

# WHO HATH BELIEVED OUR REPORT?

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Isaiah chapter 53 is well-known for its prophecies of Jesus Christ the Son of God. It may be the most quoted Old Testament passage found in the New Testament. That is the text from which Philip taught the Ethiopian eunuch about Christ and converted him in Acts 8. But the prophecy actually begins in Isaiah chapter 52, speaking of God's "servant" who would "deal prudently," and be "exalted and extolled, and be very high" (verse 13). His visage would be "so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations" (verses 14-15). The very next verse begins chapter 53, which continues to foretell what Christ would do all the way into the beginning of chapter 54. But in the middle of all of these prophecies about what Christ would do is a prophecy of the response of many people to him, phrased in the form of a question. Isaiah 53:1 says, "*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*"

## **Israel's rejection of Christ**

The Gospel of John introduces Jesus Christ as the Word, who was with God in the beginning, who is himself Divine, and is Creator of all things (John 1:1-3). John 1:10-11 then states, "*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*" Christ would be rejected by his own people. He would be "despised and rejected of men" (Isa 53:3). Psalm 118:22-23 also prophesies about the Jews' rejection of Christ: "*The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.*" The Lord himself quoted this passage and applied to the Jewish leaders who would not believe in him (Matt 21:42-46; Mark 12:10-12; Luke 20: 17-19). Jesus also forewarned his disciples that he would be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes of Israel (Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; 17:25). After it was all fulfilled, Peter and John preached to these very people, quoting the same prophecy that Christ did: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. *This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner*" (Acts 4:10-11). It is astonishing that people who personally witnessed the marvelous miracles that Jesus did would still reject him. But John 12:37-50 says, "*But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?*" There we see Isaiah 53:1 quoted and applied to the people of Israel. They would hear "the report" and see God's witness to His Son by the miracles which he did (John 5:36; Heb 2:3-4), but still would not believe in him. Only a remnant of Israel believed in him, while the rest "stumbled at that stumblingstone" (Rom 9:27-33). We are

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exhorted not to follow their unbelief, but to believe and obey him (1 Pet 2:4-10).

## **God's definition of belief**

A host of scriptures teach that faith in Christ is essential for one to obtain eternal salvation. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." John 3:16, perhaps the most famous verse in the Bible, says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In John 8:24, Jesus said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." In Acts 16:30-31, the Philippian jailor asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." But there is not a single verse in the Bible that teaches that faith in Jesus Christ is the *only* thing that will save a person. *Obedience* to God is also required. The Jews assembled on Pentecost asked the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37-38). In Galatians 3:26-27, "faith in Christ Jesus" includes being "baptized into Christ." Hebrews 5:9 tells us that Christ "became the author of eternal salvation *unto all them that obey him.*" Those who do not obey God will be eternally lost (Rom 2:6-11; 2 Thes 1:7-9). In fact, God's definition of a living faith includes and requires obedience to His commandments (Jas 2:14-26). In this context, we find the sole Bible reference with the phrase "faith only," and it says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and *not by faith only*" (Jas 2:24). The prophecy in Psalms that the Jews would reject Christ and stumble at him also defines disobedience as unbelief. Romans 9:32-33 says the Jews "sought it not by faith" and "stumbled at that stumblingstone," but "*whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*" The same prophecy is quoted in 1 Peter 2:6, and verses 7-8 says, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto *them which be disobedient*, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, *being disobedient*: whereunto also they were appointed." Put together, we see that a proper faith in Christ is expressed by obedience, and disobedience equals unbelief. The prophecy in Isaiah 53:1 ("Who hath believed our report") is used in the same way in Romans 10:16. Verse 11 of that chapter declares that "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed," and verse 13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Verse 16 then says, "*But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*" It is very telling that a verse which prophesies unbelief is described as prophesying disobedience. It should be obvious to all that disobedience *is* unbelief.