



## Chapter 23

# ***THE REAL JESUS OF THE BIBLE***

It is amazing that few people today refer to the full prophecy of the Suffering Servant as mentioned by Isaiah when it comes to describing the historical events associated with Jesus' life and death. If they did, a new appreciation would emerge of what happened throughout Jesus' life and at the time of his crucifixion. But because the information about Jesus' body being torn to shreds is primarily based on a prophecy given about 750 years before the event, it has not been seriously considered as having a literal fulfillment. This is a mistake. If it were understood that Jesus was indeed stoned while he was nailed to the tree of crucifixion, then more attention would no doubt be given to what Isaiah said. Let us look more closely at the prophecy of Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12). It will tell us far more what happened throughout Jesus' life as well as the full story of his agony at "Golgotha."

First note a prime misinterpretation that many Christian teachers have insisted on for almost the past 1600 years. It is popular to believe that the last part of Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering

Servant pertains to the final twenty-four hours of Jesus' life. As an example of this, note that when the King James Version states "with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5), it is almost consistently interpreted that this refers to the beatings given to him by the Roman soldiers just before his crucifixion. And when Isaiah spoke of his "griefs," "sorrows," "chastisement," "oppression," "affliction," along with the fact that no one would desire him for "beauty, comeliness and form," and that he would be "despised and rejected," it is almost universally believed that *all* these prophetic descriptions of Isaiah must apply *only* to the ordeal of his trial and crucifixion. But a big mistake is made when this is taught.

### ***Did Jesus even have a Sniffle?***

It is a popular Christian belief today that Jesus never experienced a day of sickness in his life. So certain are most people in this persuasion that even the mention of Jesus having sniffles associated with a cold is held by many to be anathema. The reason for their convictions centers primarily in the New Testament teachings that Jesus never sinned at any time during his life on earth. And true enough, this is precisely what the New Testament teaches (I Peter 2:21,22; II Corinthians 5:21). Since we read of Jesus' sinlessness, it is normally assumed by Christian interpreters that he could never have been ill at any time during his life. This is because there is biblical teaching that sickness can certainly be a result of sin (John 5:14), but this is not *always* the case and Jesus himself made this point quite plainly (John 9:3).

Indeed, common sense ought to show anyone that sicknesses are not always caused by sin (that is, the transgression of divine or human law). For example, animals get ill but they are quite incapable of sinning as we humans know it. Also, when bubonic plague swept through Europe in the Middle Ages, it infected the righteous as well as the wayward. And remember, a child might be accidentally bitten by a rabid animal, and the disease of rabies would set in, but it could not be imagined that the resultant sickness was

because of some sinful act done by the child. Still, it is a prevalent belief among many Christians that sickness is more often than not a punishment for sin. Since we are assured that Jesus never sinned once in the entirety of his life, and because he is symbolically compared to the *unblemished* Passover Lamb, it is felt by many that these factors exempt Jesus from even having a sniffle.

### ***Was Jesus Healthy in a Perfect Sense?***

It may appear a reasonable proposition on the surface that Jesus was totally sound in body and full of vibrant health, but there are major difficulties with this interpretation. The problem comes from the New Testament itself. It shows that Jesus was put under trial in *all things* as are other humans, and this of necessity must include the experience of sickness. And certainly, the Book of Hebrews states assuredly that Jesus was subjected to sicknesses while he was in the flesh. “For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our *infirmities* [translated sicknesses in several contexts]; but one that has been in ALL POINTS tempted [put under trial] like as we are, *yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15).

There was not a major type of trial that all of us humans ordinarily go through that did not afflict Jesus. And that includes the common trials associated with *sicknesses* that are very much a part of our human experience. However, one must admit that it is difficult to understand how a sinless person (as the New Testament insists that Jesus was) could ever be sick. But the author of the Book of Hebrews said he was sick, and he came under the same type of trials that all humans go through. And though Jesus was indeed sick in a variety of ways, yet the Book of Hebrews states he was “without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). The reason the phrase “yet without sin” was tacked on to the teaching given above is because most people were then under the impression (as most people still are today) that experiencing infirmities [sicknesses] was very much a consequence of sinning. The writer of Hebrews, knowing the inclination of humans to make this assertion, emphatically stated that

Jesus (though he underwent many sicknesses as other humans) was still “without sin.”

### ***Jesus Was Sickly and Sinless at the Same Time***

The explanation in the Book of Hebrews would not have satisfied many of Jesus’ hometown people who thought him to be a sinner. They chided him because they were told that he could heal others, yet he was unable to heal himself. Jesus said they would say of him: “Physician, heal yourself” (Luke 4:23). When they observed how Jesus appeared, they could tell that he needed *healing*. This reference of Jesus concerning the opinion of his hometown people of Nazareth was not some well-known proverb or philosophical statement that they were applying to Jesus. They were simply observing the facts in front of their eyes. It was quite obvious to them that Jesus had been subjected to sicknesses in the past and that he was presently *sickly* in appearance.

It is important to note that it was his own hometown people who were ridiculing him by saying “*heal yourself*.” They had grown up with him, and they were well aware that he had been frequently *SICK*. I have emphasized this point, and it needs emphasizing because most people today know very little about these scriptural truths. To the Jewish people at the time, this meant that he was being subjected to the consequences of sin in his body. It appeared certain to them that he could not be a sinless person since he experienced sickness just as all humans. And, this opinion is the common one that is believed by most Christians today. They find it difficult to believe that Jesus even had a sniffle, let alone experience real sicknesses as do most humans. But it was very different with the author of the Book of Hebrews. Though he admitted that Jesus was indeed subjected to *sicknesses*, he still insisted that he was “*without sin*.” And so did the rest of the apostles (I Peter 2:21,22; II Corinthians 5:21).

### ***Jesus Experienced Numerous Sicknesses***

The truth is, Jesus was not free of sicknesses while he was growing up in Nazareth, nor was he a person showing forth a vibrant and healthy constitution while he was preaching the Gospel. Indeed, he appeared just the opposite of what most people imagine today. Jesus himself made reference to the fact that people looking on his physical frame would have wanted to reject him, because he did not look “perfect” as most people would think the Son of God should. This is shown by a reference that Jesus himself made. Recall his statement that the stone which the builders rejected had become the head of the corner (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20 and I Peter 2:4-7). The masterbuilders of the early Temple could observe, without doubt, that the external condition of “that particular stone” was in an “imperfect state.” This appraisal was so positive to them that they disqualified that stone (and rightly so) from being a part of the Temple which had been ordained of God to contain only “perfect” stones. But who was that “imperfect stone” that the masterbuilders rejected as imperfect? Jesus said it applied to him. Most people looking on the outward fleshly condition of Jesus would have considered him “quite imperfect” (if one relied on physical appearance alone). He was one that most people would have rejected had he not been a great miracle worker and people followed him for that primary reason (John 6:2) or that they wanted to be fed with the free food he provided for them (John 6:26).

This illustration of the “stone rejected of men” was given by Jesus to show that when people of his time looked upon him they all saw him as an “imperfect” specimen of humanity. This made them wonder how he could be God’s Son. How could a person who was obviously “imperfect” in his outward flesh be the prophesied Messiah to redeem mankind to God? But they were not paying close attention to the description of the prophet Isaiah about the Suffering Servant. Had they done so, they would have realized that Jesus was precisely fulfilling the prophecy. And we today also need

to pay close attention to what Isaiah said because he reveals a Jesus that many people have never been introduced to in the flesh. Let us now look at what the Suffering Servant would be like from his birth to his death.

“For he shall grow up before him [Yahweh] as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he has no form or comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief [rendered sickness in the King James 12 times]: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:2,3).

The first point that one should recognize is Isaiah’s statement that the prophecy gives a historical description of the Suffering Servant from the time of his birth to that of his manhood and finally his death. “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant” (Isaiah 53:2). His physical appearance throughout the time of his growing years would be like a tender plant, not a strong, robust and hearty one. He was also to be like “a root out of a dry ground.” This shows that he would be like a parched and undernourished plant, not full-fleshed, abundantly healthy or handsome. In fact, Isaiah (in the kindness of language that he could use yet remain truthful) said that he would actually be ugly as far as human opinion was concerned. “He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). In no way was he like the handsome Anglo-Saxon or Italian gentlemen as he is so often depicted today. Indeed, he was just the opposite. To describe him in practical language today, he was frail in physique, homely in appearance and was subject to many infirmities and sicknesses of the flesh. This is precisely what the prophet Isaiah said the Suffering Servant would be like and it fits Jesus perfectly as shown by the narratives about his person given in the New Testament.

### ***Jesus was Bearing our Sicknesses throughout his Life***

In fact, when one understands what the actual Hebrew means in regard to the Suffering Servant, we find that he was “*knowing sickness*” [translated “acquainted with grief” in the King James]. That he was “*bearing sicknesses*” in his body [King James: “borne our griefs” though in the New Testament quote of this verse they correctly translate the phrase as “*bare our sicknesses*” (Matthew 8:17)]. And while the King James Version translates verse 10 as: “he hath put him to grief,” the actual intent of the original is: “he has made him *to be sick*.” And though the King James says: “for the transgression of my people was he stricken,” the actual intent is: “for the transgression of my people *was he plagued*.” The truth is, Jesus was bearing sicknesses and infirmities in his body. He was being plagued with illnesses. And all of these things were happening to him not simply when he was on the tree of crucifixion, *but throughout his life*. This can easily be shown if a person will pay close attention to the fulfillment of these prophecies about the Suffering Servant as understood by the apostles.

The apostles recorded that Isaiah’s prophecy was being fulfilled by Jesus long before his crucifixion. They saw him bearing sicknesses even during the height of his ministry. His personal experience with sickness gave him knowledgeable power over spirits and the sicknesses of others.

“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*”(Matthew 8:16,17).

Jesus even learned to be obedient to God because of *bearing* those infirmities and sicknesses which he suffered (Hebrews 5:8).

### ***Experiencing Sufferings was Beneficial to Jesus***

His sufferings led to continual obedience, and that obedience gave him power and authority over evil spirits and the sicknesses of

others. By *BEARING* sicknesses he learned how bad they can be. He was even *BEARING* the evidence of sin in his body at the start of his ministry. When John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus' Messiahship at the first he said: "Behold the Lamb of God which *TAKES AWAY* [present tense] the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The verb can mean either "*TAKES UPON* him" (that is, he bears in the present tense) or "*TAKES AWAY*" (meaning, *CARRIES AWAY*). What did John mean?

There can be little doubt that John the Baptist had reference to Isaiah's prophecy which said "he hath *BORNE* our griefs [Hebrew: sicknesses], and *CARRIED* our sorrows" and "the Lord has *LAI*D on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4,6). Thus, Jesus was then bearing [present tense] the sin of the world on his shoulders and in his body (as John the Baptist said). Or, as Matthew put it, "he *CARRIED* our diseases" (see Matthew 8:17 Greek), and this carrying of those sicknesses in his body was long before his passion. Since Isaiah commenced the prophecy of the Suffering Servant with his birth, we can see why the New Testament writers show that Jesus was *BEARING* the sins of the world (not his own, because he had none) throughout his life in the flesh.

### ***What Kind of Sicknesses did Jesus Experience?***

The reader of the Bible needs to know what kind of sicknesses Jesus experienced throughout his lifetime? Actually, the prophecy of the Suffering Servant is most important to inform us of this matter. If one will pay close attention to what the prophecy actually relates we can gain a great deal of information to illumine this subject for us. I now wish to refer to a book published in 1969 of an out-of-print volume first printed in 1877 which gives a rundown of Jewish interpretation over the past twenty-two centuries on the meaning of Isaiah 52 and 53 in regard to the Suffering Servant. It is titled *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah* by S.R.Driver and A. Neubauer (printed by Ktav Publishing, NY). The work is in two volumes. The first gives the original Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, etc.

of the ancient documents which were consulted. The second volume gives the English translations. It is a remarkable work and is indispensable in gaining the Jewish understanding of Isaiah's prophecy about the Suffering Servant from the historical viewpoint. And almost all of these early Jewish scholars did not feel Jesus fit the role of the Suffering Servant because of what their Christian contemporaries were telling them about the experiences of Jesus while he was in the flesh.

What is significant is the fact that the majority of about 60 Jewish sources (which the authors referred to) claim that the prophecy COULD NOT refer to Jesus because, among other things, Isaiah said that the man of the prophecy would be sickly, while the Jewish scholars had been told over the centuries by their Christian counterparts that Jesus had never been sick a day in his life. And true enough, that is what most Christians erroneously have taught about Jesus. This has been one of the main reasons why Jewish scholars (who adhere to the simple teachings of Isaiah's prophecy about the Suffering Servant) fail to see Jesus in it. They have taken Christian professors at their word that this was what the New Testament taught.

### ***The Errors of Traditional Christian Teaching***

But in no way does the New Testament teach what most Christian interpreters have been stating over the centuries. If one will read carefully what the apostles wrote, it can be recognized that they were well aware that Jesus had been sickly during his life (*BEARING* the sicknesses and sins of mankind in his body), though he never sinned once. This is exactly what the author of the Book of Hebrews stated (Hebrews 4:15). The apostles (many of whom were eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry) thought that he was precisely fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant. The hometown people of Jesus were not uttering some kind of proverb when they said of him: "*Physician, heal yourself*" (Luke 4:23). They knew that he needed *healing* himself.

Let us now look at the catalog of Jewish references about the Suffering Servant from the book cited above. They are given in chronological order from the third century before Jesus onward.

***Even Pre-Christian Scholars knew the Suffering Servant would be Sick***

The first citation is that from the Septuagint Version. This is a Greek translation of the Old Testament began in the third century before Jesus. We will concentrate on the first five verses of Isaiah 53 since that is the primary section that shows the Suffering Servant as being frail and sickly. This Version is important to the issue because the apostles were familiar with it and it was a pre-Christian translation.

“O Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? We brought a report as of a child before him: he is as a root *in a thirsty land*: he has no form or comeliness; and we saw him but he had no form or beauty. But his form was *ignoble*, and *inferior* to that of the children of men; he was a man in suffering, and acquainted with *the bearing of sickness*.... But he was wounded for our sins, and was *made sick* because of our transgressions” (emphases mine).

The Septuagint Version shows that the Suffering Servant would certainly be sickly (but, as the text says, not because of his own sins). Let us now go on to other references. There are three second century A D. translators who indicate the same thing. Aquila said: “a man of pains and known to illness.” Symmachus: “a man of pains and known to sickness.” Symmachus went on to say: “Surely he took up our sins, and endured our labors: but it thought him to be under the touch [of disease], plagued by God and humiliated.” Theodotion said: “a man of pains and known to sickness.”

It is certain from the above translators that they understood the Hebrew of Isaiah to mean that the Suffering Servant was prophesied to be sickly, even that he was subject to what was called “the plague.” But they were not the only ones who understood Isaiah in

this fashion. The Targum of Jonathan (an early paraphrase from the Hebrew into the Aramaic) rendered the verse: “like a man of pains and like one destined to sickness.”

### ***Early Jewish Theologians were Specific Regarding the Sicknesses***

References in the Jewish Talmud are even more specific. Mentioning the verse: “Surely he hath borne our sicknesses,” the Talmud states that this verse does not refer to Jesus, but to their prophesied Messianic redeemer. They said: “The Messiah, what is his name? The Rabbis say, *The Leprous One* [or] *The Sick One*” (*Sanhedrin* 98b). Also: “The Lord was pleased to bruise him, *he made him to be sick*” (*Berekoth* 5a).

Certainly, Jesus was not leprous because he was not isolated from the people in all his preaching experiences like a leper was required to be. But the strong language of Isaiah 53 is so similar to that which describes a leper in other contexts that it became a common teaching among some Jewish scholars to think that Isaiah’s Suffering Servant would be so sickly that only a leprous condition could properly describe him. And this opinion is reflected in what later Jewish scholars after the time of the Talmud understood Isaiah to be saying. We will now look at several of their remarks as recorded in our book under discussion.

Yepheth Ben Ali (10th century) gave the following comment: “By the words, ‘surely he hath carried our sicknesses,’ they mean that the pains and sickness which he fell into were merited by Israel, but that he bore them instead: the next words ‘yet we did esteem him, etc.’ intimate that they [the common people] thought him afflicted by God for his own sins, as they distinctly say, ‘smitten of God and afflicted.’ And here I think it necessary to pause a moment [said Yepheth] in order to explain why God caused these *sicknesses* to attach themselves to the Messiah for the sake of Israel.”

Rabbi Shelomoh Yizhaqi (Rashi, 11th century) said that Isaiah

53 spoke of the person of the prophecy “like a person stricken with leprosy...and that the sickness which ought to have fallen on us was carried by him.”

Rabbi Yoseph Qara (12th century) thought that the Suffering Servant carried “sicknesses and pains which for our iniquities should have been borne by us.”

Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (12th century) said the verses suggest that people “thought that he had been stricken with the stroke or plague of leprosy.... It was God who smote him and afflicted him because the sickness ought to have come on us.”

Rabbi Jacob Ben Reuben (The Rabbanite, 12th century) is even more specific. He wrote: “The prophet declares that he was ‘despised and forlorn of men,’ a ‘man of pains and known to sickness.’ It seems to me [said Jacob Ben Reuben] that no one would be called ‘known to sickness’ or a ‘man of pains’ except a man who suffered from *severe sickness continually*” [emphasis mine].

Rabbi Jacob Ben Reuben went on to censure Christian interpreters who were saying that Jesus was the Suffering Servant of Isaiah though they taught that he was always free of sickness because of his sinlessness. He continued: “I know in fact that Christians will not find either in their New Testament, or in the words of the wise men of their own religion who tell them about the Messiah and his deeds, or, in fact, in any book in the world, that he [Jesus] ever had a pain, even a headache, up to the day of his death when he was delivered into the hands of those who smote him: we see then that the very terms themselves which are employed, ‘pain’ and ‘sickness,’ were not realized in his person, and consequently cannot apply to him.”

### ***The New Testament was Misread or Misunderstood by the Jews***

Rabbi Jacob could probably be excused for his error in stating that the New Testament did not state that Jesus was ever sick. This

is because he would not have studied it carefully. But the New Testament has Jesus even saying of himself that he was “the stone that the builders rejected,” and that the people said “Physician, heal yourself,” and the Book of Hebrews said he had infirmities and was subjected to all the things that humans are commonly afflicted with. While Rabbi Jacob can be excused, the Christian scholars of his own time have no excuse because many of them could read what the Hebrew of Isaiah 53 actually said, *and they failed to apply it to Jesus* even when the New Testament did.

Let us now go on with early Jewish interpretation of what Isaiah 53 said the Suffering Servant would undergo. Rabbi Jacob Ben Reuben (the Karaite, 12th century), a different person from the Rabbi of the previous paragraph, said that Isaiah stated the Suffering Servant would be “continually sick: he was like a leper from whom all hid their faces.... He became as one who was sick.”

Rabbi Eliezer of Beaugenci (12th century): “It was our sicknesses, those which for our sins we ought to have endured, he carried, sighing and groaning, and afflicting himself with sickness.... and by his stripes and sickness, which we ought to have laid to heart and made our own, we were healed.”

Rabbi Yoseph Ben Nathan (13th century): “He was a man of pains, and broken by sickness...but he carried our sickness, which ought to have come on us, came upon him.”

Rabbi Yeshaeyah Ben Mali (13th century): “The Lord was pleased to bruise him and sicken him, and therefore delivered him into the hands of the Gentiles.”

Rabbi Mosheh Ben Nahman (13th century): “He was pained for the iniquities of Israel, which occasion his tarrying, holding him back from becoming king over his people; and known to sickness, because a man who is sick is continually distressed with pain. Yet he carried our sicknesses, being himself sick and distressed for the transgressions which should have caused sickness and distress in us, and bearing the pains we ought to have experienced.”

Rabbi Aaron Ben Yoseph (the Elder, 14th century) said Isaiah 53 showed the prophesied atonement bearer was “to be made sick...but the Lord was pleased to bruise him in order to increase his reward, and to make him sick with long-continued sicknesses.”

Rabbi Mosheh Kohen Ibn Crispin (14th century): “Despised, and forlorn of men: despised, namely, in the eyes of the world *because of his loathsome appearance* [emphasis mine]. A man of pains and destined to sicknesses: as all that see him will say of him.” And, of course, this is exactly what those of Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth said of him: “Physician, heal yourself” (Luke 4:23).

Rabbi Shelomon Astruc (14th century) is even more to the point: “He was despised and forlorn of men, that is, he was not permitted to enter the society of men, because he was a man of pains, and broken by sickness. Perhaps the world denotes that he was so well known generally for the sicknesses which he endured, that in oaths made by men people would say ‘May such an one be like him’.”

Rabbi Abraham Farissol (16th century): “He was in truth despised and forlorn of men, exposed to accidents and sickness...but he was made sick and punished in our stead. He carried our sicknesses.”

Rabbi Mosheh El Sheikh (16th century) has a most interesting recognition of what Isaiah intended: “In spite of his holiness, he was a man of pains and broken by sicknesses: now there are two species of sickness, one when a man is in pain but is still able to move about, the other when he is attacked by some such disease as consumption or fever, when he is prostrated upon his bed but is free from pain; in the latter case he is said to be ‘broken by sickness.’ The prophet Isaiah says that both descriptions unite against the man spoken of.”

***The Suffering Servant appeared Very Different than Most Imagine***

All these early Jewish scholars which we have just mentioned

---

were simply endeavoring to show what the Hebrew of Isaiah actually was stating about what would happen to the Suffering Servant. Many of them felt that the “Jesus” of the Christians could in no way fulfill what Isaiah was saying because the majority of Christian theologians were united in their belief that Jesus had never been sick a day in his life. According to Christian authorities, Jesus never once had a sniffle. If this were the case, then the “Jesus” of the Christians could in no way be the Suffering Servant prophesied by Isaiah. This is one of the main reasons that Jewish interpreters (who could easily read the Hebrew of Isaiah 53) simply dismissed the Jesus of the Christians, and they focused their eyes on a future Suffering Servant who would fulfill what the prophet Isaiah said would one day occur. And one could hardly blame them.

The truth is, a great disservice has been done to people in the world who have been wanting to hear the Christian message from theologians of the Christian faith for the past 1600 years. People (including the Jews) have been told just the opposite of what the New Testament (and Isaiah the prophet) said happened in the person of Jesus. Though he was indeed faultless, he was nevertheless burdened with many pains, humiliations and sicknesses all his life. He was bearing the sins of the world long before he went to the tree of crucifixion.

It is interesting, however, that non-Gnostic Christian teachers before the time of Constantine (A.D.325) were consistent in showing forth the real Jesus of history. They truly portrayed him as one who was under continual suffering and that he was repulsive to look at, just as the prophet Isaiah stated he would be. Note what Keil and Delitzsch said in their commentary on Isaiah 53 (vol.II, p.307 note 1).

“The Church before the time of Constantine pictured to itself the Lord, as He walked on earth, as repulsive in His appearance; whereas the Church after Constantine pictured Him as having quite an ideal beauty.”

Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* provides a number of historical references to show that the early fathers of the Church (before the time of Constantine) were well aware (and believed) that Jesus was repulsive in appearance (vol.I, p.875). But from the time of Constantine the description of Jesus in the flesh changed drastically. After Constantine he was portrayed by many Christians as the most handsome of men (the same article in Smith's *Dictionary* quotes these later references too).

### ***The Creation of a New Jesus***

With the fourth and fifth centuries, a new Jesus comes on the scene that was far different from the Suffering Servant of Isaiah or from what the New Testament and the early fathers had to relate. It became common to quote sections of Scripture which described God as a king and that he was fair in his divine appearance (Psalm 45:3). And true enough, the apostles believed that Jesus was a person of beauty before he came to earth and also *after* his resurrection. But while he was on the earth, and in the flesh, they understood him to have appeared very differently. The apostle Paul said that Jesus gave up the glory that he had before his birth and became Jesus, the one who no longer had any kingly glory or fair appearance. When Jesus came to earth, he became the lowly Jesus who manifested himself among mankind as a servant. He was then lacking in beauty. He was even poor and forlorn. Paul said: "For you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich he became poor for your sakes, that you might become rich through his poverty" (II Corinthians 8:9). Paul went on to say:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, *being in the form of God*, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: *but made himself of NO REPUTATION*, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in the fashion of a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death"(Philippians 2:5-7).

But in the fourth century, theologians began to abandon the

teachings of Isaiah concerning the Suffering Servant and the indications within the New Testament about Jesus' fleshly existence and they imagined him as maintaining his God-like characteristics (even in his physical appearance). The Constantinian and post-Constantinian theologians emphasized the teaching that Jesus was like the unblemished Passover Lamb and they applied this to his outward appearance as well as to his character. But anyone who understands the scriptural records knows that this evaluation can only refer to his character, not to his outward, physical frame. Actually, even the "unblemishness" of the sacrificial lamb only meant that it was not to be deformed at the time of sacrifice, not that it could never have been sick in its life. Certainly, Jesus was not deformed in his outward physique, but he was nonetheless reckoned as the "stone" that the builders rejected (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20 and I Peter 2:4-7). It was his character that resembled the unblemished lamb and not his outward appearance. The New Testament writers were well aware of this. They knew that Jesus did not retain his form and glory that he possessed before his incarnation. He emptied himself and became the *Jesus* who fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah's Suffering Servant.