

The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

Text

Isaiah 53:1-3

Topic

A future generation of Israelites will believe God's report that Jesus is their Messiah.

Title

"He Reports, You Decide"

In 1964 the Warren Commission Report concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

My dad said it was the CIA. Of course, he also maintained that all homeless people are millionaires and that seat belts kill more people than they save.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr is a reliable source. He is on record saying, *"There is overwhelming evidence that the CIA was involved in [my uncle's] murder."*

You don't have to be a conspiracy theorist to be suspicious of official government reports.

In the 8th century BC God released a report.

His report can be trusted 100%. God is not a man that He should lie; For all the promises of God in [Jesus] are Yes, and in Him Amen.¹

¹Numbers 23:19, Second Corinthians 1:20

Isaiah 52:13 through chapter 53:12 is a song with three verses in each of five stanzas. Bible commentators use every superlative in the English language to underscore its prominence. We are looking at each of the five stanzas separately. I'll organize my comments about this stanza around two questions: **#1 Do You Accept God's Report?**, and **#2 Are You Ashamed Of God's Report?**

#1 - Do You Accept God's Report? (v1&2)

In 1964 the Surgeon General published *Smoking and Health*.

It concluded that cigarette smoking was responsible for a 70% increase in the mortality rate of smokers over non-smokers. It estimated that average smokers had a nine-to-ten-fold risk of developing lung cancer compared to non-smokers.

My dad *believed* the Surgeon General's report. He quit smoking that day, cold turkey.

There are a plethora of reports circulating that suggest how you ought to live:

- How many **religions** are there? Experts say that there are 12 major religions and 4000+ 'faith groups.' Each one can be seen as a report about *who* or *what* is worshipped as god, and *why*.
- It is anyone's guess how many **philosophies** there are. They, too, report on the human condition.
- Then there are the **psychologies**. Lots of them.

They can't all be right. In fact, *none of them are*.

God's inspired, authoritative Word, the Bible, is a report of the human condition. It is the only accurate report. Makes sense since God is the Creator of the universe, and you are made in His image.

Is God's report reliable? How do we know, for example, that we are reading Isaiah?

Three words: Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of ancient Jewish manuscripts. They were discovered over a span of 10 years, between 1946 and 1956, at the Qumran Caves on the northern shore of the Dead Sea. They date from the 3rd century BC to the 1st

century AD. They include the oldest surviving manuscripts of entire books included in the Bible, along with extra-biblical manuscripts.

The Great Isaiah Scroll is one of the seven Dead Sea Scrolls that were first to be discovered. It is the entire Book of Isaiah from beginning to end (apart from a few small damaged portions). It is 1000 years older than the oldest Hebrew manuscripts known before the scrolls' discovery. It is almost identical to the most recent manuscript version from the 900s AD. (Scholars discovered a handful of spelling and tense-oriented scribal errors, but nothing of significance).

One commentator wrote, *"The Old Testament that we read today is the same one that existed in 100BC to 200BC. This means that the over 300 Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah pre-existed the birth of Jesus Christ."*

God's "report" is not just the Book of Isaiah, or the Hebrew Scriptures. It is His complete revelation in the Bible. The Bible is one report given progressively. There were around 40 'reporters,' but the Bible and tradition only mentions 35 by name. It was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek over a span of over 1500 years on three continents.

Reports can usually be summarized in a few words. My summary would be Sin, the Savior & Salvation.

Sin: "In the beginning," just two chapters in, we read about Adam & Eve disobeying God's one, simple, keepable command. In an essay, Richard Phillips writes, "Original Sin is a term that defines the nature of mankind's sinful condition because of Adam's fall. It teaches that all people are corrupted by Adam's sin through natural generation, by which - together with Adam's imputed condemnation - we all enter the world guilty before God. Original Sin shows that we sin because we are sinners, entering this world with a corrupt nature and without hope apart from the saving grace of God in the Gospel."

The Savior: While Adam, Eve & the serpent were still in the Garden of Eden, God preached the first Gospel message. He said the Seed of the woman would come and defeat the devil. As the Bible progresses, we come to understand that the Seed of the woman would be God in human flesh. This God-man would act as our substitute. He would die in our place taking upon Himself the punishment that was due Adam & Eve and all of their offspring.

Salvation: Jesus died, but rose from the dead. All humans who have no capacity to believe, and all who can & do believe, are counted as righteous and receive eternal life. All humans who have the capacity to believe but do not are consigned to eternal conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.

Isa 53:1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

The "arm of the LORD" is synonymous with salvation. Isaiah 59:1 NIV, "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save..."

To whom was salvation revealed? It was revealed to the nation of Israel. God chose Abraham to start a new nation. He had a son, Isaac, who had a son, Jacob, who had twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.

The apostle Paul explains what was "revealed" to them: "[To the Israelites] *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service *of God*, and the promises; of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God" (Romans 9:4-5).

God asks Israel, "Who has believed our report?" The prophets and John the Baptist and Jesus Himself reported God's plan, but were rejected mostly by being killed.

The nation of Israel was tasked with presenting the Savior to the world as the solve for sin. He would set-up the Kingdom of God, with Jerusalem as its capital. All the nations of the earth would come to pay Him homage. They would hear the Gospel and multitudes would be saved.

John the Baptist preceded Jesus. They preached the same message: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." The disciples were constantly asking about the Kingdom - right up to the Lord's ascension to Heaven.

The Savior came through Israel, miraculously. He came to His own... **His own did not receive Him.**

Why? One significant reason was that Jesus wasn't the Savior they expected or wanted.

Isa 53:2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire Him.

This is the collective voice and testimony of Jews in the future Time of Jacob's Trouble that we more commonly call the Great Tribulation. They understand that their ancestors did not recognize Jesus... *But they will!*

I'm going to read verse two again and a few verses from the Revelation.

Isa 53:2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, *There is* no beauty that we should desire Him.

Rev 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

Rev 19:12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

Rev 19:13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

Rev 19:14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

Rev 19:15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Rev 19:16 And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Are Isaiah & the apostle John talking about the same Person? Yes, they are. It's Jesus. The 1st century Jews were anticipating the Savior described by John. They wanted '2nd Coming Jesus.'

"For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground." The "tender plant" is describing a sucker shoot that you might easily snap off. The "root out of dry ground" is an anomaly. Normally it doesn't last.

I might be missing something deeper, an analogy perhaps, but this seems to be a simple illustration of Jesus' humiliation. By that we mean the Doctrine of Humiliation that consists of the rejection and suffering that Jesus received and accepted,

including incarnation, suffering, death, and burial. God coming in human flesh - that is humiliation.

Notwithstanding God the Father's sovereignty, Jesus was always in danger. Early on the family had to flee to Egypt because Herod was seeking to murder Him. Jesus didn't use His deity to protect Himself. He wasn't like Grogue, using telekinesis to direct objects or people with His mind. He was a vulnerable infant.

From the Garden of Eden forward, God's report was always featured a genuine fragility. Episode after episode is a cliffhanger.

"He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, *There is no beauty that we should desire Him.*"

It isn't portraying Jesus as homely or undesirable. It's saying that Jesus was not the guy you'd pick at graduation as *Most Likely to be the Savior of the World.*

Do you think of Jesus as charismatic? I mean in the nonbiblical use of the term. It's OK to think of Him that way as long as we realize that it was because His Father in Heaven and the Holy Spirit were why He spoke like no one ever had, and why children approached Him without fear, and why sinners found in Him a refuge.

Think of it this way. If someone is naturally charismatic, and God is using them, we tend to think it is because of their personality. Obviously, God can, and does, use charismatic individuals, but it isn't a prerequisite. A case can be made that God gets more of the glory He deserves if we are without form, comeliness, or beauty.

If you haven't "received" God's report - the Gospel - what are you living by? It cannot save you.

#2 - Are You Ashamed Of God's Report? (v3)

Who is the poster boy for Scientology?

'Poster boy' is a colloquial term used to describe a person who epitomizes or represents a particular quality, cause, or image, often in a positive or idealized way. It is commonly used in a figurative sense to refer to someone who becomes a symbol or spokesperson for a specific idea, movement, or brand.

Tom Cruise is a pretty great poster boy. Handsome, charismatic, talented, successful, and he does his own stunts.²

Who is the poster boy for Christianity?

I nominate the apostle Paul:

- The missionary giant is estimated to have traveled 10,000 miles *on foot* preaching the Gospel.
- He probably planted close to 20 churches, with many more born out of those by his apprentice leaders.
- Of the 27 books in the New Testament, 13 or 14 are traditionally attributed to Paul.

That's great... But it took quite a toll on his body.

2Co 11:23 [in] labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

2Co 11:24 From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one.

2Co 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

2Co 11:26 in journeys often, *in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

2Co 11:27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness...

- He had a terrible eye condition that was difficult to look at.
- He described some kind of "thorn in his flesh" that contributed to constant physical pain and weakness.

That's what a poster boy for Christianity should look like.

Isa 53:3 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; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

² Early on in his career Tom Cruise had what is called midline discrepancy. His teeth were remarkably misaligned and one of his incisors was oddly prominent. His dental midline was way off-grid where his upper incisor took over it.

First, a grammar lesson. The *prophetic perfect tense* is a literary technique that describes future events that are so certain to happen that they are referred to in the past tense as if they had already happened.

Who hid their faces, despised Jesus, and did not esteem Him? The leaders of the nation of Israel at the Lord's first coming. These Jews are looking back at that 1st century error. More importantly, they recognize the Lord as having to suffer first.

We keep referencing a future generation of Jews. They are the Jews in the future Time of Jacob's Trouble.

The twelfth chapter of the OT Book of Zechariah describes the future time when all the world will gather their armies to destroy Israel. Then this will happen: "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn" (12:10).

The apostle Paul puts it like this: "And so all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26).

One thing I said we would note in chapter 53 is that each stanza can be paired with one of the 5 offerings in the Temple. The Meal Offering was (obviously) bloodless, an offering involving pure flour. If you get into it, you find that it typifies the pure, and therefore perfect, humanity of Jesus - the perfect humanness we see in this stanza.

Why would a believer be ashamed? Even the Church doesn't get it right in terms of who & what we put forward on posters.

Let's face it: We are grateful beyond our ability to express it for the Lord's decision to be humiliated in order to save us. We, however, don't like humiliation when it is asked of us.

When Pastor Chuck Smith was getting to the end, he was in the pulpit with an oxygen tank and tubes. Critics - and there were many - thought he should get out of the way and turn the church over to a younger, healthy pastor.

"Thank you, Pastor Chuck, for that final lesson in humiliation."