

In this chapter, we will delve into the prophecies about the Messiah's suffering and atoning death. We will explore the common claim that people in the Old Testament were saved by looking forward to the sacrifice of the Messiah. Furthermore, we will consider the evidence of the apostles' personal knowledge of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah. This investigation aims to deepen our understanding of the prophecies of the Messiah's sacrifice.

1 PETER 1:10-12

The examination of 1 Peter 1:10-11 offers not only an insight but a foundational perspective on interpreting the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures concerning "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." This passage underlines the New Testament's assertion that the Hebrew Scriptures contain foretellings of Christ's sufferings. It necessitates the finding of such prophecies lest we conclude Peter erred.

Importantly, the text sheds light on the prophets' mindset: engaged in a diligent search, they themselves grappled with the significance of their own prophecies. This insight suggests that the prophets, and by extension, their contemporaries, lacked a complete understanding of the messianic sufferings they foretold. Thus, we are guided to expect that certain prophecies, while opaque prior to the revelation of the New Testament, become unmistakably clear as foretelling the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection when viewed through the New Testament lens.

The claim that the complete story of Jesus Christ's birth, life, death, burial, and resurrection can be understood solely from the Old Testament neglects the crucial interpretive guidance provided by the New Testament.

The requirement of the New Testament's perspective to illuminate these prophecies does not weaken the prophetic argument. Instead, it emphasizes the unlikelihood of inventing events to match ancient prophecies, a task nearly impossible due to the intricacies and details of the prophecies involved.

In light of 1 Peter 1:10-12, New Testament scholars should compile a collection of prophecies that seemingly predict the Messiah's sufferings. They should include passages such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 63. These passages cannot be honestly interpreted without acknowledging their apparent fulfillment in the New Testament. The alternatives to accepting this collection of prophecies as Messianic and fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth are limited: One could either dismiss the New Testament as an unfounded narrative, or reinterpret the prophecies in a way that negates their messianic significance. Both alternatives present significant challenges.

GENESIS 3:15 -

In Chapter 1, we briefly looked at this passage. However, it's important to revisit it here to keep it in mind as we study the suffering of the coming Messiah. While there are those who do not interpret this as a Messianic prophecy, the argument against this interpretation is quite weak. The complex and symbolic nature of this passage suggests that it is conveying much more than a simple discord between women and snakes. In examining what this passage might mean, it appears to be a prophecy of a coming savior. Along with this, it foretells a battle between the serpent and the seed, a battle in which the serpent is defeated and the seed is injured. Unsurprisingly, the nearly universal Christian interpretation of the prophecy is that the coming Deliverer will experience some form of suffering, but not lethal, in His attempt to overthrow the serpent.

PSALM 22

Psalm 22, particularly verses 1-22, describes suffering in a way that closely mirrors Jesus' crucifixion. Anyone familiar with the crucifixion story would have to notice the resemblance.

- **Psalm 22:1** - "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
 - Reflected in Jesus' cry from the cross in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34.

- **Psalm 22:7-8** - "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."
 - Parallel to the mockery Jesus faced from onlookers and religious leaders, as mentioned in Matthew 27:39-43 and Mark 15:29-32.
- **Psalm 22:16** - "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet."
 - This verse is seen as a direct prophecy of the crucifixion, where Jesus' hands and feet were nailed to the cross, as detailed in Luke 24:39-40 and John 20:25-27.
- **Psalm 22:18** - "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."
 - This is reflected in the actions of Roman soldiers dividing Jesus' garments and casting lots for his clothing, as described in Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:34, and John 19:23-24.

Based on the logic we derived from the 1 Peter 1:10-12 passage, we first notice that Peter refers to foretold sufferings. We find these in Psalm 22 and note the striking similarity to Jesus's experiences, suggesting that the words can only be taken as a prophecy of the crucifixion. This interpretation challenges others, including those who reject the New Testament, to refute it in one of three ways.

First, some could argue that Jesus was a fraud, fabricating events to mimic the words of Psalm 22. However, the idea that Jesus could have influenced the statements of passersby and the actions of soldiers is far from persuasive. Therefore, this argument falls significantly short.

Secondly, some might argue that the interpretation of the passage is fallacious and propose a different valid interpretation that could convince the student of the Word. If they argue convincingly that Psalm 22 is not about the Messiah's sufferings but about a different topic, they would still need to explain the remarkable coincidence with the life of Jesus, which occurred about 500 years after David penned the words. But what interpretation could sufficiently convince a serious student that the words pertain to another subject rather than the Messiah? Some have tried to link the words as prophetic of Queen Esther, while others have associated them more commonly with Judah's Babylonian exile.

Are these arguments compelling enough to convince an inquiring mind about the perfect reflection of these words in the crucifixion? The most reasonable and logical conclusion suggests that these words pertain to the Messiah. They are so profoundly fulfilled in Jesus' death that there is only one viable conclusion: Jesus is the Messiah.

It appears that fraud, fallacy, or fulfillment are the only possible interpretations. However, the arguments for Jesus as a fraud or the Messianic interpretation as a fallacy are so weak that Jesus as the fulfillment seems to be the only viable option.

PSALM 69:20-21

In Psalm 69:20-21, we find additional allusions to the suffering of Christ. The first part, "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none," depicts a scene of profound sorrow and loneliness. This is reminiscent of Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He felt a deep sense of sorrow and asked His disciples to watch and pray with Him, only to find them asleep (Matthew 26:39-45).

The second part of the passage, "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," can be seen as directly fulfilled during Jesus' crucifixion. According to the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus was on the cross, the Roman soldiers offered Him "vinegar to drink mingled with gall" (Matthew 27:34), and later, when Jesus said He was thirsty, they gave Him vinegar to drink (Matthew 27:48). These connections further reinforce the prophetic nature of these Old Testament scriptures and their fulfillment in the New Testament narrative of Jesus' suffering and death.

When we juxtapose the prophecies from Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 with the account of Jesus' suffering, the volume of specific details, or "moving parts," is so vast that the notion of a fabricated narrative crumbles. These prophecies contain details such as the piercing of hands and feet, onlookers' mockery, the division of garments, the desertion by friends, intense sorrow, and vinegar for drink. All these elements are so distinctively fulfilled in Jesus' crucifixion that coordinating such an

event to precisely match these prophecies would be an insurmountable task. This abundance of moving parts, each perfectly aligning with Jesus' life, bolsters the argument that Jesus is indeed the prophesied Messiah. Those who dismiss this premise must demonstrate how Jesus was a fraud, overseeing an intricate plan to appear Messianic, or that the premise is entirely false to such an extent that the replication of these words in Jesus' experience was irrelevant. Alternatively, they could agree with my preferred conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah and these words indeed refer to Him.

ISAIAH 50:6

In the previous chapter, we looked at Isaiah 50:4, which pertains to the ministry of Jesus. This time, we turn to verse 6, which speaks to the suffering of the Messiah: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

Once again, we encounter a prophecy that is filled with so many "moving parts" that it would be next to impossible for any one person to contrive a scene which fulfilled all the parts with any degree of credibility. Here, the prophecy speaks of physical abuse and humiliation, elements that certainly find fulfillment in the New Testament accounts of Jesus' trial and crucifixion.

In the New Testament, we read that Roman soldiers struck Jesus, spat on him, and mocked him (Matthew 26:67, Mark 14:65, Mark 15:19). The physical abuse is echoed in the phrase "I gave my back to the smiters," while the spitting is directly mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy.

Furthermore, the phrase "and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair" does not have specific reference in the Gospels, but certainly aligns with the New Testament's depiction of Jesus' trial, where he was mocked and humiliated by the soldiers, the crowds, and even those crucified with him.

All these details from Isaiah 50:6 correspond so clearly with the New Testament's account of Jesus' suffering that it adds considerable weight to the belief that Jesus is indeed the prophesied Messiah. Any attempts to explain these fulfillments as either contrived or coincidental must grapple with the intricate and specific nature of these prophecies and their fulfillment in the life of Jesus.

DANIEL 9:26

The phrase "Messiah be cut off" is about as explicit as one can get when it comes to prophesying the Messiah's death. However, interpretations of who this "Messiah" is have varied, with some viewing it as referring to "just a prince" or even to King Agrippa.

There are numerous ways to calculate the timing of the weeks mentioned, with the assumptions one makes about their desired outcome often determining the assumptions they introduce into their interpretation to achieve that outcome. A thorough examination of the 70 weeks would be warranted to allow each interpretation to fully articulate itself.

In the end, I believe you would encounter so many passages speaking of the Messiah's "cutting off" or suffering that you would have no choice but to conclude that "Messiah" here is exactly what one would expect: the Messiah. Interpreting "Messiah" as referring to Agrippa or some other prince seems to be merely a weak argument intended to evade the obvious straightforward interpretation of "Messiah be cut off."

ZECHARIAH 12:10

Examining Zechariah 12:10, the phrase "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" is particularly noteworthy. If interpreted messianically, this passage suggests a scene of deep mourning for a figure who has been pierced, indicating suffering, possibly even death, inflicted upon this figure. The poignant mourning described here, "as one mourneth for his only son," further emphasizes the severity of the loss, suggesting that the one who is pierced holds a significant, irreplaceable

role, much like the Messiah. Therefore, this prophecy can be seen as another compelling testament to the Messiah's anticipated suffering, and virtually all Christians take it as such.

Interestingly, there is a Jewish interpretation that sees this as a prophecy of a Messiah of sorts. The medieval commentator Rashi explains, "as one mourns over an only son: As a man mourns over his only son. And our Sages expounded this in tractate Sukkah (52a) as referring to the Messiah, son of Joseph, who was slain."¹ Here, this "Messiah, son of Joseph" is not Jesus but a different figure known as "Messiah ben Joseph" who is considered a forerunner to "Messiah ben David."

Could it be that this passage, and others about a suffering Messiah, were so clear that they demanded one of two responses: either accepting Jesus, son of Joseph, as the Messiah, or creating a dichotomy between a suffering "Messiah ben Joseph" and a reigning "Messiah ben David"? From a Christian perspective, the idea of two Messiahs closely mirrors the concept of a first and second coming, which seems hopeful.

COULD THEY HAVE KNOWN?

We could examine many more "suffering servant" passages, including the famous Isaiah 53, and arrive at the same conclusions. The prophecies are so specifically and profoundly fulfilled in Jesus Christ that accepting Him as the prophesied Messiah is almost the only logical conclusion.

However, it's important to note that expecting those who only had access to the Hebrew Scriptures to recognize these prophecies as Messianic would be an overreach. Without knowing the fulfillment in Jesus, one would not naturally predict His specific life events, or even associate some of these prophecies with a Messiah at all. This could explain why the Jews could cry out "Crucify Him!" without anyone interjecting and pointing out that these circumstances were eerily reflective of their own prophetic texts, implicating them in the rejection of their Messiah.

It further explains why the disciples, even after walking with Jesus for three years and acknowledging Him as the Messiah, failed to comprehend the inevitability of His death. The concept was so alien to them that it was beyond their understanding.

Thus, the proposition that individuals in the Old Testament era attained salvation by anticipating and placing their faith in the future events of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection lacks substantive Biblical endorsement and is, consequently, an unsupportable argument. Christians should unequivocally reject this notion.

Instead, Christians should use 1 Peter 1:10-12 as a foundation when teaching Jews and others who believe in prophecy about Jesus. The options are clear – either Jesus is a fraud, or the New Testament is fallacious, or, as I firmly believe, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Hebrew prophecies about a suffering Savior.

¹ "Zechariah - Chapter 12," [Chabad.org](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16216/showrashi/true), last modified 2024, accessed February 29, 2024, https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16216/showrashi/true.