

Today we will examine, from Scripture and history, the reasons why the Jewish people during the time of Christ did not anticipate a suffering Messiah, despite prophetic texts that clearly depict suffering. This session will help you grasp the historical, theological, and hermeneutical gaps that led to the national misunderstanding of Messiah's role.

I. THE PROPHETS DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THEIR OWN PROPHECIES

Key Text: 1 Peter 1:10–11

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently... searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

- Prophets "searched diligently" — implying confusion or incomplete understanding.
- "What" and "what manner of time" — they couldn't pinpoint the specifics.
- Therefore, their audience—ancient Israel—would have had even less clarity.

Point To Remember:

If the inspired writers were uncertain about the meaning of their own words, how much more would the average reader fail to grasp a suffering Messiah?

II. THE PROPHECIES OF SUFFERING WERE VEILED IN POETIC OR SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

Examples:

- GENESIS 3:15 – "bruise his heel" – cryptic and open to various interpretations.
- PSALM 22:16 – "they pierced my hands and my feet" – vivid, but without clear Messianic attribution.
- ISAIAH 50:6 – "I gave my back to the smiters..." – poetic, not plainly identified as the Messiah.

Point To Remember:

These texts did not say, "The Messiah will suffer in this way." They required a framework for understanding that didn't exist yet.

III. JEWISH EXPECTATION FOCUSED ON GLORY, NOT SUFFERING

Influential Passages:

- ISAIAH 9:6–7 – A child born to reign with authority.
- DANIEL 7:13–14 – One like the Son of Man receiving dominion and a kingdom.
- PSALM 2 – The anointed King breaking nations with a rod of iron.

Point To Remember:

Israel longed for liberation and restoration. Prophecies of a conquering, reigning king were far more attractive and dominant in public expectation than those of a suffering servant.

IV. THE NOTION OF A SUFFERING MESSIAH WAS NOT A SYSTEMATIC DOCTRINE

- There was no clearly outlined theology in the Hebrew Scriptures connecting the Messiah with atonement through suffering.
- Sacrificial types existed (e.g., Levitical offerings, the Passover), but they were not interpreted as Messianic personifications.

Point To Remember:

Without the New Testament to connect the dots, these shadows remained undefined.

V. SOME JEWISH INTERPRETATIONS INVENTED A DUAL-MESSIAH THEORY

Rabbinical Thought:

- MESSIAH BEN JOSEPH – a suffering warrior who dies.
- MESSIAH BEN DAVID – a reigning king who conquers.

Based on texts like Zechariah 12:10 – “...they shall look upon me whom they have pierced.”

Point To Remember:

Rather than applying these prophecies to one Messiah with two advents, they created two Messiahs to resolve the tension. This shows they did recognize suffering in the texts—but could not harmonize it with their expectations.

VI. EVEN JESUS' DISCIPLES WERE CONFUSED BY HIS SUFFERING

- MATTHEW 16:21–23 – Peter rebukes Jesus for predicting His death.
- LUKE 24:21 – “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel...”
- LUKE 24:25–27 – Jesus had to “expound unto them...the things concerning himself.”

Point To Remember:

If those walking with Jesus daily didn’t anticipate His suffering, how could the rest of Israel have done so?

VII. THE FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST WAS RETROSPECTIVE, NOT PREDICTIVE

- PSALM 22, ISAIAH 53, ZECHARIAH 12 — all now clearly seen as fulfilled in Christ.
- But they were not evident until **after** His death and resurrection.
- This aligns with LUKE 24:45 – “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”

Point To Remember:

The suffering Messiah was always there in the text, but only visible once the reality had taken place. IX. Application: Use This Understanding in Evangelism

WHEN SHARING WITH JEWISH OR SKEPTICAL AUDIENCES, PRESENT:

1. The prophetic text (e.g., PSALM 22, ISAIAH 53).
2. The New Testament fulfillment.
3. The challenge: Can this be coincidence or invention?

Teaching Point:

Invite others to weigh the evidence honestly. If Jesus fulfills these prophecies in striking detail, isn’t He the only reasonable candidate for Messiah?

CONCLUSION: THE SUFFERING MESSIAH WAS NOT EXPECTED, BUT HE WAS FORETOLD

- The Jewish rejection of a suffering Messiah is understandable without the New Testament.
- But with the full revelation now complete, the suffering servant and reigning king are not two Messiahs, but one who comes twice.
- ISAIAH 53:1 – “Who hath believed our report?”—a question that still echoes today.