

Becoming Catholic #30: The Prophecy That Convinced Me the “Apocrypha” Was Part of the Bible

Making Wisdom Popular

The “Becoming Catholic” blog series is a multi-part, multi-year, bite-size, fact-focused attempt at describing the journey of a lifelong protestant to the Catholic Church. You can read all the individual articles [here](#).

It is widely believed that the most explicit Messianic prophecy of Jesus in the Old Testament is found in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which we provide below for reference ([Isa. 53](#)):

Who has believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
² For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.
³ He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,
and with his stripes we are healed.
⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned everyone to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,
so he opened not his mouth.
⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?
⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him;
he has put him to grief;
when he makes himself an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days;
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;
¹¹ he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous;
and he shall bear their iniquities.
¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out his soul to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

The Prophecy

A prophecy of at least equal clarity in one of the “Apocryphal” books played an immense role in convincing me that the seven books commonly called the “Apocrypha” by protestants are in fact canonical, and thus part of the Bible, as the Catholic Church teaches.

The “Apocrypha,” or “Deuterocanonical” (“second canon”) books are seven in number, and considered to be part of the Old Testament by the Catholic Church. But they were later rejected by protestants (many of whom, early on, nonetheless considered them “useful”). These books are: Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and portions of the book of Daniel and Esther.

In this post, we are not making a comprehensive case for the Deuterocanonical books. We are simply showing one particularly powerful data point that convinced us these books are in fact part of Scripture, and the Catholic Church has been correct to recognize them as such.

The standard we’re using comes straight from the Torah ([Deut. 18:20-22](#)):

²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.’ ²¹ And if you say in your heart, ‘*How may we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?*’—²² when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, *if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken*; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him.

In this case, the prophecy we are referring to comes from the second chapter of the book of Wisdom. This prophecy, written centuries before Christ, provides a remarkable description of Jesus (the “righteous man”), His ministry (as perceived by His enemies), and His execution at the hands of His enemies. The words of the prophecy are as follows ([Wis. 2:12-20](#)):

¹²“Let us lie in wait for the righteous man,
because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions;
***he reproaches us for sins against the law,
and accuses us of sins against our training.***

¹³ He professes to have knowledge of God,
and ***calls himself a child of the Lord.***

¹⁴ He became to us ***a reproof of our thoughts;***

¹⁵ the very sight of him is a burden to us,
because his manner of life is unlike that of others,
and his ways are strange.

¹⁶ We are considered by him as something base,
and ***he avoids our ways as unclean;***
he calls the last end of the righteous happy,
and ***boasts that God is his father.***

¹⁷ Let us see if his words are true,
and let us test what will happen ***at the end of his life;***

¹⁸ ***for if the righteous man is God’s son, he will help him,
and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.***

¹⁹ Let us test him ***with insult and torture,***
that we may find out ***how gentle he is,***
and ***make trial of his forbearance.***

²⁰ ***Let us condemn him to a shameful death,***
for, ***according to what he says, he will be protected.”***

Let’s briefly analyze the prophecy piece by piece.

“He reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training”

This is a common theme throughout the Gospels, where Christ frequently upbraids the Jewish leadership for their misunderstanding of the Torah. To the Pharisee, Nicodemus, He directly asks him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet do not understand this?” ([John 3:10](#)) He also criticized the way in which the Pharisees imposed burdens on the people in a way that violated the spirit, and sometimes even the letter of the law.

“Calls himself a child of the Lord”

Jesus is known as and believed to be the Son of God by Christians. The essence of the Christian Faith was first enunciated by St. Peter: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ([Matt. 16:16](#)) At His trial before the Sanhedrin, the high priest directly asked Him if He was the Son of God, and He not only did not deny it, but affirmed it by referencing other Messianic prophecies that speak of the Son of Man coming down on the clouds. ([Matt. 26:63-64](#); cf. [Mark 14:61-62](#); [Luke 22:70](#))

“A reproof of our thoughts...he avoids our ways as unclean”

Jesus frequently contrasted the outward purity and religiosity of the Pharisees and other members of the Jewish leadership with the internal state of their hearts, which he compared with “whitewashed tombs.” ([Matt. 23:27](#)) He frequently prefaced His teaching by saying “You have heard it said,” followed by “But I say.” ([Matt. 5:21, 22, et al](#)) The Gospels thus often observe that

those who heard Him were amazed because He spoke as one “with authority.” ([Matt 7:29](#)) Sometimes, Christ even directly contradicted the Pharisees and their traditions, asserting they actually violated the law they claimed it upheld. Jesus did this to contrast His teaching and way of life with that of the Pharisees. Theirs was the “unclean” way, not His.

“Boasts that God is his father”

This point is obvious, and the natural corollary of Jesus being the Son of God. The Lord’s Prayer itself begins, “Our Father.” It was because Jesus identified God as His Father that many in the Jewish leadership accused Him of blasphemy.

“Let us condemn him to a shameful death”

The prophecy speaks of a “shameful death” being imposed on this “righteous man.” Likewise, the New Testament, echoing the Torah, speaks of everyone who hangs from a tree being accursed ([Gal. 3:13](#)), of the cross as a form of humility ([Phil. 2:8](#)), and the crucifixion as a shameful form of death ([Heb. 12:2](#)), concurring once again with Wisdom’s prophecy.

“If the righteous man is God’s son, he will help him”

These words of Wisdom’s prophecy are all but directly quoted by the criminals, chief priests, scribes, and elders as Jesus is dying on the cross ([Matt. 27:38-43](#); cf. [Mark 15:27-32](#)):

³⁸ Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.

³⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, *save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*” ⁴¹ So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴² “He saved others; *he cannot save himself.* He is the King of Israel; *let him come down now from the cross,* and we will believe in him. ⁴³ *He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”*

The Wisdom prophecy goes on to describe the folly of these wicked enemies of the “righteous man” this way ([Wis. 2:21-24](#)):

²¹ Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray,
for their wickedness blinded them,

²² and *they did not know the secret purposes of God,*
nor hope for the wages of holiness,
nor discern the prize for blameless souls;

²³ for God created man for incorruption,
and made him in the image of his own eternity,

²⁴ but through the devil’s envy death entered the world,
and *those who belong to his party experience it.*

This language is likewise directly mirrored in the New Testament. For example, St. Paul echoes Wisdom’s assertion that those who kill the righteous man “did not know the secret purposes of God” when he writes the following to the Corinthians ([1 Cor. 2:7-8](#)):

⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. ⁸ *None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

A New “Isaiah 53”

In short, not only does the Wisdom prophecy describe Jesus’ claims and His crucifixion in remarkable detail, but it quotes His enemies, and describes their folly in the same way as St. Paul does.

The only other Messianic prophecy I knew of that came even close to this level of detail and clarity was Isaiah 53. So how could one be Scripture, and the other not?

This was the first of the seven books of the “Apocrypha” I read while investigating Catholic claims. Reading such an accurate prediction right at the beginning of the book certainly caught my attention, and made me far more open to the Catholic Church’s teaching on the matter. When I saw how stunningly accurate it was, it became impossible to deny it was a genuine prophecy. Per the words of Deuteronomy about distinguishing false prophecy from true, the Wisdom prophecy made very detailed claims about the future, and every single one of them took place in the life of Jesus Christ. Thus, it was a genuine prophecy, and therefore came from God.

While more research was left to do, this remarkable prophecy set me on the road. I eventually concluded the Catholic Church had been right all along to include the Deuterocanonical books in the Bible. They were not “Apocrypha” after all, but Holy Scripture.