him out of their trouble. This all points forward to how the Jews will look upon Jesus whom they thought they had disposed of so

long ago, and accept his offer of salvation from the dire straits they will soon be in at the hands of their enemies. Not without significance is Joseph's name at this time: 'Zaphnath Paaneah', meaning literally 'Saviour of the world'. This in itself cements Joseph as a type of Messiah.

- Elijah at his first ministry went about doing good deeds, as well as denouncing Israel's sin. He was persecuted by them, and then taken up into Heaven. At his second coming Israel will accept him, as they proclaim each Passover (cp. Mal.4). This typifies exactly the position with Jesus.

- An Israel dominated by superficial Saul persecuted David, God's anointed King (i.e. His messiah, anointed one). Only a remnant of Jewry accepted him, suffering with him in his troubles. But after successive Philistine military victories, David returned and was accepted by the people, who marvelled at his mercy to the house of Saul. The words 'Philistine' and 'Palestine' are linguistically connected; thus again we see the connection between an Arab victory over Israel and their acceptance of God's true Messiah.

- Similarly the book of Judges records many incidents in which Israel cried unto the Lord and repented due to the oppression by their Arab neighbours, which God responded to by sending them a "saviour" - a Jesus. Many of these "saviours" suffered experiences which Jesus, the ultimate saviour and judge of Israel, also experienced. Note that Mic.5:1 describes the persecuted Messiah as "the judge of Israel". Consider the following:

a) Gideon was opposed to his father's household and the men of his city, although later they accepted his reformation of their false worship (Jud.6:27-32). Initially they wanted to kill him, but his father intervened so that in some strange, unrecorded way he overcame this death sentence. This exactly fits the position of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament, his Father preserving him from the death sentence by means of resurrection. Gideon was from a small, despised family - as Jesus was despised by Israel for his poor background.

b) Israel were unwilling to fully support the great campaigns and victory of the great judge Deborah (Jud.5:15-17).

c) Jephthah, "the son of an harlot", was "thrust out" by his brethren. In Israel's time of distress through the invasion of the children of Ammon (modern Jordan/Syria), they pleaded with him to return and be their leader: "They said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain...therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us...and be our head...the Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words" (Jud.11:1-10). This desperate pleading will only be matched by Israel's pleading for the return of Jesus when their Arab neighbours have brought them to their knees. Compare their initial mockery of Jephthah's parenthood ("Thou art the son of a strange woman", v.2) with the Jewish claim that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier by a whore. Again, the pattern is clear; initial rejection of God's appointed saviour, mockery of his parenthood, the saviour in exile, then Israel's fervent repentance and desire of him as a result of their Arab oppression. It cannot be gainsaid that this makes Jesus of Nazareth the true Jewish saviour. During his exile, Jephthah lived in the land of Tob, a word meaning spiritually good, joyful, gracious etc. - a fitting type of Heaven, where Jesus spends his exile after his initial rejection.

d) Ibzan, a later judge, was from Bethlehem, the record twice stresses (Jud.12:8,10). This emphasis points us to Messiah, who was to be a Bethlehemite (Mic.5).

e) Samson was born by the intervention of God on his mother's womb, as in a far fuller sense was Jesus. He was betrayed by his brethren (Jud.15:9-13), but after winning the greatest ever victory against the Philistines (cp. the Arabs, Jud.16:30), was finally accepted by his brethren (so Jud.16:31 implies).

As a footnote to all this, it needs to be pointed out that the Talmud and most of the early Jewish writings teach the doctrine of the two Messiahs -one who would suffer and die, and the other who would rule and reign (see, e.g., the Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 52a). This shows the Jewish acceptance of the problem of making all the Messianic prophecies apply to just one coming of Messiah. They clearly indicate two comings of Messiah.

5-5-3 Christian And Jewish Interpretations Of Isaiah 7:14

4) Isaiah 7:14 - This is not about Jesus.

a) The birth of Immanuel was to be a sign to king Ahaz, so it must refer to a child born then.

b) The Hebrew word "almah" translated "virgin" only means a young woman; a virgin in the sexual sense would be denoted by the Hebrew word "Bethulah" .

c) Jesus was called " Jesus" and not " Immanuel" .

This is a classic bone of contention in Jewish/ Christian debate. However, the outcome of this has often been held to be highly significant on deciding the Messiahship of Jesus. In view of all the other evidence available, this should not be the case.

" The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" .

This being spoken to King Ahaz, it is evident that this must have a primary application to his time. But it can be proved that most Messianic prophecies have a dual application, to an individual contemporary with the time of the prophecy, and also on a far grander scale to the future Messiah. Jewry seems reluctant to accept this; yet the promises to David provide an example which cannot be gainsaid. He was promised a seed who would build a temple, and whose kingdom would be established by God (2 Sam.7:12-16). David's son was Solomon, and he fulfilled these aspects of the prophecy (1 Chron.22:6-11; 28:5-7). However, the following considerations show that there is another, greater descendant referred to:

- David recognized that God's promise was about his family " for a great while to come" (1 Chron.17:17).

- He confessed that his present family was not the real fulfilment of the promises, and that this must lie in the far distant future (2 Sam.23:5).

- The seed would have an everlasting Kingdom and rule on an everlasting throne (2 Sam.7:13,16); i.e. he would have eternal life.

- This state of affairs would be seen by David, in his presence (2 Sam.7:16). This rules out application to Solomon, and suggests that David would have to be resurrected to behold this.

- Solomon ended his days sunk in apostasy. He hardly fits this prophecy of an everlasting seed of David who will rule the everlasting Messianic Kingdom.

It is, however, clear that the prophecy must have some reference to Solomon. Similarly, many other Messianic prophecies can be expected to follow a similar pattern. We need to imagine Isaiah standing before the court of Ahaz, pronouncing that " The virgin shall conceive" (R.V.margin). The Hebrew word 'almah' means a mature, unmarried woman, who by inference was a virgin. Its other uses in the Old Testament are all with regard to young women who were also virgins, e.g. Rebekah (Gen.24:43) and Miriam (Ex.2:8). The reason why the word 'bethulah' is not used (meaning a virgin in the strict sense of the word) is because the prophecy had a dual application, to a young woman in Isaiah's time, and also to the virgin who was to bear God's son, the Messiah. The Lord gave a " sign" (Hebrew: a marvel, a token, a wonder). For a young woman to have a baby would not be a great sign in that sense; therefore it is fitting if the prophecy also had a more significant future fulfilment. It is noteworthy that the Jewish translated Septuagint version uses the Greek word 'parthenos' for " virgin" here, which definitely means a virgin in the sexual sense. This is the basis of the word " parthenogenesis" , which is used to describe greenfly, wasps and other species reproducing without males. The book of Isaiah in this version " was translated in the second century B.C." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th Ed., 1986), contrary to some desperate Jewish claims. Later Greek versions produced by the Jews after the time of Jesus change 'parthenos' to 'neanis', meaning a young woman. This very fact shows that the Jews have something to explain away here. It is clear from this that the Jews of the first and second centuries B.C. themselves understood the secondary application of this prophecy to be to a virgin miraculously giving birth to a child.

However, it could be argued that the sign was not bound to have relevance to Ahaz and his generation; " The Lord will give you a sign" could be referring to Israel nationally, rather than Ahaz individually. Thus God told Israel at Moses' time " The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee" (Deut.18:15), referring to Messiah. Yet that generation of Israel who first heard those words only saw that prophecy have a primary fulfilment in Joshua- its greater fulfilment in Messiah was to be after their time.

The objection that Jesus was called 'Jesus' and not 'Immanuel' is surely on weak ground seeing that Isa.9:6, which many Jewish commentators accept is about Messiah, lists several titles by which he would be called: " His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace" . It should be obvious that he could not have each of these as his personal name. And if, as the Jews agree, the prophecy of Isa.7:14 has a primary fulfilment at the time of Ahaz, which of his sons was called Immanuel? The reference to " The virgin" implies that she was a woman known to Ahaz- perhaps the woman he was engaged to? She of all people would be a young woman whose virginity he felt assured of.

However, " the virgin" also suggests reference to one particularly significant woman who would bear a child who would be the dwelling place of God among men -" God with us" . Such a child would therefore have to grow up to be of perfect character, and would display this to the Jewish world in the first instance (" God with us" is primarily referring to Israel). In the light of this, any application of this to a child born in Ahaz' time must at best be only a primary reference. The main fulfilment must be in one who was of perfect character and represented God's dwelling with flesh. In the light of this we can now link in the fact that the word for " virgin" does have some reference to a

woman who has not had intercourse with a man. For her to conceive must therefore be due to God's begetting a child through her who would therefore be His son. This is exactly what is required by the promise to David, that David's great seed would be the begotten son of God (cp. Ps.2:7). Abraham's natural seed, Isaac, was born by the miraculous intervention of God's power on a woman; Abraham's greater Messiah-seed would also be born in a similar, yet even more miraculous way. In view of this the Christian concept of a virgin birth should not be such anathema to Jews. Thousands of people who met Jesus in person recognized that in Him was a perfection of character and holiness which was quite extraordinary. Millions of people worldwide are convinced from the New Testament record of Him, piecing together the records of His ways as recorded there, that He was perfect in character, and therefore a manifestation of God in the flesh, " God with us" .

5) Isaiah 11:1,2 - This cannot refer to Jesus because it says that in the time when Messiah comes (vs. 9,10 " in that day") Israel will be regathered and the animals live at peace. This did not happen when Jesus came.

We have spoken previously of the necessity of two comings of Messiah to fulfil the prophecies about him. Isa.11:1 describes the seed of David " coming forth" -a phrase which in the Hebrew suggests a physical going out, or public manifestation. At this time, " the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom...and might...he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes" . Thus Messiah was to have vast access to God's spirit-power, both to perform miracles (" might") and in terms of supreme spiritual understanding of God. An examination of the teaching of Jesus clearly shows that he did have immense knowledge of God's ways, and contemporary records attest to the extraordinary miracles he performed. However, this was but a minor fulfilment of what he will achieve when he 'comes forth' in the future.

That prophecies about the " branch" can have both primary and secondary fulfilments is indicated by the fact that these prophecies are all set in a context of the return of Israel from a time of suffering and captivity, with God re-establishing their Kingdom (Isa.4:2; 11:1; Jer.23:5; Zech.3:8; 6:12). Those references in Zechariah show that in some measure the branch prophecies were fulfilled at the time of the restoration under Zerubbabel. But there are many descriptions of the Kingdom of the branch which just do not fit in with the Kingdom which was established in Zerubbabel's time. Some examples:

" The branch...He shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his (God's) throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne" (Zech.6:12,13 -untrue of Zerubbabel, seeing he never ruled in Jerusalem but returned to Babylon after rebuilding the temple).

" A righteous branch...a king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice in the earth...he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" (Jer.23:5,6). This implies that the branch would have a worldwide Kingdom and would be a King. Israel never had a king again after the exile to Babylon, and so this cannot primarily apply to the Restoration. Further, the Branch being " The Lord our righteousness" shows that it was through him that God would provide the necessary covering of righteousness which was needed for the proper forgiveness of sins through the imputation of God's righteousness. Thus the Branch had to be a perfect man who made that willing sacrifice which we have seen earlier was required by the types of the Law.

Isa.11 prophecies of the branch that he will bring about a time when " the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb...they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" . This lifting of the Edenic curse

did not happen at the restoration. Therefore the branch prophecies must also refer to the future Messianic Kingdom.

However, Zech.3:8 and 6:12 clearly show that the Branch prophecies did have a fulfilment at the time of the Restoration. We have laboured this point to show that these prophecies can have one or more partial applications, but still await a fuller one in the future. The prophecies about the Branch being perfect, having the Spirit of God and supreme understanding of Him received some fulfilment at the first coming of Jesus, as we have shown above. But those describing the lifting of the Edenic curse and His ruling over a worldwide Kingdom will be fulfilled at his second coming.

To argue from the phrase " In that day" in v.10 that all these things must happen simultaneously is spurious; the phrase is introducing another strand of the prophecy, which follows in the rest of that verse 10. The A.V. recognizes this by inserting a paragraph break at v.10. However, the real answer to this is as outlined above, that " the Branch" prophecies are capable of more than one fulfilment, and that those fulfilments covered only some parts of the whole picture of " The Branch" , pointing forward to the day when Messiah will come and fulfil all the prophecies by setting up the Kingdom on earth, having redeemed Israel from their sins by His own perfect sacrifice.

7) Jeremiah 31: The New Covenant

a) Jer. 31:31-34 says that when the New Covenant is made the whole world will know God. This is not now true, therefore we are not living under the New Covenant now.

b) A new " covenant" (Heb. " bris") will " not mean a (new) set of laws, but...a creation of a closer relationship" (Levine). The word is used like this in Deut. 7:2.

a) " They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:34) is describing the effects of " the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel" (v.33) upon Israel, not the world. Those Jews who are truly forgiven are therefore under the new covenant. Real forgiveness is only made possible by the offering of the perfect human sacrifice which the Law constantly pointed forward to; that sacrifice was in the death of the Lord Jesus, and because Israel generally will not associate themselves with that sacrifice, they are not under the new covenant of forgiveness. The Jewish claim that they are not now under the new covenant is devastating, seeing that true forgiveness for Israel only comes from this covenant: " I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel...not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers (when) I took them out of the land of Egypt (i.e. the covenant at Sinai); which my covenant they brake...but..I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:31-34). The old covenant has been broken by Israel, and in response God has divorced Israel, confirming their breaking of the covenant. To this day the Rabbis openly accept Israel's divorce from God and the subsequent breaking of the old covenant. If they are not now under the new covenant, then they are under no covenant -they have no relationship with God whatever. The only way out is to accept the new covenant of forgiveness, which we have shown elsewhere to be related to the promises to Abraham of forgiveness through his seed/Messiah. Therefore only with the coming of and acceptance of Messiah can Israel be under this new covenant. Again the point must be emphasized that this total, permanent forgiveness of sins (which will not have to be brought up again at the day of Atonement), can only be possible through a perfect, human sacrifice being made. If Israel wish to have any covenant relationship with God, they have to have it through the new covenant, seeing the old covenant has been broken. And that new covenant requires that Messiah die for their sins. In the

face of this, and the knowledge we should all have of God's desire to see Israel repent, it should be obvious that this sacrifice has already been made -in the person of Jesus. Small wonder there will be such joy and yet tears of sorrow that for so long they have not realized this.

b) The old covenant made at Sinai was clearly a set of laws as well as a definition of a relationship between God and Israel. The new covenant is also a set of (albeit different) laws and a definition of an even closer relationship -but " not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers" at Sinai (Jer.31:32). It is therefore faulty to argue that the new covenant does not fundamentally change the old covenant, as this objection reasons if taken to its logical conclusion. There was evidently a problem with the old covenant; due to man's weaknesses rather than any intrinsic fault in that covenant, it did not bring man to a full relationship with God. Therefore a new covenant was needed, in which God would write His law in human hearts (v.33) rather than on tables of stone, the " tables of the (old) covenant" .

See also notes on how the old covenant was broken and replaced under 'Miscellaneous Objections'.

5.6 Christian And Jewish Interpretation Of Daniel 9

Objections To The Christian Usage Of Daniel 9 Include:

a) The prophecy of the 70 weeks in Dan. 9 has been mistranslated - it would take 7 weeks for Messiah to come, not 69 or 70. It should be translated, " From the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem unto one anointed, a prince, shall be seven weeks; and for sixty two weeks shall it be built again with streets and moats" (see S. Levine, " You Take Jesus, I'll Take God" , p. 30).

b) " Two events were to occur after the 62 weeks - the anointed one would be cut off AND the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed" . The death of Jesus and the destruction of the temple were not simultaneous.

c) The Christian interpretation makes the first 69 weeks consecutive, and then there is a long gap of about 1900 years until the 70th. week occurs.

d) The anointed one was Cyrus - this is what he is called in Isa. 45:1.

e) " Messiah" (Heb. " Mashiach") only means " anointed one" - it does not necessarily refer to one particular person.

f) The passage speaks of " Messiah the prince" . Christians say that this prophecy applies to the first coming of Jesus; but he was not a prince then.

g) Dan.9:27 says that Messiah was to confirm the covenant for one week. If a day represents a year, this means for seven years. But the ministry of Jesus only lasted 3.5 years.

Daniel 9

Any study of the prophecy of the seventy weeks must keep the context of the whole of chapter 9 in mind. In this chapter Daniel is praying for the sufferings of Jerusalem to come to an end, and for the forgiveness of Israel's sins. The prophecy being about the fortunes of Jerusalem, any reference in it

to Messiah is incidental; He is not the main thrust of the prophecy. However, there can be no doubt that what mention that is made of him is valuable evidence as to both the character of Messiah and his identification with Jesus of Nazareth.

God's reply to Daniel's requests is found in the prophecy of the 70 weeks. It is clear from the Biblical history of Israel during their captivity in Babylon and in the period of their return and partial restoration that there were major spiritual weaknesses in the nation which ultimately would warrant God's judgment. The reply to Daniel's prayer typically shows the goodness and severity of God; He promises that:

- In the short term, there will be a decree made to enable the rebuilding of Jerusalem;
- A time for the ending of Israel's iniquity does lie ahead; their cleansing will be through the coming of their Messiah;
- To enable this, a new kind of covenant would be established with them;
- The means to forgiveness would involve a doing away of animal sacrifices and a destruction of the temple, with abominable idols standing there making it " desolate" .
- Eventually this desolation would be done away with.

Thus Daniel's prayer for the forgiveness of Israel and his enquiry about the fortunes of the temple is given a complex answer; very soon a command would go forth to rebuild the temple, but the full judgment for Israel's iniquity still had to come. This would be through the death of their Messiah, great desolation of the temple and other times of trouble. However, ultimately the death and work of their Messiah would enable the eventual cleansing of Israel from their iniquities in a permanent fashion, so that never again would God's House lie desolate.

This seems a fair interpretation of the passage under discussion:

" Seventy weeks have been determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, for sin (offerings?) to be ended, and to seal up transgressions, and to blot out the iniquities (of Israel, which Daniel had been confessing in v.20), and to make atonement for iniquities, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy. And thou shalt know and understand that from the going forth of the commandment for the answer and for the building of Jerusalem until Christ (A.V. " Messiah") the prince there shall be seven weeks and sixty two weeks: and then the time shall return, and the street shall be built, and the wall, and the times shall be exhausted (" even in troublous times" , A.V.). And after the sixty two weeks the anointed one shall be destroyed (" cut off" , A.V.), and there is no judgment in him: and he shall destroy the city and the sanctuary with the prince that is coming: they shall be cut off with a flood, and to the end of the war which is rapidly completed he shall appoint the city to desolations. And one week (" he" A.V.) shall establish the covenant with many (Jews -Dan.12:2): and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and drink offering shall be taken away: and on the temple shall be the abomination of desolations; and at the end of the time (the 70 weeks?) an end shall be put to the desolation." (Dan.9:24-27, Septuagint version; the Greek version of the Old Testament, translated by Jews 200BC).

From this it is clear that after 69 weeks (literally "sevens") from the decree to rebuild the temple Messiah was to be "cut off". This ought to silence once and for all the constant Jewish objection to a suffering Messiah; he was to be "cut off". The decree of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem was given, according to profane history, BC457. Gentile commentators have frequently multiplied 69 by 7 to give a period of 483 day/years that were to elapse before Messiah's death. However, Jewish time is often reckoned in Lunar cycles rather than Solar, as Europeans are accustomed to. On the basis of Lunar time, 69 weeks of years comes out at 486.5 Lunar years. Allowing for a BC/AD calendar inaccuracy of 4 years, this brings us to AD33.5 for the time of Messiah being cut off; which is exactly when Jesus was crucified, 33.5 years after his birth.

The 69 weeks being split into 7 weeks and 62 weeks is understandable once it is appreciated that most Bible prophecy has some immediate reference to the period around which it was given. 7 weeks of years would come to around 50 years. According to the records of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai it would appear that the bulk of the work was done in the 50 years after the issuing of the decree for rebuilding. This mini time period would doubtless have been of great encouragement to the Jews of the time as they laboured in the rebuilding work amidst so much opposition.

No matter how much debate there may be over the events of the 70th week, the above reasoning concerning the 69 weeks still holds true as regards the time when Messiah would die. The description of the sacrifices ceasing and the temple being desecrated by an "abomination" must apply to the final destruction of the temple in AD70. It cannot apply to the time of the Maccabees - despite the disruption of the temple services, the sacrifices did not "cease" permanently. The Hebrew word for "cease" is also translated in the Old Testament as "to cause to fail", "suffer to be lacking", "put down", "to rid", "to take away", showing that the sacrifices in the second temple were to be ended permanently. The placing of abominations in the temple sounds like the Roman desecration of it with the idols of their legions after its final capture in AD70. Jesus also interpreted this part of Dan.9 with reference to the events of AD70 (Matt.24:15).

The abomination that caused desolation in AD70 can also be referred to the abomination of Israel's sins, which finally resulted in the desolation of both the land and the temple. Dan.8:11-13 (R.V.) has many connections with the prophecy of Dan.9 under consideration: "The daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down...an host was given against the daily sacrifice by reason of (Israel's) transgression...the transgression of ('making') desolation". Israel's sins reached the maximum degree to which God was willing to let them accumulate without intervening in judgment. If the Jewish crucifixion of Jesus a few years earlier was indeed their rejection of God's Messiah, then this is understandable. Deuteronomy chapters 28-31 consistently link the ideas of desolation and Israel's disobedience. Josephus (Wars of the Jews, 4.6.6-8) records how the Jewish Zealots made the temple a garrison in AD70 and thoroughly desecrated it by their actions even before the Romans took it.

If the middle of the 70th week was the destruction of the temple in AD70, and there ought to be little Jewish objection to this, then it follows that from BC457 to AD70 is 69.5 "weeks". Now no commentator, Jewish or Gentile, has devised a scheme of interpretation which attempts to fit the 69.5 weeks into this period. Therefore, if AD70 was the middle of the 70th week, it follows that there was a gap in the fulfilment of the prophecy. Thus it should not appear unreasonable to say that the first 69 weeks had a chronological fulfilment from BC457 to AD33, and that the first half of the 70th week ended in AD70. Now it is of the utmost significance that the Jewish wars which culminated in the sacking of Jerusalem in AD70 began 3.5 years previously in AD66/67. Thus the

first half of the 70th week of the judgments upon Jerusalem started at this time. We must ever remember that the 70 weeks prophecy was concerning the judgments upon Jerusalem and how God was going to deal with their sins, which formed the burden of Daniel's initial prayer.

This extraordinary gap in the 70 weeks between AD33.5 and AD66.5 must be significant. Does it not imply that something happened in AD33.5 which gave Israel the opportunity to repent, and that during that time the judgments to come upon them were suspended, although being resumed in AD66.5-70, presumably due to Israel's failure to do anything in the former period to avert those judgments? The Christian reasoning surely sounds uncannily true, that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah who was crucified in AD33.5, and that due to Israel's failure to repent as they should have done the judgments continued. It is noteworthy that the judgments on Jerusalem in the first half of the 70th week were to be by Messiah's armies (Dan.9:26). The idea of Messiah commanding an attack on Jerusalem in order to punish Israel for their sins is impossible to fit into the standard Jewish concept of Messiah. Yet if he is Jesus, all fits into place nicely -having been given control of all things on earth (Matt.28:18) after his resurrection, Jesus was able to send the Roman armies, effectively His armies, against Jerusalem in judgment. Indeed, Jesus foretold the future destruction of Jerusalem by God's armies (Matt.22:1-7); which became His when God gave Him all power after his resurrection. If the New Testament and Christianity is indeed a fake, made up by men, as Jewry is forced to claim, then those men who worked out these elaborate connections of thought and theology must have had access to a mind of superhuman dimension. Surely the very intricacy of how the teaching hangs together so beautifully should be proof enough?

The final half (i.e. 3.5 day/years) of the 70th week is difficult by anyone's standards. Masada, the last outpost of Jewish resistance to the Roman re-invasion, fell in AD73.5, suggesting that the final part of this week and indeed the whole prophecy, finished then. This would mean that by AD73 "reconciliation for iniquity...everlasting righteousness" as promised in Dan.9:24 would have been brought in. This would imply that by that date a major atonement would have been made, and there is no record of any special sacrifice having been made to this end amongst Jewish records. The idea of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice which permanently overcame sin, thus doing away with the need for animal sacrifices, seems to fit the requirements of the prophecy perfectly. In passing, the significance that this prophecy attaches to AD70 is helpful in explaining why Paul was happy to allow Jewish Christians to continue to keep the Mosaic Law initially, but it may be reasonable to infer that after AD70 the changeover period from Moses to Jesus had ended, and therefore it was no longer advisable or necessary for Jewish Christians to keep the Mosaic Law. The (new) covenant of Messiah was "confirmed" (the Hebrew implies violently, with strength) during the 70th week (Dan.9:27), and therefore the Old Covenant of the law (Deut.4:13) was finally done away then, although fundamentally Christians believe that this was done at the death of Jesus on the cross (Col.2:14-17). The "vision and prophecy" being "sealed" (Dan.9:24) at this stage may hint that it was by AD70 or just after that the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy was taken away, and inspired writing ceased. There is ample internal evidence that the whole New Testament canon was written before AD70.

However, it is also possible to argue that the second half of the 70th week refers to a time yet future. The new covenant of Messiah must be powerfully confirmed to Israel, and finally an end of all Israel's punishment for sin must be made, with the result that an end (i.e. a permanent end) must be made to the powers that desolate Jerusalem (v.24,27). Such an end clearly did not come in AD73, and the final deliverance of Israel from God's judgment and desolators of the temple mount must be yet future. It is therefore suggested that there will be a final 3.5 year downtreading of Jerusalem during which time Messiah's covenant will be confirmed mightily to Israel, and at the end of which

time there will be a final end to Israel's sufferings and the destruction of their desolator. Naturally it is impossible to be dogmatic about these things -Jewish commentators are also very open-ended about the meaning of prophecies such as these. However, there are other references to a 3.5 year period of trouble for God's people in Daniel: " A time (a year), times (two years) and an half" , i.e. 3.5 years (Dan.7:25; 12:7; Rev.12:14). The New Testament speaks of a similar period:1,260 days - also 3.5 years (Rev.12:6; 11:3); 42 months (3.5 years) (Rev.11:2; 13:5). It seems fair to assume that they are all speaking of an identical or associated period of time. We have stressed that during the 70th week, the covenant of Messiah will be powerfully confirmed. Therefore we should see this happening during this final 3.5 years; and Mal.3:1 describes the coming of the future Elijah prophet as " The messenger of the covenant" , i.e. he will preach Messiah's covenant to Israel. It is thrilling to find that Jesus and James mention that Elijah's first ministry lasted 3.5 years (Luke 4:25; James 5:17); it would be so fitting in the light of this for Elijah's second ministry to last the same period of time.

Given the present world situation, this 3.5 year downtreading of Israel by those who would take every delight in desecrating Jerusalem and the temple area with their anti-Jewish abominations could begin any moment now.

As a final piece of fascinating speculation, it should be noted that this prophecy is concerning the 70 " sevens" . The idea of seven weeks of years, i.e. 49 years, must make every Jewish mind think of the year of Jubilee. The 70th Jubilee year will be around 1996, if the first Jubilee was kept 49 years after Israel entered the land of Canaan under Joshua. This would therefore associate the period around the end of the 20th century with the time when Israel's sufferings will end, and when through their Messiah their desolators and desolation will finally end. It is significant that one of the few indirect references to the year of Jubilee in Scripture is in the time of Hezekiah, where it would appear that the great invasion of the land by the Assyrians was in a Jubilee year (Isa.37:30 and context). That invasion and its dramatic destruction by God's direct intervention would therefore typify the events at the end of the 3.5 year period of suffering.

With this in mind, we can now briefly comment on what remains of the original objections to the Christian use of this passage:

b) The cutting off of Messiah and the temple's destruction do not have to be simultaneous, although they both occurred at some stage after the end of the 62 weeks; Messiah's death resulted in the abolition of the temple, seeing that on account of his death the Old Covenant had been done away.

d) Cyrus lived long before the decree to rebuild the city which is mentioned in Dan.9. Cyrus gave permission to build the temple. Respected Jewish Rabbis such as Kimchi, Jarchi and Saadiah all agree that the day-for-a-year principle should be used in the interpretation of this prophecy. This rules out any reference to Cyrus as the Messiah spoken of here.

e) It is true that the term 'mashiach' (messiah) can refer to an 'anointed one' like the High Priest, or a prophet (e.g. Elisha) or a king in David's line. However, in the prophecies of the future Messianic Kingdom, it must be one great, specific messiah who is referred to. This person was to be a descendant of David and would rule the whole earth -see prophecies like Psalm 45,72; Isaiah 9,11; Jeremiah 23 etc. Judaism certainly speaks of 'Messiah' as a specific individual who is yet to come (see, e.g., Rabbi D.J. Goldberg: 'The Jewish People, Their History and Their Religion'). Josephus (Book 7.31) describes how the Jews at the time of Jesus were looking for Messiah to come at that time due to their study of Dan.9 and other such prophecies: " That which chiefly excited them (the

Jews) to war was an ambiguous prophecy, that at that time, someone within their country should arise that should obtain the empire of the whole world. This they had received, that it was spoken by one of their nation" . This is confirmed by the New Testament recording that " all men were musing in their hearts" about Messiah at this time.

f) Messiah is elsewhere described as a King coming in the line of David (e.g. 2 Sam.7:12-16); here in Dan.9 he is spoken of as being a prince when he appeared about 483 years after the decree to rebuild the city. This in itself indicates that Messiah was to have two comings: firstly as a prince, and then returning as a King who has received his Kingdom. This is how Jesus saw himself in the parable of the nobleman (Lk.19:12). The time period of 69 weeks from the command to rebuild the city ended in both " Messiah the Prince" (Dan.9:25) and also in him being " cut off" (Dan.9:26), i.e. killed. Thus it would appear that it was at His death that Messiah became " the prince" , the definite article suggesting that this was the specific Messiah and the greatest ever prince. This is all fulfilled by Jesus Christ's triumphant death/sacrifice being rewarded by His being exalted to God's right hand in Heaven, and being made a " Prince and a Saviour" by Him (Acts 5:31), so that due to His death and subsequent glorification in resurrection he became " the prince of (i.e. over) the kings of the earth" (Rev.1:5).

g) This assumes that Messiah's making of " the sacrifice and oblation to cease" was at the end of His 3.5 year ministry. The exposition offered above applies this to His death bringing about the destruction of the temple in AD70.

5.7 Miscellaneous Jewish Objections To Christianity

a) Human blood was never allowed as an atonement. This is a pagan notion.

The use of human blood is as much a pagan notion as the use of animal blood. We have shown at length in the section on 'Reconciliation with God' that " the blood" that made atonement could not be the blood of animals; it pointed forward to the one all effective blood offering that was to be made in the sacrifice of Messiah. We have shown that Isaiah 53 clearly speaks of Messiah as a human sacrifice. If his blood was unnecessary for atonement, then He would have only needed to

suffer rather than die. Yet He is clearly described there as an offering. If animal blood was the atonement, then they would not have had to be continually offered, nor would there have been a remembrance made of Israel's sins each day of Atonement.

b) Deut. 30:8-14 says that it was quite possible for Israel to acceptably obey the Law. The blessings for obedience would not have been made if obedience was impossible. Man is therefore not condemned to sin, and therefore there is no need for someone to die for our sins.

These verses do not say that Israel would keep the whole law. Deut.30:10 is clear: " If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God" . Throughout the prophets there is the continual complaint that Israel were being grossly unfaithful to God's commandments, and the majority of them throughout their history had been. " They were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to Thee, and they wrought great provocations" (Neh.9:26). " I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face" (Isa.65:2,3). The curses for disobedience outlined in the law have come upon Israel, showing their continued disobedience. If they repented, then they

would receive the full Abrahamic promises of eternal inheritance of the land; Abraham and the true seed of Israel would be resurrected to receive the promises; they would have total victory over their enemies, and above all the presence of their saviour-Messiah. (Lev.26:39-45). This would necessitate Israel being regathered to their land and dwelling there securely. The existence of a massive diaspora and the paranoia in the modern state of Israel is proof enough that such repentance and subsequent blessing has not yet occurred.

Whilst technically total obedience to the law was possible, it was primarily a teaching mechanism to make men realize the seriousness of sin. Without the knowledge of the Mosaic law there would have been little appreciation of sin. However, the law also taught a correct understanding of the perfect sacrifice to which it pointed forward, which would ultimately save man from the sinfulness which the law emphasized. The law itself was perfect; it was the weakness of man which resulted in that law leading to sin and condemnation. Therefore by its very reason of being, the law was almost impossible for sinful man to keep. We have seen that the law pointed forward to one specific human sacrifice- " the blood" of atonement. If there were many men who had perfectly kept the law, this would not be necessary. The fact that no one except Jesus ever claimed perfect obedience to the law is proof enough that the Law was very difficult to keep.

Deuteronomy 30 is speaking of the time when Israel will be regathered after their dispersion (v.1-5), and their hearts will be circumcised as opposed to their flesh (v.6), resulting in God's word being in their heart (v.14). There are ample allusions here to the new covenant: " After those days (of sin and lack of covenant relationship with God) I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:33,34). This would lead us to conclude that when Israel are fully regathered and repent, then God will make the new covenant with them, so that they will be able to fully obey His word and therefore receive the blessings for obedience of Lev.26 and Deut.28 in the Messianic Kingdom. There is an extraordinary emphasis on the heart in Deut.30 -the word occurs seven times, suggesting that the passage is speaking of the time when Israel's heart will be totally committed to God's law. This can only be under the new covenant, when God puts His law in Israel's heart. Similarly Ezekiel 36 describes Israel's dispersion and suffering (v.18-20), followed by God taking pity on them (v.21), their regathering, the surrounding nations coming to accept Israel's God (v.22,23), and " then...a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh...and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them" (v.25-28).

It is to this time of Israel's obedience that Deut.30 refers, but this is when the new covenant is made with Israel, and God assists ('causes') Israel to be obedient to the Mosaic Law on account of the new covenant. Without this help Israel would be unable to be obedient to the law. For this reason it is common to read of references to Israel keeping parts of the Mosaic law during the Messianic Kingdom (Mal.3:4; 4:4,5; Ezekiel 40-46; 20:41; 36:26; Isa.60:7; 66:23; Zech.14:21; Mic.4:2); thus through God's making of the new covenant with Israel " He will magnify the law, and make it honourable" (Isa.42:21) through their obedience to it and the blessings for obedience to it coming upon the world during the Kingdom. The Elijah prophet comes as both the messenger of the new covenant and to turn the hearts of Israel (cp. God giving them a new heart) to be truly obedient to " the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel" (Mal.3:1 cp.4:4-6). The " new covenant" can therefore be seen as an 'enabling covenant' enabling full obedience to God's law by Israel. If Israel are disobedient to Elijah, God will smite the land with a curse (Mal.4:6)- the curses for disobedience to the law outlined in Lev.26. By implication, if they are obedient to Elijah's new covenant then they will receive the blessings on the land promised for

obedience to the law. From this it follows that Israel are now disobedient to the law, seeing that Elijah comes to lead them back to the true spirit of the law, which was the burden of his ministry at his first coming.

Returning to the original objection, it is not true that man is forced to sin. However, there is ample indication in the Old Testament that by nature, man is sinful, and therefore condemned to suffer the effects of sin. The record of the fall of man in Gen.3 makes this clear. We have shown above that Israel live and have lived without total obedience to the law of God. There is therefore a need for a perfect sacrifice to atone for Israel's sin. Jewry's rejection of the need for someone to die for their sins seems largely due to their refusal to accept that man is sinful by reason of so easily giving way to his inherent evil mind. The Jews recognize the existence of this evil heart (the 'Yetser ha-ra'), but seem unwilling to accept the degree to which it is present in our very natures. The following need some explaining by them:

- " The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jer.17:9)- i.e. our inherent sinfulness is so great that it deceives us as to its very magnitude. Judaism's attitude to man's sinful nature is surely a prime example of such deception.

- David, a man after God's own heart, admitted " I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps.51:5).

- " Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble (referring to the curse on man in Gen.3)...who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean (i.e. woman)? not one...what is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?...how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 14:1,4; 15:14; 25:4).

- " The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth...I will not again curse the ground for man's sake...neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done" (Gen.8:21; 9:5). This is referring back to the language of Gen.3, as if God is saying that because man is of inherently sinful nature, He will not again bring curses for sin upon the earth in such a form as will permanently affect it. It can be argued that before the flood, man did not eat the animals (Gen.9:2,3). His doing so afterwards would indicate an extension of the Edenic curse.

- The Mosaic provision for sins of ignorance, the day of Atonement, and its constant emphasis on the need for the shedding of blood indicates that sin was a major problem which ultimately could only be dealt with by sacrifice.

- God's dealings with Adam and Eve show that it is a principle with Him that sin brings death. All their descendants were subject to death, showing that by nature they were sinful. Thus even a perfect man would still need to die by reason of having mortal nature. For this reason the Messiah, being a man and descendant of Adam, would have to die, despite his perfection. It is for this reason that true Christians believe that Jesus would have died anyway, e.g. of old age, had he not died on the cross. Thus the Jewish problem with the concept of a Messiah who dies is quite unnecessary.

c) Christians claim that animal sacrifices cannot atone for sin, yet they are to be offered in the Messianic Kingdom, according to Ezekiel. Why, if they are ineffective?

This is the same question as asking why the animal sacrifices were offered before the time of the perfect sacrifice which they foreshadowed. We have shown that the offerings taught man about the

principles of God concerning sin, sacrifice and reconciliation with God. Thus the law has been correctly described as a 'schoolmaster' which led men towards an understanding of the love and purpose of God as shown in the sacrifice of His son as the Messiah. This role of the law as a teacher will continue during the Messianic Kingdom. However, it is the purpose of God to fill this earth with a group of people who fully manifest Him -His memorial name 'He who will be revealed in a host of mighty ones' (Jehovah Elohim) reveals this plainly. The promises to Abraham speak of a time when the earth will be filled with the seed of Abraham, and all the enemies of mankind (i.e. sins) will be permanently overcome. This connects with God's promise in Eden, in which sin was to be finally overcome. Thus animal sacrifices will not need to go on for eternity. We can conclude therefore that the first part of the Messianic Kingdom will involve the teaching of the whole world about the God of Israel, and their entry into covenant relationship with him. The partial restitution of the Mosaic Law as outlined in Ezekiel 40-48 will be uppermost in this teaching programme. However, the time will come when this will have fulfilled its purpose. The New Testament sheds more light on what the Old Testament teaches more indirectly and by implication: " God will be all in all" (1 Cor.15:28), after a 1,000 year reign of Jesus sin will be eradicated from the earth (Revelation 20-22).

Thus instead of the sacrifices pointing forward to the perfect sacrifice as they did before Jesus, they will point back to His work. The Christian breaking of bread service similarly looks back to the sacrifice of Jesus. The New Testament describes the believers as the future king-priests in the coming Kingdom (Rev.1:6; 5:10; 20:6; 1 Pet.2:5,9); as it was God's intention that the whole of Israel should be " a Kingdom of priests" (Ex.19:6), so His new Israel will be also. The prospect before the believers during the first part of the Kingdom is therefore to teach the nations, based in small centres worldwide, as the Levites of old were scattered throughout Israel to teach and judge the people.

d) A sacrifice was only valid if it was offered on the altar (Lev. 17). Jesus was not offered on an altar, so he cannot be a sacrifice.

The constantly underlined principle was that sacrifice could only be offered at the place where God had caused His name to dwell: " There shall be a place which the Lord shall choose to cause His name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices...take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings" (Deut. 12:5,11,13,14,18). The altar is described as the place which God had chosen to place His name there no less than 15 times in the book of Deuteronomy alone. The guilt offering described in Deut.21:1-9 was not made on an altar, although the priests had to be present to " bless (i.e. forgive) in the name of the Lord" (v.5) after the sacrifice had been offered. Being a human sacrifice, Jesus was the fulfilment of the law, and therefore that sacrifice was a special case. God's name was to be carried by Messiah: " His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace" (Is.9:6). Therefore he was the altar, the chosen place of God on which and in which God was willing to see atonement made once and for all (Heb.13:10).

The reference to the altar in Lev.17:11 emphasizes the importance of the blood rather than the altar: " 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 maketh an atonement" . The whole chapter is speaking of the importance of shedding blood.

However, it remains true that there was only one way of correctly offering to God and thus coming before Him in fellowship, and that was to offer on the altar at the one place where God had placed His name. Thus while the temple was standing Israel were able to pray towards that temple and the altar that was within it. The temple and altar were destroyed in AD70, as prophesied in Daniel 9 (see previous notes). It follows that God's name must still be dwelling somewhere so that man can come to God. Seeing it is not dwelling physically in the temple or on the altar, it follows that the temple and altar must represent the person that has replaced them, which according to Daniel 9 is " Messiah the prince" . Thus he can be described as both altar and temple, which symbology the New Testament uses about Jesus.

e) Only kosher animals could be offered on the altar, so the idea of a human sacrifice dripping with blood is contrary to the Old Testament concept of sacrifice.

'Kosher' is a post-Biblical term, meaning literally 'to be fit', and refers strictly to 'clean food' as outlined in Lev.11. We have shown that blood had to be shed for the forgiveness of sin, therefore a blood sacrifice on the altar is necessary. Messiah being perfect, he was the pre-eminently fit ('kosher') sacrifice to be offered there. Thus Heb.2:10 (N.I.V.) says that it was " fitting" that God should make Jesus the saviour because of his perfect character. Again, the laws about clean and unclean animals were for teaching purposes, seeing that there was nothing inherently harmful in some of the unclean meats. Messiah, the supremely clean food of sacrifice, fulfilled those things which this teaching foreshadowed. The altar having to be sprinkled with blood on the day of Atonement (Lev.16:18,19) shows that it is not abhorrent in God's sight to associate blood with the altar. The blood was drained out from the animal and then offered in various ways to God; there was constant emphasis on the fact that the blood was not to be drunk by the offerer, because it represented the life, which was being taken by God. The bloodless animal therefore represented the dead body of the offerer, seeing the blood was the life. It taught that sin resulted in death, and the animal represented the offerer dying on account of his sin. However, Jesus was the offering for sin, therefore he gave his own personal life on the altar. His personal blood and body had to be offered to God, and therefore all this was as it were offered in one offering to God on the cross.

f) The Old Testament concept of atonement is concerning past sins - there is no hint of a sacrifice providing future forgiveness.

This was so by reason of the fact that the blood of the offerings made did not in itself save from sin. To demonstrate acceptance of the principle that sin brought death, the offerer laid his hand on the head of the animal to show it represented him, and then offered it to show that he accepted that he deserved to die. God was willing to accept this representative offering by reason of the fact that the blood shed pointed forward to some perfect offering yet future. This idea has been discussed at length in the section on 'Reconciliation with God'. It is therefore understandable that the offerings made did not relate to future sins, seeing that the offerer could not repent of his sins in advance and sacrifice for them. However, the fact that God was willing to accept the animal offerings as a temporary means of covering sin did in itself point forward to a future sacrifice which would be an all sufficient sin covering. That being made, there would be no need for any more offerings, seeing that forgiveness would be made possible through association with that perfect offering whenever one sinned, rather than through making yet another animal sacrifice. For this reason it is vital to show association of ourselves with the perfect sacrifice of Jesus by means of baptism into his atoning death and resurrection, and also continuing to show our association with this by our taking the bread and wine in memory of His sacrifice.

The claim that atonement for future sins is a concept alien to the Old Testament is surely contradicted by the teaching of the new covenant: " I will (future to the time of Jeremiah) forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer.31:34).

g) The sin offering had to be female. Jesus was male.

This is incorrect. Most sin offerings required male animals. Lev.4 required a bullock for the High Priest or for the whole congregation, and a male goat for a ruler. In Lev.5:15,18, trespass offerings included rams (male animals). The R.V. here translates " trespass" as " guilt offering" . Isa.53:10, concerning the offering of Messiah, describes His sacrifice as a " guilt offering" (R.V.margin). We have seen that the guilt offering was a male animal, and Messiah too was male. The sin and trespass offering were closely related: " As the sin offering is, so is the trespass (guilt) offering: there is one law for them: the priest that maketh atonement therewith (i.e. both types of sacrifices were for atonement) shall have it" (Lev.7:7).

Further, it must be remembered that Messiah was to be the " seed of the woman" who through his sacrifice would overcome sin (Gen.3:15); therefore any female element in the typical teaching of the Mosaic sacrifices can be understood in this context.

h) The Torah is not very precise and is designed to need further explanation. This created the need for the Talmud and Rabbinic interpretation, and therefore their teaching about Jesus should also be accepted. Deut. 17:8-13 says that the interpretation of the Law by the elders was to be accepted as the will of God.

Much of the need for further explanation of the Torah has arisen because Israel have been living for so long without a temple, altar and priests who can prove their genealogy. It is impossible to keep the law of Moses in the long term without these things, although during relatively brief periods of exile provisions such as those outlined in 1 Kings 8 were made. To get round this problem, Judaism has amassed a large body of extra-Biblical teaching to justify themselves. The old covenant has now been broken (Zech.11:10), God has divorced His people Israel, and therefore the Rabbinic pronouncements have become a religion in themselves. Its concepts of atonement and fellowship with God are at odds with the basic teachings of the Old Testament scriptures. It is doubtful whether, had Israel been faithful to the terms of the covenant and remained living in the land in obedience to the Mosaic law, they would have had many cases where they could not find inspired guidance from the Torah.

However, God had made provisions for when such occasions did arise by granting His Holy Spirit to be possessed by a hierarchy of elders, to whom matters of practical judgment could be referred. These seem to have been replaced by the priests of the tribe of Levi, whose duty it was to live in certain priestly cities and indeed probably in all the cities of Israel. They were to keep the true understanding of the Law, and to actively teach this to Israel (Mal.2:5-7). However, they abused their privilege of being supported materially by the people, and are targeted by the prophets as " false shepherds" , who were largely responsible for Israel's apostasy. Malachi chapters 2 and 3 provide ample evidence for all this. However, it should be noted that the priests had no mandate to claim new revelation from God. Indeed the corrupt priests of Jeremiah's time are condemned for so doing. Their method of teaching the people was to be through drawing their attention to the Mosaic law, rather than through claiming new inspiration: " The law of truth was in his mouth...the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth" (Mal.2:6,7).

To suggest that Christians accept Rabbinic teaching about Jesus presupposes that the spiritual mantle of the priests has fallen upon the Rabbis, and that they are speaking by inspiration rather than voicing their personal opinions. At least two major obstacles stand in the way to accepting this:

- There is much disagreement between Rabbis. Thus the Rabbinic schools of Shammai and Hillel disagreed over the interpretation of divorce and other matters of practical interpretation of the Mosaic Law. There is also a wide divergence of Rabbinic teaching over the person of Messiah; Leo Baeck questions whether there will be a personal Messiah, interpreting 'Messiah' as a personification of various ideals; Hillel claims " Israel shall have no more Messiah: for they had him in the days of Hezekiah" ; whilst other rabbis look for a future coming of Messiah. How can Rabbinic teaching about Jesus of Nazareth be accepted as inspired and reliable, when they are so evidently prone to error, as shown by their contradiction of themselves?

- Members of the priesthood had to prove their genealogy; Ezra 2:62 describes how those who could not do so were barred from the priesthood, and were thereby " polluted" -a Hebrew word meaning 'repudiated, defiled, desecrated'. During the destruction of the second temple in AD70 the records of Jewish genealogy were destroyed, and since then there has been no way in which Jews can prove what tribe they are from. All Rabbis since the time of Jesus have been unable to prove their descent, and therefore their claim to representation of the priesthood is groundless. It cannot be coincidental that the proof of descent was permanently destroyed in AD70 -at the very time when, according to the exposition of Daniel 9 offered previously, the ministry of Messiah fully replaced that of the Old Covenant system.

The quotation of Deut.17:8-13 is hardly proof that the views of modern Rabbis about Jesus should be accepted. It describes how in difficult cases the opinion of the High Priest and the priests on duty at the temple should be sought and obeyed. Their pronouncement is called " the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee" (v.11) -i.e. all they were doing was reiterating the relevant parts of the Mosaic Law already existing. It must be remembered that most Israelites would not have had personal copies of the Law, nor would they have been able to read for themselves. Regarding this priestly pronouncement they were told: " Thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee (by pointing to it in the relevant scroll?), to the right hand, nor to the left" (v.11). This must definitely connect with the injunction to keep the Mosaic law without " turning aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deut.5:32; 28:14; Josh.1:7; 23:6). Thus the command of the priest was basically a statement from the Mosaic Law, which they had to obey. Above all, there is absolutely no evidence in the law of Moses that the judgments of the priests were to be written down and treated as inspired scripture. Surely God would have legislated concerning this? By contrast, they were explicitly forbidden to add to the commands which God had given them; the terms of their covenant with God were inviolate: " Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deut.4:2). This implies that any adding to the Law would make the Law itself impossible to obey, which explains exactly the moral and intellectual dilemma of Judaism. The only solution is to accept the new covenant, based as it is on God's merciful action on men's hearts through His word, rather than man having to obey rigid legislation.

i) " Shiloh" , or Messiah, was to come before " the sceptre...depart from Judah" (Gen. 49:10). The last king in the line of Judah reigned at the end of the first temple (2 Kings 24:12; 25:11), so Messiah should have come by then, which was before the time of Jesus.

This is as much a Jewish problem as a Christian one, seeing that many Jews are still looking for a future Messiah. If Shiloh did come before the end of the first temple, then where is the Messianic Kingdom? Jews often argue that Jesus was not the Messiah because he did not establish a Messianic Kingdom on earth. If their objection now being considered is to be accepted, then it follows that there is a person they can identify as Messiah who fulfilled the promises to Abraham and David, who permanently destroyed sin, and who established the Kingdom of worldwide peace and righteousness which the prophets speak of. But this has not happened.

The sceptre was to only temporarily depart from Judah; it was to be removed, the Kingdom was to be overturned " Until he come whose right it is; and I (God) will give it (the sceptre) him" (Ez.21:25-27). Thus the sceptre has not permanently departed. If it has, and Messiah has not come, then the promise to David is broken, seeing he was promised that he would have a son who would reign on his throne for ever.

" The sceptre" cannot mean the existence of a literal monarchy, as the objection interprets it. Jacob was saying that the sceptre would not depart from Judah from then on -which was 800 years before the monarchy began. Yet up until that time the sceptre did not depart from Judah. " The sceptre" must represent the principle of kingship which would ultimately find fulfilment in Messiah; note how Balaam describes him as " the sceptre" (Num.24:17).

Some of the apparent difficulties disappear if the verse is re-translated " The sceptre shall not depart from Judah...until he come to whom it shall be" , which more obviously suggests connection with Ez.21:25-27 " He whose right it is" . Rabbi Ben Uzziel and the Targums of Onkelos and Jerusalem translate it as " Until the time when King Messiah shall come" . Another possible translation is " The sceptre shall not depart...for that (i.e. because) Shiloh (shall) come" ; i.e. because he would be an eternal king and a member of the tribe of Judah, the sceptre of rulership would never depart. This seems the most probable explanation.

j) It took a revelation from Heaven to convince Paul of Jesus' Messiahship (Acts 9:3). This indicates that theological and historical proofs were not powerful enough. Surely without such a revelation there is no reason to accept Jesus?

This objection focuses on the experiences of just one convert to Christianity. But it is also recorded in the New Testament that thousands of Jews were converted by the preaching of the word by Christians without the personal appearance of Jesus. Acts 18:24-28 records how a Jewish Christian named Apollos, " an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures...mightily convinced the Jews...shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ" , i.e. Messiah. Another example, this time concerning Paul, is found in Acts 17:1-4: " There was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was (i.e. this is how he normally preached to Jews), went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed..." . Other records of Paul's entry into a synagogue and preaching the Messiahship of Jesus through reasoning from the Scriptures are to be found in Acts 13:14-43 and 17:10,11. In the latter case we read that many Jews believed because " they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily" . These examples are not of ecstatic response to an emotion-charged message depending on personal experiences, as is seen all too often today, but of a response dependent on " theological and historical proofs" . Paul was a zealot for Jewish tradition. It is an accepted fact that zealots for a cause can ignore the most powerful contrary evidence and need something supernatural to shake them out of their obsessions. Paul was a special

case; indeed, if Jews are willing to accept the record of his conversion, then this is evidence in itself of the uncanny conviction of Christianity.

k) God gave the Law in front of all Israel. It can only be abrogated in front of the entire nation.

There is no Biblical evidence for this reasoning. The law was given through Moses at Sinai in front of all Israel, on a certain date in a certain month. It does not follow that the law has to be ended at Sinai on the same day of the year, with Moses present. Therefore it is not necessary for all Israel to be assembled either.

When Israel left Egypt, their relationship with God is described in terms of both parties falling in love with each other. God could later say of Israel " I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness" (Jer.2:2). God's love and compassion for Israel were similar, so that " I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee...and thou becamest mine...I spread my skirt over thee" (Ez.16:8 cp. Ruth 3:9). This refers to the covenant made with Israel at Sinai in the wilderness, which was the law of Moses. Thus the old covenant was the marriage contract between God and Israel. Thus through disobeying the commandments which made up that covenant, Israel were breaking that covenant and thereby effectively committing adultery against God.

The whole of Ezekiel 16 and also 20:1-33 describe all this in quite explicit language. The covenant was therefore broken by Israel, and God confirmed this by breaking the covenant formally (Zech.11:10). Therefore Hosea, representing God, was told to marry a harlot, symbolic of Israel. As a result of the false relationship between Israel and God, He cast them off from being His people. This was represented by the offspring of Hosea and his harlot wife being called Lo-Ammi, meaning 'Not my people'; " For ye are not My people, and I will not be your God" (Hos.1:9). Thus in practice God confirmed Israel's estrangement from Him by effectively divorcing them. The destruction of the second temple was the ultimate proof of this; Dan.9:26 speaks of Messiah being cut off " and the Jews they shall be no more his people" , which would be followed by the destroying of the " sanctuary" . The killing of Jesus was the ultimate breach of the covenant, and from then on God confirmed, even stronger than during the ministry of the prophets, His estrangement from Israel. This connection between Hosea and Dan.9:26 suggests that the relationship can only be restored when Israel's killing of Messiah is repented of; then they will be God's people again. Significantly, Messiah was to confirm " a (new) covenant" from the time of his cutting off to the time of Jerusalem's final cessation from tribulation. This in itself indicates that Messiah's resurrection was able to do this. It also shows that repentant Jews can at any time enter into that new covenant, although nationally the whole nation will not do so until the reappearing of Messiah. This new covenant of forgiveness must be based, as we have reasoned earlier, on the promises of forgiveness and eternal life made to Abraham well before the Mosaic covenant.

The Rabbis of today accept that God and Israel are divorced. This means that the marriage covenant has been broken through Israel's disobedience; it did not need to be formally abrogated before the whole nation, as the objection claims.

In all these prophecies there is definite mention of a day when Israel will be accepted back into relationship with God. Because that old covenant was broken, a new covenant forming the basis of God and Israel's future married relationship will be made (Hos.2:14-20; Ez.16:60; 20:33-44; Jer.2:2;3:1-18). This last passage is parallel to the more familiar new covenant prophecy of Jer.31.

This new covenant will enable Israel to obey the basic principle of the Old Covenant, i.e. obedience to God's word. This will be through the forgiveness of their sins which the new covenant, based on the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is able to offer. Thus Lev.26:40-42 says that when Israel finally repent, " then will I remember My covenant with Jacob" . This is parallel to the promise of the new covenant being made with them once they return to God as His wife. Yet it will not be the same as that old covenant made through Moses on Sinai. Speaking of that time of the new covenant God said " They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more (note the emphasis on the change). At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all nations shall be gathered unto it" (Jer.3:16,17). Thus instead of Israel seeking to the ark, under the new covenant Jerusalem and God's throne there with God's name on it will be the centre of God manifestation, and will be attended by all nations, not just Israel. This throne will be the restored throne of David, in fulfilment of the promise to David, that he would have an everlasting throne on which the son of God, his great descendant, would reign. This will be fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus.

1) If Jesus wittingly went to the cross of his own choice, then he committed suicide, which is abhorrent to God.

This objection misses the point that although Jesus was obedient to God and offered no physical resistance to his persecutors, His death was against his own choice (Matt.26:39-42). A man who gave his life to save his friends can hardly be classified as having committed suicide (John 15:13).Suicide is fundamentally selfish and self-centred. Jesus is recorded as giving his life from totally self-less reasons. Jesus did not engineer his own death, as the Talmud's record of his death admits. He was submitting to Roman and Jewish law, which cannot possibly be called suicide. Moses was willing to offer his life -even his place in eternity, it would appear -for the salvation of others (Ex.32:32), setting a superb pattern to be followed by Messiah, the great prophet like unto him (Deut.18:18).