

# EXPLORATION: BIBLE

JESUS, “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a **SERVANT**, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:7-8).

## SCARLET THREAD #9 The Suffering Servant

The “Scarlet Thread” is a series of stories found in the Jewish scriptures that all connect and point us to Jesus. Today’s scarlet thread is Isaiah’s prophecy of the “Suffering Servant.” Isaiah lived and authored his book in about 700 B.C. We know for certain Isaiah lived in Israel at this time in history because his name has been found in archaeology.



**The Isaiah bulla is about the size of your thumbnail. It was discovered in the Ophel excavations in Jerusalem and dates to 700 B.C. It says, “Belonging to Isaiah the Prophet” (Photo, BAS Library, Eilat Mazar, by permission)**

The “suffering servant” prophecy is found in Isaiah chapter 53. This passage was controversial for hundreds of years, that is, until the 20th century. Why? Orthodox Jews claimed the Christian church changed the text of Isaiah 53 to reflect Christian beliefs about the sufferings of Jesus. That all changed with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Great Isaiah Scroll, found in Qumran Cave #1 in 1947, proves the text of Isaiah was not altered in any way by Christians.

Why is this text controversial? Consider the prophecy of Isaiah 53, keep in mind it was written seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, yet this “Suffering Servant” perfectly mirrors Jesus. How could this be? **ONLY GOD.**



**The Great Isaiah Scroll, contains the entire text of Isaiah and dates to 125 B.C. The column just left of the stain in this photo is the entire 53rd chapter. (Photographed by Chip Thompson, at the Israel Museum, 2008)**

Isaiah 53 says, “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.. (vs. 3). **[His own people rejected and abandoned Him.]**

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted” (vs 4). **[His enemies ridiculed him as a fraud.]**

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (vs 5-6). **[This Servant suffered not for his own sins, but for the sins of the people.]**

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as

a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (vs 7). **[He remained silent in the face of abuse and false accusations.]**

“He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people, He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth” (vs 8-9). **[Though He died a criminal’s death, He was buried in a rich man’s tomb.]**

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul and be satisfied. By His knowledge, My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities” (vs 10-11). **[The death of this Servant will not last. God will raise him from the dead and prolong his days.]**

“Therefore, I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (vs 12). **[Even in death this Servant prayed for those who killed him, so the LORD gave him fame and a name above every name.]**

**CONCLUSION:** Any reasonable person who reads this story and is familiar with the story of Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile, believer or skeptic, is forced to admit that Isaiah 53 appears to be speaking of Jesus Christ.

**WHY?** Because today, we have four separate accounts, written by contemporaries of Jesus, that explain the details of his final days on earth (Matthew 26-28, Mark 14-16, Luke 22-24, and John 18-20 you should read these chapters!). In these accounts, the betrayal of Jesus, His trials, His crucifixion, his burial, and His resurrection perfectly match the details of Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant.” One fact is undeniable, no one person who has ever lived on planet earth has so greatly affected our world. Both foes and followers universally know the name Jesus Christ. Worldwide Jesus is “the Savior of the world.”