

**“The Prophet Zechariah: The Branch (3:8; 6:12), the Donkey (9:9)
and the Piercing (12:10): Perspectives from Judaism and
Christianity.”**

The Pre-Trib Study Group Conference
Dallas, Texas
December 13, 2019

Dr. Brian Moulton
Chairman of Biblical Studies
San Diego Christian College
Santee, California

The Table of Contents

I. Introduction to the Paper	1
The Author of Zechariah	
The Historical Times of Zechariah	
The Purpose of this Paper	1
II. The Prophecy of the Coming Branch (3:8; 6:12)	2
The Exegesis	3
Perspectives from Judaism	8
Perspectives from Christianity	9
III. The Prophecy of the Donkey-Riding King (9:9)	15
The Exegesis	16
Perspectives from Judaism	20
Perspectives from Christianity	21
IV. The Prophecy of the Piercing (12:10)	22
The Exegesis	22
Perspectives from Judaism	27
Perspectives from Christianity	29
Resurrection as a Necessary Condition	30
A Time Warp in History	31
V. The Conclusion to the Paper	31
Bibliography	33

“The Prophet Zechariah: The Branch (3:8; 6:12), the Donkey (9:9) and the Piercing (12:10): Perspectives from Judaism and Christianity.”

I. Introduction to the Paper

The Author of Zechariah

In the wake of seventy years discipline in Babylon, with the prospect of reconstruction from the rubble of years, came a young Captivity-born prophet named Zechariah. Brought to the Promised Land by his grandfather along with the scant 50,000, this prophet became a beacon of light and hope for the returned exiles. Facing the frustration of threatening enemies in the Land along with the collapse of spiritual hope in ever seeing the temple rebuilt, Zechariah and his friend Haggai brought messages of encouragement and hope for the returnees then and for the future of restored Israel.

Zechariah means “God remembers,” an indication that God will remember His covenant with Israel by one day bringing in the temple and kingdom through a regathering of Jews from the present (and future) diasporas. This message of hope promises to deliver the Jews from her enemies once and for all. Spiritually-driven and flush with imagery, visions and symbolism, Zechariah set out to not only realize the temple completed and the priesthood restored, but also to throw the attention of that generation to the “in that day” time zone, the end zone of history when Messiah will bring perfect justice to the Land of Israel and the world...permanently.

The Historical Times of Zechariah

Work on Zerubbabel’s temple has ceased due to opposition and discouragement during the reconstruction period. Zechariah came on the scene to encourage the returned remnant to complete the work they had started so that even beyond the time of Zerubbabel’s temple, Messiah would come and build His own temple during the future kingdom days of Israel.

The History of the Temple Work		
Ezra 3-6		
Chapter 3	The Work Begun	536 B.C.
Chapter 4	The Work Opposed	534 B.C.
Chapters 5-6	The Work Resumed	520 B.C.
Chapter 6	The Work Completed	516 B.C.

The Purposes of this Paper

The purpose of this paper is to analyze three well-known prophecies about the coming of the Jewish Messiah for the purpose of satisfying for Christians both the validity of applying literal hermeneutics to promise and fulfillment, as well as probing the depths of spiritual application as found in these biblical texts. A second purpose is to understand

how Jews and Judaism have interpreted these texts, both before and after the Jesus event of the first century A.D. when Jesus seemed to have clearly fulfilled these Messianic texts.

A quote from Abba Hillel Silver from *A History of Messianic Speculation* (1927):

Three factors contributed to the spread of the Messianic belief in Israel: the loss of national independence and the attendant deprivations, the will to live dominantly and triumphantly as a rehabilitated people in its national home, and the unfaltering faith in divine justice by whose eternal canons the national restoration was infallibly prescribed. Helplessness in the face of overwhelming odds. a masterful love of life, and an unyielding hold upon the basic morality underlying all national experiences constituted the physical, psychic and ethical elements out of which the Messianic faith was fashioned. The Messianic ideal was a group conception into which political aspirations, religious imperialism and moral vindications merged.¹

II. The Prophecy of The Branch (3:8; 6:12)

The Chapter Context

Zechariah 3:1-5 tells of the spiritual cleansing of Joshua the High Priest. Zechariah 3:6-10 then conveys the meaning and significance of that event. Chapter three begins with a startling education in Satanology. Joshua the high priest is being played on by Satan. Satan is playing on the guilt of Joshua who is, in fact, guilty. He is standing before the Lord in filthy garments. So the Lord rebukes Satan, taking note that Joshua, by divine decree, has been chosen by God for his special task; “Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?”

The high priest has been selected and cleansed, but there is no temple with which to carry out the Levitical worship in these days after Exile. No King; No Temple, hence the concern for both Zechariah and Haggai that the temple reconstruction be completed as soon as possible so the spiritual restoration of the nation could succeed. This new post-exilic society would be tethered, anchored to the Land with this crucial building, surely tied to the figure of the coming Branch.

Reading of the Texts

Zechariah 3:8-9

8 Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. 9 For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

¹ Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1927), ix from the Foreward, paragraph one.

Zechariah 6:12-13

12 Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. 13 Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”’

Exegesis of Zechariah 3:8-9

Now listen: Those involved in this scene are about to receive information that is of vital importance, important to their task at hand and beyond. Something is about to be revealed that will serve as a motivation to complete the work on the second temple.

You and your friends: Joshua has a group of priestly-minded associates with him who are apparently subordinated to him since they are “sitting in front of” Joshua. They are with Joshua, awaiting wisdom and instruction from God through the prophet. We cannot discern either the names of these persons or their specific roles in the ministry of the Levites at that time.² But these are men of great prophetic significance, symbolic of some person to come.

They are men who are a symbol: These men serve as a symbol (*mopeth*, from *yapet*³) or perhaps a type of that ultimate leader to come...the Branch. What is happening with the temple then is the work of God; therefore they can proceed with confidence to complete the temple work, for these men are types of a greater reality to come. The exact wording of verse 8 indicates that Joshua and the men are to listen, but it is the men who are the symbols.

For behold: The change from “Now listen” to “For behold” indicates a further heightening of the prophecy about to be given.

I am going to bring in: This indicates an abrupt change with regard to the personnel God is using to accomplish His temple-building plan. While Joshua, his friends and Zerubbabel are on the scene at that time, a new person, not presently in their midst, will enter this story by the decree of God. And there is no time frame provided for this to happen. Yet there will be a role for a future Joshua-like leader among the people of Israel.

My servant the Branch: Both 3:8 and 6:12 use the term *tsemach* for branch, not the more familiar term *nezer*. Isaiah 4:2 is *tsemach* and 11:1 is *nezer*, while Jeremiah 23:5 and

² According to the Talmud, the companions sitting with Joshua are Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, all of whom were involved in the days of Daniel in Babylon when signs and wonders did occur among the captives in Babylon. If the Talmud is correct in that speculation, these three Hebrew “boys” would not be in their 90’s or 100’s by this time.

³ William Wilson, *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co, Orig. 1870), 487.

33:15 use *tsemach* for Branch. The Branch statements in Isaiah and Jeremiah have been universally understood as a coming Messiah-King of the lineage of David who would bring in the final kingdom in Israel and the world (cf. 2 Samuel 7:14-17; also Jeremiah 33:7-22 referring an ultimate restoration after Exile). Here in Zechariah it appears to suggest the same. God will bring in His servant, His Branch.

Both *tsemach* and *nezer* are agricultural terms referring to the first growth of a vine, grain or tree. Wilson suggests the Messiah is the Branch of Jehovah, either as to his eternal generation, or as the restorer of his chosen people.⁴ The connection of *nezer* with Nazareth and Nazarene has long been understood as reference to the life of Jesus Christ who was born in Nazareth, ‘branch-town’, therefore fulfilling the promise of the coming *nezer* who will bring in a future for Israel in the Land. Jesus is the Branch of Jesse *and* David by lineage, but also the Branch to be born in branch-town...Nazareth.

The branch texts in Isaiah and Jeremiah refer plainly to the Jewish Messiah:

Isaiah 4:2; In that day the Branch (*tsemach*) of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.

Isaiah 11:1-2; Then a shoot (*miggeza*) will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch (*nezer*) from his roots will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11:10-16 indicates that this Branch will rule over the world of nations.

Jeremiah 23:5-6; “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (*tsemach*); And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 “In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’ Both this verse and the next clarify the house of David as the dynastic source for the Branch.

Jeremiah 33:15-16; 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch (*tsemach*) of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the Lord is our righteousness.’

Since the Branch statements of these pre-exilic (Isaiah ca. 740-680 B.C.) and exilic (Jeremiah ca. 627-585 B.C.) prophets historically precede the Branch statements of post-exilic Zechariah (520-518 B.C.), it must be understood that a prophetic flow of truth and

⁴ Wilson, 48.

progressive revelation is intended by God the Holy Spirit who alone moved these prophets to refer to Messiah with such consistency over time.

Cohen, however, suggests that this distinction of terms indicates that Zerubbabel is the *tsemach*, while Messiah is the *nezer*.⁵ Zerubbabel would then be the prince/king while Joshua would be the priest. Zerubbabel was in fact the grandson of Davidite Jeconiah who was ousted in 597 B.C. Hence, both elements would then be in place for this post-exilic moment of the restoration of the temple and the nation to the Promised Land.

Yet the Branch cannot be Zerubbabel since he was already on the scene historically for perhaps two months engaging in the restoration of the temple. The Branch whom God will bring in is yet to appear since the time of Zechariah. More on identifications in a moment.

For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua: Notice the abrupt shift in metaphor from branch to stone. The identification of the stone as been understood in many ways:

(1) The foundation stone or the final stone of the temple being laid by Joshua and Zerubbabel.⁶ The placement of the divinely-inscribed stone would signify the completion of the post-exilic temple.⁷

(2) A special priestly stone to be engraved and placed into Joshua's ephod. The ICC suggests that the stone is an ornament for the costume of the high priest since it speaks of engraving (as if on a precious stone).⁸

(3) A reference to the Branch-Messiah who is yet to come. There is a continuative sense here in which the just-mentioned Branch is now referred to as a stone, and as such could be rendered, "The stone (the Branch) that I have set before Joshua..." So the Branch is then identified with the Stone. The promised Branch is said to function "in that day" (3:10), indicating an eschatological throw for this prophecy. Zechariah 10:4 refers to Messiah as a cornerstone. In addition, the prediction of the stone hearkens back to the time of Isaiah who wrote, "Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed" (Isaiah 28:16).

In both Testaments, 'stone' is a common symbol used to indicate both God and Messiah (Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:6). Jesus the cornerstone became a

⁵ A. Cohen, *The Twelve Prophets* (London: The Soncino Press, 1948), 282.

⁶ *The Tanakh Online*, accessed August 2019.

⁷ Thomas McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 1079.

⁸ Charles Briggs, Samuel Driver & Alfred Plummer, *The International Critical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1912), 157.

stumbling stone to the Jews in the first century who rejected Him (1 Peter 2:7-8). Given this context, this cannot be an ordinary stone....this is the Branch-Messiah.

If this text is messianic, then Messiah is designated by three descriptives: The Servant, The Branch and The Stone. Little in this context would connect the stone with some sort of building materials for Zerubbabel's temple. In addition, this single stone should not be confused with the two stones in the priest's ephod or the twelve stones on the priest's breastplate.

On one stone are seven eyes: There are three possible meanings here:

(1) This refers to the seven eyes of God directed *toward* the stone, suggesting the assurance and care of God as the Branch-Stone-Messiah completes His work. It would additionally serve as a motivation for the temple builders THEN, knowing that God's eyes are watching over the building efforts of the stone workers. God will see them through to completion.

(2) This refers to the seven facets of an engraved stone as a jewel in the crown of the Messiah.⁹ Such an interpretation would be in keeping with the idea above that the stone is a reference to some aspect of the priest's ephod stones.

(3) This refers to the seven eyes of the Stone-Messiah Himself. Similar to the seven eyes of God which roam throughout the earth (Zechariah 4:10), the Branch-Stone-Messiah will oversee the affairs of His creation in accordance with all that God has decreed for Israel, the nations and the end of history. Zechariah 4:10 says, "For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—these are the eyes of the Lord which range to and fro throughout the earth."

With 'seven' indicating completeness and 'eyes' indicating observance and care, this would specify the full knowledge and wisdom of Messiah with an allusion to the seven-fold Spirit of God bearing the same number (Revelation 1:4).

I will engrave: There is no indication here what message or marking is created by the engraving. Whether it be a statement on a building stone or the very statement, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day," one can only speculate, and without much success. Some see the engraving as the markings of crucifixion on Messiah Himself.

I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day: This would occur either in the time of Zerubbabel with the temple completion (516 B.C.) or in a future day when the Branch (who is distinct from Zerubbabel) forgives the sins of Israel with a full restoration of the

⁹ Cohen, 282.

people to her temple and Land. As Joshua was cleansed of his sin previously (3:4), so will the nation experience a similar cleansing of sin.

Zechariah 5:7 tells of the woman in the ephah, representing sin, which will one day be banished to Shinar. Presumably that too refers to the “in that day” end times. Zechariah 2:9-13 refers to this time of ultimate restoration with 2:12 as the focal statement: “The Lord will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.”

In one day: This specific time designation has been understood with various ideas:

(1) A single day or pointed action in the future indicative of the abrupt nature of this cleansing as God breaks into Israel’s national life and brings a permanent change....instantly.

(2) A period of time during when this cleansing will take place. This idea suggests a fulfillment of this prophecy in the time of Zechariah: Finish the temple, restart the worship and sacrifices, then forgiveness will come.

(3) The Day of Atonement from Leviticus 16. Though the Day of Atonement was an important annual observance for Israel, this does not appear to be the focus of this special Branch prophecy which itself is tied to the Branch prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah. The priestly work for the Day of Atonement was a *normative* event in the life of the people; THIS future priest is carrying out a *non-normative* role tying up the loose ends of world history in the eschaton.

This author favors the first interpretation which sees the Branch-Messiah coming to accomplish the ultimate temple reconstruction and restoration of the Jews to the Land. This promised forgiveness of sins will occur in that abrupt moment when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth, the battles will be done away, and the earth renewed in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom. This day is referred to in Zechariah 13:1; “In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.”

The confirmation of a promise is seen here to Joshua and his priestly companions in that this Branch, whoever that will be, will fulfill what God has long-promised to Israel in the Land. The restoration of Israel after Babylon is the sign that in latter times God will bring in the Branch-Messiah to permanently complete the task. It should be noted that both Joshua and Jesus bear identical names. Joshua the Priest served, as did General Joshua of the Conquest, as a personification or type of the greater Joshua who is to come.

Zechariah 3:10 offers perhaps the strongest evidence that the Branch-Stone prophecy was not fulfilled in the days of Zechariah. The common expression among the Jewish prophets, “In that day” is always shorthand for the eschatological end times. If indeed this

coming Branch is to be brought forth by God Himself and the iniquity of Israel is to be permanently cleansed, then it makes sense that this would occur in the far future.... “in that day”. However, if “in that day” refers to the time of Zechariah¹⁰, then the Messianic Era began sometime toward the close of the 6th century B.C. when Zerubbabel’s temple was completed.

Perspectives from Judaism:

Jewish interpreters have understood the Branch in Zechariah 3 in the following three ways, among others:

(1) The Branch passages in the Hebrew Bible, whether *nezer* or *tsemach*, are surely references to the coming Messiah. Messianic prophecies throughout the Tanakh reveal this righteous branch to be Yeshua Ha-Moshiach.¹¹ Thus the passage is messianic, but not Jesus-messianic.

(2) The *tsemach* texts in Zechariah indicate that Zerubbabel is the shoot, while the *nezer* texts in Isaiah and Jeremiah refer to Messiah.¹² Thus a little of each: some fulfillment then, later fulfillment when the non-Jesus Messiah comes.

(3) The fulfillment of the Branch, as least in Zechariah, is found either in the person of Joshua the high priest or Zerubbabel the governor.¹³ Boda gives an extensive support for Zerubbabel as the fulfillment in his (Boda’s) quite non-messianic treatment of this prophecy.¹⁴

The problem arising from the Joshua/Zerubbabel interpretations is that neither of those historical figures, as vital as they were in their day, rose to the level of the Branch-Messiah predicted here and in the other prophets. Joshua the high priest was cleansed and crowned, though not as a Davidic King. Likewise Zerubbabel, though being of the line of David, never aspired to the level of a temple-building king such as Solomon. Ezekiel chapters 40-43 describe the greatest temple ever envisioned, a temple yet to be built in the Holy Land.

The Persian Empire allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. In making that allowance, Zerubbabel was selected as a man well-trained in the Persian form of governance, thereby assuring that Persia’s interests would continue to be served by the Jews back in Canaan. Nehemiah would function in a similar role as governor in Judea during his time. While it may be allowed that Zerubbabel (and perhaps Nehemiah) served as examples of who was to come, neither man fulfilled the Branch prophecy. It would

¹⁰ Cohen, 101.

¹¹ *The Prophet Zechariah: Prophecy for Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, accessed October 2019.

¹² Cohen, 100.

¹³ *Jewish Virtual Library*, accessed October 2019.

¹⁴ Mark Boda, *The Book of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 258-259.

require a future king, a king not yet known in Israel, one greater than Solomon who would bring permanent forgiveness and righteousness to the Jews living in the Holy Land.

Perspective from Christianity:

Though the Branch texts in Zechariah do not explicitly identify who the Branch is, whether Zechariah, Joshua, or a future Davidic king, there is sufficient reason to understand that all of the branch passages in the prophets are messianic and refer to Jesus Christ.

- (1) The phrase “My Servant” bears the notion of a Davidic descendant in keeping with the Servant-Messiah message of Isaiah.
- (2) There is a clear distinction between Joshua the High Priest and the person referred to as the Branch.
- (3) Zerubbabel was a governor, not a king. Therefore it would be unlikely that Zerubbabel is the identity of the Branch promised by God. Zerubbabel was the man serving in his day as the leader and political motivator for the Israelites, but that seems to be it. He drifts from the stage of Jewish history shortly after this time.
- (4) Taking all of the Branch passages together shows that someone far greater than Joshua or Zerubbabel is the fulfillment of the Branch-Messiah. It will be the Jewish Messiah who will complete a final temple for Israel’s permanent presence in the Land some time beyond the post-exilic restoration.
- (5) The singular New Testament reference to a Branch fulfillment is Matthew 2:22-23, which reads, “But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee, and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Though there is debate on equating “Nazarene” with “Nezer”, this author is content to read Matthew 2 as an approximation of the words of the prophets, much like the quotation of Amos 9 in Acts 15 wherein James says, “With this the words of the prophets agree.”

III. Joshua the Crowned Priest. 6:9-15

The Chapter Context

The Branch text in Zechariah 6 brings additional Branch content to what has been given in Zechariah 3. This Branch text is part of the narrative describing the crowning of Joshua the high priest. Using silver and gold, the returned exiles are told to make a special crown

to be placed on the head of Joshua the high priest. Having already received cleansing and a clean turban for his head (3:5), he is now endowed with greater importance as a royal figure.

Zechariah 6:10-11...Make an ornate crown (*ataroth* plural) and set it (singular) on the head of Joshua the high priest: Most commentators associate this crown with that of royalty, indicating a ruler to be the king over the Land. But the Hebrew plural for crown begs the question: Were there actually two crowns made, one of silver, the other of gold, which were then placed upon the head of single man, Joshua? Or does the plural simply indicate that two precious metals would be used in making a single crown?

Favoring the latter idea of the single crown are the following suggestions:

- (1) It would be unusual to place two crowns on the head of a single person.
- (2) It would seem awkward to make two crowns as indicated in 6:11, but then place only one of them on the head of Joshua in 6:14. Such an occurrence would implore the question, “What happened to the other crown?”
- (3) The plural of majesty in Hebrew could be an indication of the heightened importance of this single crown.
- (4) The two metals used in this singular crown can readily be understood as the reason for the plural use of crown in 6:11. Two precious metals were used to make one crown, whether woven or fused in some kind of manufacture. Baron cites Job 21:36 as an example of the plural form indicating a single crown.¹⁵

Each band used in this single crown was indicative of not only the high honor afforded to Joshua, but also of the two offices (priest and king) to which Joshua (or the Branch) would be appointed.

Some may ask, “Why not crown Zerubbabel, a legitimate Davidite?” Easy answer-Zerubbabel was not present for this event. And the Persians would not allow such a high authority to be given to a still-subjected people...the Jews. No strong king would have been allowed...only priesthoods and governorships.

Zechariah 6:12-13

12 Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. 13 Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”’

Exegesis of Zechariah 6:12-13

¹⁵ David Baron, *Commentary on Zechariah: His Visions and Prophecies* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988), 190.

Behold, a man whose name is Branch: The intended force is clear: Here is the Man! There can be no question but that a continuation of the former Branch prophecy from Zechariah 3 is now being re-addressed with further implications for this Branch. Zechariah is told by God to speak with the newly-crowned Joshua about a man (He)...not Joshua himself...but some other man.¹⁶

Zechariah looks directly into the eyes of Joshua, and yet does not address him directly as the Branch. Six times Zechariah 6:12-13 says “He”; not once does he refer to Joshua as “you”, making it clear that Joshua is NOT the Branch at all. Brown suggests that Joshua IS the Branch, but that he foreshadows the greater Branch to come.¹⁷

Yes...the Branch statement is addressed to Joshua, and yet is not applied to him as intimated even by many Jewish commentators.¹⁸ It seems clear that when coupled with the Branch text of Zechariah 3, the identity of this Branch has NOT shifted from a future person (Zechariah 3) to someone like Joshua living in the time of the second temple (Zechariah 6). Meyers & Meyers note that Zechariah’s language here leaves an open question on the Branch’s identity.¹⁹ Feinberg suggests that Joshua is typological of Messiah the Branch, the Priest-King.²⁰

He will branch out from where He is: Literally ‘from under Him.’ This future ruling king would not come from Persian-trained stock like Zerubbabel, but would be independent, free from all forms of foreign interference. He will spring up out of his place, that is to say, a royal descent of *Jewish* stock. Boda suggests a supplanting or replacement of the Jewish leadership coming at a future time.²¹ The future sense of this statement also infers that after the days of Joshua and Zerubbabel, this Branch will arrive on the scene. Unfortunately, no timetable is given.

Since the Branch prophecy of Zechariah 6 heightens and completes the statements from Zechariah 3, we know for sure that the temple work in Zerubbabel’s time was not the fulfillment of the Branch prophecy, neither was it the beginning of the messianic age in Israel. Rather, Zechariah describes the eschaton when Ezekiel’s temple will be built during the Millennial Kingdom, a time (as we now know in 2019) far future from the 6th century B.C.

¹⁶ Boda, 398 rightly notes that this cannot be referring to either Joshua or Zerubbabel.

¹⁷ Michael Brown, *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019), Kindle Loc 31851.

¹⁸ Baron, 191 carries an extensive footnote indicating that many early rabbis saw this as messianic, not related to either Joshua or Zerubbabel. The early messianic interpretation of the Branch therefore places the anti-Jesus Jewish interpreters into a hermeneutical strait-jacket trying to explain away the ‘errors’ of earlier rabbis.

¹⁹ Carol Meyers and Eric Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 202.

²⁰ Charles Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1952), 301.

²¹ Boda, 401.

Yes, it is He: This offers a further indication of the unique centrality of the coming figure, suggesting that it is someone other than Joshua or Zerubbabel.

He will build the temple (*hekal*) of the Lord: The primary object of attention in their day was the completion of the second temple. Myers and Myers note that this term can refer to both palace and temple, showing God's association with the residence of the king.²² And yet in this "day of small things" there would be yet a day of greater things, namely, the completion of THE temple of YHWH at a yet future time, a task to be completed by this coming future Branch.

Sit and rule on His throne: The Branch will also sit and rule (*masal*) on His throne (*kisse*). *Masal* is used over eighty times in the Old Testament referring to ruling as in having dominion. *Kisse* means chair, being both a literal piece of furniture as well as suggesting a seat of authority in ruling over His domain. According to 1 Samuel 1:9, Eli the priest's chair was placed near the entrance to the tabernacle. His role was to judge in the affairs of the people as well as to carry out the tasks for the Jewish system of worship. The Branch in Zecharian 6 reigns as a King. He will rule firmly, autocratically, but with the love, attention and wisdom of God Himself watching over His earthly realm.

He will be a priest on His throne: This Branch will not only complete the temple, but will rule on the Davidic throne as king AND priest, dispensing the duties of both offices. He will be a king on his throne, representing God to the people; He will be a priest on His throne, representing man before God. And if that is not strange enough to the hearers, Gentiles will come from great distances to assist in the construction of the Branch's temple! Verse 10, "And those who are far off will come and build the temple of the Lord." Haggai 2:7 also referred to Gentile assistance in the Millennium.

The indication here is not two men holding two offices, but one man holding two offices. The combination of King-Priest in one person was anticipated in the king-priest Melchizedek (Psalms 110:4). Ultimately this person came to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 5:5-6; 7:15-22). This person will be the true Melchizedek, carrying out his dual role as King-Priest.

Peace...between the two offices has been understood variously:

(1) A rivalry between Joshua and Zerubbabel in their historical setting. And yet there is no hint of rivalry between Joshua and Zerubbabel in their day.

(2) A rivalry between God and the Branch-Messiah. Again, there is no hint of discontinuity in the relationship of the God the Father and God the Son.

²² Meyers & Meyers, 123.

(3) A planning for peace by YHWH and the Branch.²³ This view is best because it takes into account the integrity of the economical Trinity as well as the expectation of world peace to come through Messiah. The community restored from the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century B.C. would function largely under the authority of their own priesthood, with a governor or two standing in as appointed by the Persian Empire. But once this Branch-King comes to rule on David's throne, complete forgiveness, justice and peace will be fully established. So the peace is not for God and Branch—it is extended to others in Messiah's kingdom. The Moody Commentary suggests the intent here it to show the distinction between the two offices rather than emphasize some apparent rivalry between them.²⁴

The Branch will wear the crown of Davidic royalty while also, as priest, represent the people of His realm before the Father of Israel. There has yet to come in the history of Israel a person who has carried out this dual task in a permanent way. Rather, there is a new order coming in the Land of Israel involving the construction of yet another temple, a third temple, a temple fitting for that future time of restoration from another diaspora which has endured (in the present) since the destruction of Israel in A.D. 70.

Think of the potential confusion and/or jubilation for the Jewish people after the Exile. On the one hand, they were building a temple with great effort THEN, for that generation. Yet on the other hand, a yet future temple was now being set forth prophetically which may either augment or completely replace the structure being erected THEN. This two-temple concept may have met with some confusion; yet the implication of another temple coming after this one would serve to motivate their work at that time with a renewed joy at the prospect of greater things to come. Remember, with the Jewish people, things could always get better [do not despise the day of small things]!

Perspectives from Judaism:

Most Jewish interpreters see the Branch fulfillment as occurring during the time of the Second Temple, since that is the context of Zechariah's preaching in the 6th century B.C.²⁵ The task at hand during the days of Haggai and Zechariah was the completion of Zerubbabel's temple. In fact, Zerubbabel was credited with completing that temple. Therefore himself, Joshua or both would have been the rightful heir of the title 'Branch'.²⁶

²³ Baron, 201. Baron suggests this third view.

²⁴ Rydelnik, Michael and Vanlaningham Gen Eds., *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1424.

²⁵ *Who is the Branch of Zechariah 6:12?*, accessed August 2019.

²⁶ Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, gen. eds. *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019), Kindle Loc. 32087: Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Radak indicate Zerubbabel as the Branch (as also in 3:8).

Rashi (1040-1105) notes, “Some interpret this as referring to the King Messiah, but the entire context deals with the Second Temple.”²⁷ Cohen sees Zerubbabel as the Branch, noting that Joshua must take second place in the new state with Zerubbabel serving as the chief leader.²⁸ Hence the ‘peace’ established between the two offices was a peace between Joshua and Zerubbabel under Persian authority in Canaan. With Joshua as the priest, he would subordinate himself to Zerubbabel the king. Therefore in the ideal future, both Priest and Branch would sit upon thrones of authority, governing with peace and respect between them.

The main difficulty with identifying the Branch as either Joshua or Zerubbabel is evident in the grammar of these texts. The grammar shows one individual, not two individuals, who would sit upon a throne with royal authority to rule. Surely the man in view here would unite both offices under a singular person. Since Joshua represented only one of the offices (priest) and Zerubbabel neither, history must look for another man to fulfill the Branch texts. Though Zerubbabel is the line of David through Jeconiah (Matthew 1:12-13), he did not serve as king/priest, nor did he rule on a throne while rebuilding the temple. At best it could be said that Zerubbabel foreshadowed the true Branch, the one who is to come.

Zechariah 3 noted that Joshua and his servants were symbols, signs of a person yet to come; “I am going to bring in My servant the Branch,” as if to say, “Joshua, you are not the Branch.” Besides, Joshua the high priest was of the tribe of Levi and therefore could not serve as a Davidite ruling on Israel’s throne. For Joshua to have done so would negate the promises that a Judahite (Genesis 49:10) from the family of David (2 Samuel 7) would occupy Messiah’s throne.

Perspective from Christianity:

Taking the *nezer* and *tsemach* Branch texts together leaves little doubt but that the prophets are referring to the eternal Messiah-Jesus. The contexts of these Branch texts present a heightened sense that something far greater will happen in the day of the Branch. While the temple of Zerubbabel was of lesser stature than the temple built by Solomon, the coming third temple promises to eclipse any temple ever built in Israel.

The single Branch reference in the New Testament is the “He shall be called a Nazarene” text of Matthew 2:22-23. But that is fulfillment enough to show the connection between the predicted Branch of the Old Testament with the arrival of the Branch in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ became the King-Revealed at His First Advent, but will be the King-Reigning at His Second Advent.

²⁷ *Who is the Branch of Zechariah 6:12?*, accessed August 2019, cites Rabbi Rashi. Baron, 191 offers an extensive footnote from Jewish sources that indicate Zerubbabel as the Branch. And I do mean extensive.

²⁸ Cohen, 293.

Peace...between the two offices: In keeping with the books of Psalms and Hebrews, the Messiah to come (Psalms 110:4) and the Messiah realized in the first century (Hebrews 5, 7) would serve as both Davidic King and Priest. This Anointed one would be of an everlasting priesthood according to the order (not the lineage) of Melchizedek in addition to serving in His royal office in the line (not the order) of David.

III. The Prophecy of the Donkey (9:9)

The Chapter Context

The history of kings in both Israel and Judah following the schism of 931 B.C. was largely disappointing. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had zero good kings, while the South a mere eight good kings. The others were violators of the will of God in both their personal lives and their leadership of the Jewish people. Zechariah 9:9-10 promises the arrival of a king who will right all of those kingly disappointments, promising a new day for the Jewish people—Messiah’s Dominion Day.

Zechariah 9 can be outlined and summarized as follows:

I. The Conquests of Alexander the Great in Syria 9:1-8. These verses predict the campaign of Alexander the Great as his armies would roll through Syria and Philistia (333-332 B.C.) two hundred years after Zechariah’s time (520-518 B.C.). Marching through Philistia there is no mention of Gath, most likely because Gath, being inland, was not in the Alexander’s pathway. Whatever the case, the Jews in Judah would be protected from this campaign as God promised, “I will camp around my house because of an army, because of him who passes by and returns” 9:8.²⁹ The expression “camp at my house” refers specifically to the temple, but can be understood as symbolic of the Jewish people and the entire nation of Israel. This is a statement of prophecy, not history. Judah and Jerusalem were spared from Alexander’s conquest; the Greek armies became protectors of the Jews, protectors of the seed of Abraham.

Zechariah then refocused from the nearer scene of protection from the Greeks to the ultimate protection and victory for Israel in the far future....during the time when Messiah would arrive on the donkey.

II. The Coming of a Messiah-King in Israel 9:9-10. In contrast with Alexander conquering on a white horse, though sparing Israel, the Messiah-King will ride on an unbroken donkey, cutting off the enemies of Israel and bringing worldwide dominion and peace. Israel will ultimately be safe from all prospective enemies.

²⁹ Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 11:8:3-5, notes that Alexander had a dream and therefore chose to leave Israel alone.

III. The Conquest of the Maccabeans over the Greeks 9:11-17. The reference to Greece in 9:13 (Javan in some translations) brings the focus still to the future, but to a nearer future during which the Jews were harshly treated by the Greek-Seleucid Antiochus Epiphanes IV (171-164 B.C.). The sons of Zion will counter the actions of the Greeks through the intervention of the Lord (9:14-15). The Maccabean leader-to-come serves as a symbol of the Messiah-King who will ride on the donkey. History shows that it was Judas Maccabaeus who drove out Antiochus Epiphanes IV, bringing an age of Jewish independence to last until the rise of the Roman Empire. The prophet Daniel predicted both the rise of Alexander the Great (Daniel 8:1-8; 11:3-4) as well as the victories of the Maccabees against the Seleucids and Antiochus Epiphanes IV (Daniel 8:9-14; 11:21-35).

The Reading of the Text:

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
 Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!
 Behold, your king is coming to you;
 He is just and endowed with salvation,
 Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
 Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
 And the horse from Jerusalem;
 And the bow of war will be cut off.
 And He will speak peace to the nations;
 And His dominion will be from sea to sea,
 And from the River to the ends of the earth.

The Exegesis of the Passage:

Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion/Jerusalem: The term rejoice (*gili*) refers to being excited, having a joy extending to bodily actions such as dancing. And what a contrast! The fear experienced during the days of upheaval caused by Alexander the Great's campaign will turn to rejoicing when Messiah comes into the Land. Constable notes that three figures of speech are used to reflect the fullness of this king's arrival to all Israel: Zion and Jerusalem are *personified* as daughters, indicating the closeness of the Father to His own. The reference to Jerusalem is a *metonymy* in which the place name actually represents the citizens of the city. Jerusalem is also a *synecdoche* in which the city name represents not only the people of Jerusalem, but all the Jewish people of the nation.³⁰

Behold: As with the Branch narratives, "behold" gives the impression that a crucial statement follows.

³⁰ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Zechariah 2017 Edition*, 66, accessed August 2019.

Your King is coming to you: That is, the king who will come into the Land of Israel and establish a physical/spiritual kingdom in the Holy Land. Zechariah does not say “a” king, but “thy” king, the one whom the Jews had long anticipated. Zechariah 2:10 already noted the exuberance for the coming Messiah. Your king is coming to you. He is on the way. He is most likely the same Messiah-Branch figure described earlier (Zechariah 3, 6). This king will come to her...to Israel...finally after having survived takeovers by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and later the Greeks. This statement stands in direct opposition to the previous predictions about Alexander the Great, a king serving the Macedonians for the purpose of spreading the Greek world everywhere. No. This donkey-driven king will specifically serve God’s chosen people.

He is just and endowed with salvation: This king shares two stated attributes of God. This king will be just (*tsaddik*), endowed with salvation (*nosha*). More than simply ‘just’ in himself; this King will bring justice to everyone, making a display of justice in everything that He accomplishes for His people and the world.

The Hebrew (*nosha*) as a Niphal participle is the passive form of *yasha*, indicating that this King has either been saved or endowed with salvation. Zuber notes the participle can be passive (saved) or reflexive (salvation is in himself).³¹ Baron suggests one who is endowed with salvation, showing himself to be the Savior, furnished with the assistance of God.³² Hence it could be understood that this King of Israel was delivered (saved) from the period of humility (and subsequent death ca. AD. 33) to become the stallion-riding Savior arriving with strength and decisiveness in Revelation 19.

Humble and mounted on...the foal of a donkey: This King will ride the son of a female donkey; the foal of a donkey. There are several essential observations to be made:

(1) Riding on a donkey is not necessarily a sign of in-distinction, for men of distinction rode on donkeys before the time of Solomon (Genesis 22:3; Judges 5:10, 10:4; 12:14; 2 Samuel 16:2; 1 Kings 1:33). But from the time of Solomon and after, the horse became the vehicle of choice for military campaigns and special occasions (Jeremiah 17:25). The donkey-usage also can be regarded as indicative of peace (see Genesis 49:11 regarding Judah’s influence in the Millennium).

(2) Riding the donkey here is a sign of humility, the sign of a man far different than the horse-riding Alexander the Great. Alexander rode the horse to destroy and conquer; this Jewish King will bring peace to the entire world through an approach different than the normal tactics of warfare. This battle will be decided in a single day, once and for all time.

³¹ Kevin Zuber, *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy*, Kindle Loc 32400.

³² Baron, 308.

(3) Alexander established a dominance over the ‘world’ that was limited and did not last. This coming King will conquer and control a far greater territory (the earth) with a permanent effect. Following his arrival, no other king or series of kings are predicted by the prophets to unseat the King riding on the donkey.

(4) Riding an unbroken donkey (cf. Luke 19:30, 35; Mark 11:2) is no small task since the rider would normally be bucked off at a moment’s notice.³³ Yet this animal required no training, indicating the submission of even this animal to the one riding upon it. And yet the donkey-riding King will defeat the horse-riding kings; “I will cut off the chariot....and the horse...” (9:10).

(5) It was the combination of a humble king (9:9) and a victorious king (9:10) that eventually led the Jewish interpreters to believe there would be two Messiahs rather than a single Messiah. The son of Joseph would die for the sins of Israel, the son of David would conquer and reign in the Jewish kingdom.

THE GAP: Without the New Testament as a point of reference, verses 9-10 appear to be an unbroken statement referring to a single event. The king appears on the donkey and then changes the world! But the Gospels indicate the dual advent significance to this prophecy. Between verses 9-10 comes the church age, the dispensation of grace. As indicated in the Gospels, the King arrived, but was rejected by His own people. So Jesus was killed, buried, resurrected and ascended to be seated at the right hand of the Father’s throne until the time of Armageddon when His enemies will be a footstool at His feet. At that time Messiah will return to bring an end to the times of the Gentiles and sit on His glorious throne. The church age was not envisioned by the prophets, but was a mystery age, not revealed in times past, but given to Paul by revelation (Ephesians 3). Wiersbe notes, “The entire age of the church fits between Zechariah 9:9 and 9:10, just as it does between Isaiah 9:6 and 7 and after the comma in Isaiah 61:2.”³⁴ Therefore Zechariah 9:9 is more *soteriological* in intent, while 9:10 is *soteriological-geographical* in intent.

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim...the horse from Jerusalem...the bow of war:

The expression to cut off (*hicarathi*, Niphal participle) means to root out, strike, to punish with death. This humble King bringing peace to the world will not do so without violent and decisive warfare; “The bow of war will be cut off,” suggesting that one final great war will be fought and ended by this humble arm of the Lord. The removal of the chariot, the horse and the bow necessitates victory in battle, such as Armageddon (Zechariah 12-14).

In this text, God is the speaker who announces the arrival of the coming King. The pronoun shift from “I” to “He” suggests that God Himself will carry out the cutting off,

³³ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 1998), 131.

³⁴ Warren Wiersbe “Zechariah” in *The Bible Exposition Commentary/Prophets* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2002), 467.

while the king who is God's associate will speak peace to the nations. These actions were not accomplished by Joshua, Nehemiah or any other Davidite living in post-exilic or inter-testamental times.

Verse 10 anticipates an era of world peace to be accomplished through the destruction of all implements of war. These implements will be removed from the North (Ephraim) and from the South (Jerusalem), indicating a time of restoration of the Jews to their lands and their cities, a time of "rejoicing" and "shouting" in zeal for Messiah's advent. A similar reunification of the North and South is also promised through Ezekiel's vision of the millennial Land apportionments (Ezekiel 47-48) and his story of the Two Sticks (Ezekiel 37:16-20). The implements of warfare will be removed from both Israel and the nations as Messiah's peace permeates the world in that future time. Other prophets predict the same world-wide disarmament (Isaiah 2:4, 9:5; Micah 5:10-11).

He will speak peace to the nations: This King will bring to an end a long history of distrust and warfare between Israel and her surrounding enemies. Modern presidents and other leaders have attempted in vain to solve the various Arab-Israeli crises, to no lasting avail. But this donkey-riding King will accomplish that very task in a decisive manner (like the Branch = in a single day) with a permanent result. This peace will not only bring quiet to the struggles of nation-against-nation, but also the inner peace resulting from the elimination of enmity between God and men.

His dominion will be from sea to sea, from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth: The Holy Land will thus be the center of this King's realm, serving as the starting point for a salvation and peace extending throughout the world of nations.

Psalm 72:8-11 references this time: "May he also rule from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth. 9 Let the nomads of the desert bow before him, And his enemies lick the dust. 10 Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. 11 And let all kings bow down before him, All nations serve him."

Fulfillment in the New Testament:

At the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, Matthew 21:4-5 notes the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9. Likewise John 12:14-15 records, "Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, 15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." Also in Mark 11:1-11, with 11:2 as focal, Jesus said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here."

While New Testament Christianity understands this as a messianic prophecy fulfilled by Jesus at His First Advent, Judaism has also understood this as a messianic reference. Both

foresee a descendant of David in this text. And yet for Judaism, the arrival of this King was either fulfilled in the past or yet awaits fulfillment...it was never Jesus Christ.

Perspectives from Judaism:

The Jewish scholars, historically puzzled by this text, concluded that there must be a two-stage prophetic program for Israel that includes the arrival of two distinct Messiahs. In that scenario, Messiah son of Joseph would die for sins, then Messiah son of David would live and reign forever.³⁵

Within those discussions have come other ideas. Ancient rabbis either *deny* that this is a direct reference to Messiah³⁶ or *affirm* a long understanding that this text has always been messianic. One author notes that Judaism understood that her Messiah would be a God-fearing Jew, a direct descendant of David, a Torah scholar and a great leader to be anointed as the new Jewish King.³⁷ This King is thy king, a king of Israel and for Israel, not any non-descript ruler who may happen to bring peace to the world. David Baron cites quotations from the Talmud, the Midrash and various Jewish commentators which apply this text to the Messiah.³⁸

Various Identities of the Donkey-Rider:

(1) Judas Maccabaeus was the rider on the donkey. Since the victories of the Maccabees are described adjacently in Zechariah 9:11-17, it would logically assume the chronology established in the chapter: Alexander the Great conquers the world; then a King is coming into Israel to deal with those Greeks! That humble leader, riding the donkey, is Judas Maccabaeus since he was the ‘Hammer’ who drove Antiochus Epiphanes IV out of Israel and back into Syria (under Greek control).³⁹

(2) Nehemiah was the rider on the donkey: Jewish priest R. Moses assigned Nehemiah the Tirshathite as the fulfiller of this prophecy.⁴⁰

(3) Messiah would be the rider on the donkey: Jarchi (Rashi) affirms from the Talmud, “If he sees as ass in his dream, let him look for salvation, as it is said, behold, thy king cometh unto thee, ‘riding on an ass’”.⁴¹ The Tanakh Online establishes no doubt but that Messiah is intended as the person riding the donkey.⁴² And yet that source makes no reference to the New Testament fulfillment, or even the potential NT fulfillment in Jesus

³⁵ See Baron, 441 footnote 2 for a strong explanation of the Two Messiahs.

³⁶ Kevin Zuber, *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy*, Kindle Loc 32435.

³⁷ Garrett Smith, “The Returning King: The ‘Two Messiahs’ in Zechariah”, accessed August 2019.

³⁸ Baron, 304. See footnote 1 for a fuller list of those favoring a messianic meaning in Zechariah 9:9.

³⁹ Cohen, 305 notes Ibn Ezra on this view.

⁴⁰ Silver, 210 mentions this view opposed by Ibn Ezra. Also *Bible Hub Commentaries Zechariah 9:9*, accessed August 2019, affirms that Jarchi also denied that Nehemiah would be the rider. Jarchi saw the donkey text as strictly messianic.

⁴¹ *Bible Hub Commentaries Zechariah 9:9*, accessed August 2019.

⁴² *The Tanakh Online*, accessed August 2019.

Christ. Jesus is not even a possibility to be the one riding the donkey! Though Jesus was presented to Israel as her King, it remains true that “He came unto His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1).

Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889), a Christian Jew, applied this verse to Messiah. Quoting Edersheim, “The Messianic application of this verse in all its parts has already been repeatedly indicated. We may here add that there are many traditions about this donkey on which the Messiah is to ride; and as firm was the belief in it, that, according to the Talmud, if anyone saw a donkey in his dreams, he will see salvation’ (Ber 56b).”⁴³

Many among the Jewish rabbis held an expectation that Messiah Himself would fulfil this prophecy and not Nehemiah, Judas Maccabaeus or any other Jewish hero. It remains to be said that no other King in history has or could have fulfilled this text like the Lord Jesus Christ did during His First Advent (the donkey) and will at His Second Advent (dominion from sea to sea).

Perspective from Christianity:

The quotation of Zechariah 9:9 in Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15 have lead some Jews and many Gentiles to faith in Jesus Christ. Though Jesus would fulfil prophecy by dying at His First Advent, the people at the triumphal entry erupted in spontaneous joy by preparing a pathway of palm branches and garments for Him. They fully accepted a donkey-driven Messiah because they cried out in clear terms, “Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” This is a resilient evidence that Jesus was the Jewish King expected in the Zechariah 9:9 prophecy. One source describes the scene on that first Sunday of the Passion Week:

Though the triumphal entry was a joyful celebration, a Roman spectator would wonder what was to triumph about this entry. It didn’t compare at all to the kind of parade Julius Caesar had when he came back to Rome from France. Then there was a parade that lasted three days as he displayed all the captives and booty he brought back. In contrast to this, the procession of Jesus must have seem pretty humble, and this showed that Jesus was a different kind of King.⁴⁴

The gospels do not quote Zechariah 9:10, an indication that that aspect of Messiah’s program would not be carried out in the first century A.D. Jesus’ arrival on the foal of a donkey served as a guarantee, a pledge that the complete prophecy of Zechariah 9:9-10 will be carried out eventually.

There is no other person in world history who bears the character and authority to be identified with Zechariah’s promised Jewish King than Jesus Christ. Believing Christians

⁴³ *The Prophet Zechariah: Prophecy for Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, accessed August 2019, cites this quotation from Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1883.

⁴⁴ *Enduring Word Commentary-Zechariah*, accessed August 2019.

and Jews since the first century have understood that a single individual performed a dual role to be carried out through a First and Second Advent to the earth. At Jesus' First Advent He was a servant and a sacrifice (9:9). At Jesus' Second Advent He will conquer, rule and bring peace to the world (9:10). When Messiah-Jesus comes to Israel the second time, repentant Jews on earth will realize that the Jews living in the first century A.D. had missed it! And because of that sudden realization, they will mourn as though grieving for the loss of a firstborn son (Zechariah 12:10). The two purposes were and will be fulfilled in a single person.

IV. The Prophecy of the Piercing (12:10)

The Chapter Context

Chapter 12 predicts a worldwide cooling off toward Israel in the form of a siege against Jerusalem. The context is clearly warfare, most likely the Battle of Armageddon as the Tribulation Period nears its end. It will be during that time that the events of the piercing text occur.

The Reading of the Text: 12:9-11

9 And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.
10 "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. 11 In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

The Exegesis of the Passage:

In that day: An expression in the prophets referring to the eschaton, beyond the time of the First Advent, beyond the time of the church age, to the consummation of all things Jewish, the time of the battle already raging among the nations and Israel (Armageddon).⁴⁵ Verse 11 mentions Megiddo for historical purposes, and yet happens to be the very location of this war-to-end-all-wars.

I will pour out (*shapak*)...house of David...inhabitants of Jerusalem: Clearly this prophecy is directed toward the Jews who will undergo a conversion to faith at this future time. The house of David indicates the lineage of David through whom Messiah would come. The inhabitants of Jerusalem represent not only those living in Jerusalem proper, but all Israelites who in that day will recognize the once slain Messiah and turn to Him in repentance and faith. *Shapak* refers to the dispensing of a liquid, wrath, indignation or any number of other descriptives found in the Old Testament, as well as the pouring out of God's Spirit. It is clear that the change of heart experienced by Israel at this time is

⁴⁵ Meyers & Meyers note that "on that day" occurs 17x in Zechariah 12-14, setting the an eschatological tone for these chapters, 316. Zechariah 9-14 Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 316.

produced by God Himself. God is the first cause and prime mover of a nationwide repentance to be experienced at the Second Advent.

The Spirit (*ruach*) of grace (*hen*) and supplication (*hanah*): *Ruach* could refer either to the Holy Spirit or to the human spirit. Favoring the human spirit is McComiskey who notes that *ruach* in this text is not equated with God or divinity as in other uses in Zechariah.⁴⁶ Therefore this could be a reference to the human psyche being quickened through the grace of God to the reality and identity of this pierced one toward whom they will mourn.

Favoring *ruach* as the Holy Spirit is the already familiar concept spoken through other prophets about God pouring out His Spirit upon Israel in the eschaton (Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28; Isaiah 32:15, 44:3). If that is intended in Zechariah 12, this irruption of the Holy Spirit in Israel will create a hunger for God's truth and thus a turning toward her returning Messiah. Either way *ruach* is nuanced here, whether human spirit or Holy Spirit, the repentance and mourning will be the effectual work of God.

Hen refers to grace in the normal sense of grace: a favor shown from man to man or from God to man. *Hanah* is derived from the same word as grace, indicating that one will lead to the other. The Spirit of grace poured into the lives of the people will evoke the verbal response of prayer, a supplication as each illuminated heart turns in faith toward the one who had been previously pierced. At this future time God's temporary hardening of Israel will be lifted so national Israel can be saved (Romans 11:25-27).

They will look upon Me whom they have pierced (*dakar*): Clearly "they" refers to the members of Jewish society living predominantly in the Holy Land. The term *daqar* is used eleven times in the Old Testament, twice in Zechariah (12:10, 13:3). Summing up the other nine, all but one of them refer to someone being killed by piercing. Jeremiah 37:10 alone refers to wounded men left in their tents, perhaps to die later. Note the linkage between the piercing of this unnamed individual and the mourning over the death of a first-born...in both cases actual death is intended. Zechariah sees this day of piercing and mourning as already having been accomplished, yet it is still future. So there is a future piercing, and a THEN yet future mourning!

There is a connection between the piercing here and that in Isaiah 52-53. Isaiah 53:5 reads, "But He was pierced (*chalal*) through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed." In both texts there is a messianic figure pierced, though differing Hebrew terms. These Hebrew terms appear to be synonyms. In Zechariah the piercing produces mourning; in Isaiah it produces salvation from sin. Yet this difference need not deflect from the connection since in Zechariah there is clearly an eschatological salvation

⁴⁶ McComiskey, 1214.

coming to Israel in chapters 13-14. It is not incongruent with Scripture to suggest that the piercing of Isaiah 53 refers to Jesus' crucifixion at His First Advent, while the piercing in Zechariah 12 refers to that same event...but to be realized at the time of His Second Advent.

Note also that this prediction of the pierced one comes approximately 550 years before Jesus' death on the cross. It would be the Roman soldier doing the piercing, yet culpability rests with the Jews themselves who insisted on that day, "Let Him be crucified!"

Look upon Me...mourn for Him: Note the change in pronouns. While at first glance this seems peculiar, the bigger picture as to the identity of this pierced one comes fully into view. God is the speaker; yet it is His associate who would be pierced and receive the lamentation of the people. God Himself will suffer; God Himself will be pierced—through the person of the Branch; the donkey-riding King; the first-born whose death will be later recognized as a rejection of Israel's Messiah at the First Advent of Christ.⁴⁷ This is a strong indication of the deity of Messiah.

In addition, the differing pronouns (Me, Him) indicate that there are two distinct persons described here. Keil and Delitzsch point up that the person slain is essentially one with God and yet distinct in person from God.⁴⁸ Therefore the Holy Trinity is surely indicated with reference to Me (God the Father), Him (God the Son) and the Spirit (God the Spirit).

This "look upon Me" is more than just seeing or noticing the arriving Messiah. It suggests a contemplative look, a deeply passionate recognition of the pierced hands, feet and side; a coming into full knowledge of reality, as did Thomas who saw the wounds of Jesus and believed. All of this will be impressed upon the Jews in that striking moment of realization and bereavement.

As with the donkey narrative (9:9-10), Zechariah neither indicates that Messiah will come twice, nor that there will be two distinct Messiahs. But if the events described in 12:9-11 are allowed their natural chronology, it would seem accurate based on the New Testament to understand a dual advent of the same person. This is the king who *has come* (riding the donkey, later pierced in A.D. 33) and the king who *will come* in the final consummation as the nations are defeated and the Jewish people mourn and repent.

And mourn...weep bitterly over Him: Once awakened to the truth, the fruit of that awareness will pour forth in conviction, sorrow and bitter weeping. Like the death of a first born, the death of God's only-begotten Son will come into full recognition as this

⁴⁷ See Daniel Stuart, *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy*, Kindle Loc 33050 for an excellent discussion on the pronoun shift.

⁴⁸ C.F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 610.

future generation of Israelites comes alive with the knowledge of what had occurred at Messiah's First Advent. Ironside notes, "They will realize the dreadful impiety of which their fathers were guilty in crucifying the Lord of glory."⁴⁹

Like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo: This location is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, nor is the location known with certainty today. The two main theories on its mention here are:

(1) Hadad was the name of a Canaanite storm God, while Rimmon was the name of a pagan temple cited in 2 Kings 5:18. Perhaps the two are linked for whom some now-unknown ceremony of mourning was observed. But certainly Jews would not have mourned the defeat/failure of some pagan god. Why mourn that?

(2) Hadad Rimmon is a location in the plain of Megiddo where the Jews mourned over the death of Josiah (2 King 23:29-30; see 2 Chronicles 35:20-27, esp. v.25 – a customary day of mourning established). The death of Josiah occurred during the reign of Pharaoh Neco (609-594 B.C.), a senseless, needless death to be sure.

Josiah was himself pierced in battle and mourned; so will this future pierced one who comes into Israel. Both Josiah and Jesus were pierced and mourned by the people. The customary mourning over Josiah seems to have continued for many generations following his death.⁵⁰ It is not insignificant that the location Megiddo is used for the parallel idea of mourning over the pierced one. Zechariah deals considerably with the Battle of Armageddon (Megiddo) in chapters 12-14, an event which John refers to with similar precision (Revelation 16:12-16).

Zechariah 12:11-14 then describe the all-inclusiveness of mourning at the time of Messiah's appearance. All classes of Jewish society will repent after learning of the crucifixion of the Messiah thousands of years earlier by the hands of their forefathers. The individual nature of this mourning (*by themselves, by itself*) indicates the personal nature of this mass conversion of Jewish society. This will be every class of individual making a personal decision to mourn based on the realization that the Messiah has once again come into Israel, and that her Messiah was and is Jesus of Nazareth.

Privacy will be important as these future Jewish converts experience the depth of their national shame; they will wish to be alone with loved ones: the house of David, the house of Nathan, the house of Levi and the house of Shimei; even the wives will mourn apart from their husbands. D.A. Carson notes, "Perhaps the best way to understanding this is

⁴⁹ H. A. Ironside, *Notes on the Minor Prophets* (New York: Loizeaux Brother, 1928), 418.

⁵⁰ This commemoration of Josiah's death apparently extended through the Captivity to the post-exilic times when the Chronicles were written (ca. 450-425 B.C.).

that the people have killed a historical figure, who was the Lord's representative, and in doing so they have pierced the Lord Himself."⁵¹

Other texts speaking into the piercing text in Zechariah 12 include:

Psalm 22:16; "For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They *pierced* (*kereh*) my hands and my feet." Here the word differs from the one used in Zechariah (*dakar*). While *dakar* indicates a thrusting through to the point of death, *kereh* refers to digging, suggesting that the piercing of hands and feet may or may not prove fatal. David's statement in Psalm 22 may refer to the wild dogs nipping at David's hands in his day while also referring prophetically to the experiences of Jesus Christ at His crucifixion.

Isaiah 53:5; "But He was *pierced through* (*chalal*) for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed." Here the death of the Servant has the effect of vicarious atonement for sin. Moreover, the death of this Servant is God's intent to benefit of His people in Israel (53:8). The language of propitiation, or satisfaction with this sacrificial Servant is indicated in that 'it pleased the Lord to crush Him" (53:10). While Isaiah 53 indicates that God was the first cause of the piercing of the Servant, Zechariah 12 shows it was the Jewish nation that was responsible for His death.

Luke 2:35. Simeon regarding Mary the mother of Jesus; "and *a sword will pierce* even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." Mary learned that her precious first Child will be met with violence as His time on earth would draw to a close.

John 19:31-37 1 "Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; 33 but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 34 But *one of the soldiers pierced His side* with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. 35 And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. 36 For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." 37 And again another Scripture says, "*They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*"

The slight change from "Me whom they have pierced (in Zechariah 12)" to "Him whom they have pierced (in John 19)" is important with regard to prophetic fulfillment. This is John's Spirit-inspired manner of referring back to the prophecy in Zechariah to indicate that this Jesus now being crucified IS the one referred to 550 years earlier in Zechariah.

⁵¹ D.A. Carson, *The New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1994), no page number.

Revelation 1:7: 7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even *those who pierced Him*; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.”

Perspectives from Judaism:

Can God be pierced? The answer in the Jewish mind is “No!” The debate centers upon the “to Me” vs. “to Him”. Jewish interpreters tend to change the translation to read “look upon him whom they have pierced and will mourn for him.” In changing the Me (God) who was pierced to him (anyone) who is pierced, it eradicates the idea of a God-Man being pierced for the transgressions of the people, let alone the idea of God being pierced.

Daniel Stuart notes that the correct translation “To me” is supported by many versions of the Old Testament, including the LXX, Greek versions of the Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, the Aramaic Targums, Syrian Peshitta, Old Latin Bible and the Latin Vulgate.⁵² God is clearly the speaker in the first part of this passage! And it must remain so rather than twisting Scripture to fit some other idea.

Specific Jewish Interpretive Ideas:

(1) It is the nation Israel that has been pierced. A Jews for Judaism source suggests that God Himself *cannot* be pierced, but that Israel as a nation *can* be pierced.⁵³ Therefore with a vicarious understanding of it, to pierce Israel is to pierce God, given the close relationship between the two. God takes part figuratively in the destiny of Israel and is wounded whenever His chosen nation is attacked or defeated. Some Jewish interpreters translate this as “the one(s) who have been pierced,” thereby removing the possibility that a single individual (such as Messiah-Jesus) is the referent.

Most Jewish commentators twist the translation to read either “regarding those whom the nation thrust through” or “about those who are slain.”⁵⁴ This allows the Jewish interpreters to suggest that the nations have pierced Israel in some way. And yet, who did the piercing? Clearly it is Israel who carried out this killing, and not upon herself!

(2) Another view suggests that the mourning is more an astonishment that even one person might be killed in this battle.⁵⁵ This perspective reads this as Gentile nations who attacked Israel and therefore vicariously attacked God. Consequent to the death of many Jews by the hand of the nations, the Jews will mourn those who had died in that conflict, perhaps the conflict just mentioned in 12:11.

⁵² Stuart, Kindle Loc 33042.

⁵³ *Jews for Judaism*, “Does John 19:37 Misquote Zechariah 12:10?”, accessed August 2019.

⁵⁴ Stuart, Kindle Loc 33128 provides the translations from Jewish sources.

⁵⁵ Adele Berlin & Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 1264. Their quote from source; “Radah reads the text differently; for him it describes such a salvation that if even one person of Israel were killed in battle, they will be astonished.”

(3) Some Jewish commentators understand the “*they* will look...and mourn” as a reference to the nations who would mourn over Jews who had fallen in battle in defense of their city and country.⁵⁶ So this is Jews killed in battle as in views #1 and #2. But in this case the nations (for some reason) are mourning over the death of Jews (something that nations usually celebrated in OT times). There is nothing in this text about Israel dying in battle. In fact, the Israelites are quite secure and safe under God’s hand at this time:

- Zechariah 12:4 – I will *watch over* the house of Judah...
- Zechariah 12:6 – the inhabitants of Jerusalem (will) again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem...
- Zechariah 12:8 – the Lord will *defend* the inhabitants of Jerusalem...the one who is feeble will be like David.

(4) The one pierced is some Jewish person who suffered violence by the hand of others, that person’s ‘piercing’ having already occurred by Zechariah’s time. Any number of godly persons who perished by violence would fit the bill here. Since the piercing in 12:10 could be associated with the destructive battle in 12:9, it is possible that the piercing will happen at the time of that great battle. In that case it would not indicate a repentance toward a long-ago-pierced individual, but toward one who had just-been-killed in battle. The ICC also sees this person as already having suffered martyrdom.⁵⁷ Boda lists such possibilities as: Uriah, Josiah, Gedaliah, Jeremiah, Zerubbabel, Onias II. Simon Maccabeus, Judas Maccabeus as those suggested by others.⁵⁸

The language of this text, however, does not mandate that interpretation, nor does that idea fit with the flow of Zechariah’s words. This is clearly a prophecy of Future-Past!⁵⁹ There is a looking into the Future for a time of mourning over something in Past time...from the perspective of that Future time. And that Past event was still Future to Zechariah’s day.

(5) The rabbis of early Judaism understood this as a prophecy of the Messiah who would be put to death.⁶⁰ The martyr killed here is Messiah the son of Joseph who will fall in battle.⁶¹ In the Two Messiah Concept, Messiah ben Joseph must suffer and die; Messiah ben David would come later to reign as king.⁶² In support of this, both Rabbi Moseh

⁵⁶ As noted by Constable, 84; and Stuart, Kindle Loc 32980.

⁵⁷ *The ICC*, 330.

⁵⁸ Boda, 716.

⁵⁹ Not to be confused with the Moody Blues first album; *Days of Future Passed*, 1967.

⁶⁰ “Pierced Messiah Zechariah 12:10,” accessed August 2019.

⁶¹ Cohen, 106, 107 notes that the rabbis of the Talmud saw this suffering personified in the leader of the people, the warrior Messiah, the son of Joseph, who will be slain at this time (The Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 52a). Stuart, Kindle Loc 32994, 32998 notes that the early Rabbis such as Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Abravanel, Alshech see this as Messiah ben Joseph. Baruch Korman, “Zechariah and the King”, accessed August 2019 notes, “Hashem will pour out His Spirit on a certain group of the Jewish people and reveal who the Gemara calls Messiah Ben Joseph.”

⁶² Baron, 441. See footnote 2 for an excellent discussion of the history of the Jewish Two Messiah Concept.

Alshrich (1508-1593) and Rashi (1040-1105) agree that the Jewish mourning described in Zechariah 12:10 is the mourning over the death of Messiah ben Joseph.⁶³

Messiah ben Joseph is a yet-future Messiah who will build a temple in Jerusalem and then be killed. Therefore this IS a messianic text for many Jewish interpreters, albeit a different Messiah than Jesus who actually was pierced according to the gospels. Judaism sees no linkage to the person of Jesus Christ. And yet...there is no Messiah ben Joseph ever talked about in Scripture. He is an invention of the Jews own making.

Can it not be suggested that Jesus Christ would become the pierced one for whom tears and acceptance will be offered at His Second Advent? The simple solution is a single Messiah with two distinct roles carried out at two distinct times in history. The first role is redemption through His voluntary sacrifice (the piercing); the second is to bring the work of that redemption to Israel and the world through the earthly kingdom of God.

Perspective from Christianity:

To the Christian, the pierced one is Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified for sin and resurrected to eventually return to build a temple during His future reign on the earth. The Jesus of Christianity, crucified as Messiah ben Joseph, will return to fulfill the role of Messiah ben David, a single Messiah accomplishing both roles. It is unfortunate that many Jewish interpreters miss the point of this passage entirely, seeking other interpretations so as to forestall the need to believe in Jesus of Nazareth.

A Lesson from Emmaus:

The Emmaus Road story from Luke 24 offers additional insight on the dual role concept of Messiah. The two men say, “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.” After additional comments, Jesus replied, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Clearly these men expected the restoration of Israel spiritually and politically in the person of Jesus Christ at His First Advent. And in that they were correct! And yet Jesus’ general statement about the prophets made it clear that there would be a two-step process by which He, the Messiah, would fulfill the prophecies of His suffering phase (then) and then His glory and ruling phase (yet to happen).

The pierced one is Jesus Christ who was crucified in Jerusalem ca. A.D. 33. David Baron notes three ways the Romans pierced Jesus on the day of His crucifixion: the crown of thorns pierced His head; the nails pierced his hands and feet; the spear of the Roman guard pierced the side of Jesus as He hung nailed to the cross.⁶⁴ This person whose death

⁶³ “The David Williamson Talmud”, accessed November 2019.

⁶⁴ Baron, 450.

will be mourned is the Branch from chapters 3 and 6 and the King riding the donkey in chapter 9.

Revelation 1:7 refers to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ with clear allusion to Zechariah; “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, *even those who pierced Him*; and all the tribes of the earth *will mourn over Him*. So it is to be. Amen.” Note also that the events of Zechariah 12:7-9 were not fulfilled at Jesus’ First Advent and therefore await fulfillment at the time of His Second Advent.

Zechariah 13:1 expresses a concept related to the days of the Branch, the return of the donkey-riding King and the repentance of Israel over the pierced one; 13:1-2: “*In that day* a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity. 2 “It will come about *in that day*,” declares the Lord of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.”

Resurrection as a Necessary Condition

Within Isaiah 53’s direct statements about the suffering Servant-Messiah comes the implicit mention of His resurrection; “But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.” The resurrection itself is a necessary condition to placing a crucified Messiah on an eternal throne. Otherwise we are left with two Messiahs as the Jews have believed through the years.

The same argument for resurrection as a necessary condition is found in Acts 2:29-32; “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. 32 This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

The amillennialists and progressive dispensationalists have a field day with this text in support of their idea that the resurrection of A.D. 33 placed Jesus immediately upon the throne of David in heaven. Hence, a spiritual enthronement of Christ: for the amillennialist, the kingdom is NOW... no future for Israel at all; for the progressive dispensationalist, the kingdom is NOW (in the church) and LATER (with Israel in the millennium). But that is not the point being made in Acts 2. The only point is that Jesus had to be resurrected so that he can eventually fulfill the complete role assigned to Him by the Father when He comes again to the earth to do His business here. Resurrection is a necessary condition to seating a dead Messiah on a future throne. That is all Peter

intended by his statement in Acts 2:30. A few verses later Jesus is seated at the right hand of God on His throne....not on Messiah's throne.

A Time Warp in History

There is a time warp in Zechariah 12:10 that would have been difficult to understand during the post-exilic days of Zechariah, Ezra, Haggai, Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. Who is this pierced one? When will this take place? Will he be pierced at the time of the war? Or some other time? When will the nations be destroyed? All they could have known then is that this information was for the future.

But those of us living post-first century, post-resurrection can clearly understand the time sequence of the dual advents of Messiah. The apostle Peter indicates the disquiet of the prophets who could not fully understand some of the words they were writing; "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Both Zechariah 9:9-10 (the donkey) and 12:10 (the piercing) are Dual Advent texts. Looking back from a New Testament perspective, we have strong evidence for that through a literal interpretation of Scripture. Moreover, Zechariah 14 describes the return of Messiah to Israel, not riding humbly on a donkey, but arriving from heaven to stand on the Mount of Olives. At that time the Lord will be king over all the earth, Jerusalem will dwell in security, the warring nations will be defeated and silenced, and the bells of the horses will bear the expression "HOLY TO THE LORD."

But from the Jewish perspective, there are still questions, there remain doubts and a lingering sense that an entirely different person than Jesus will fulfill these prophecies. The Jewish people residing in unbelief today have not yet mourned for Jesus. But Zechariah affirms that they shall mourn in that day when God's grace will open the eyes of the unbelieving to generate Jewish brokenness, repentance and eternal salvation. As they mourn over the one whom their forefathers had pierced, they will look to Him in faith.

V. Conclusion to the Paper

Why so long?

I close as I opened with a selection from Abba Hillel Silver's book *Messianic Speculation in Israel*:

Why is this exile so long? The Egyptian exile lasted four hundred years. The Babylonian, seventy years. This exile has lasted 1,500 years. Again, in the case of both the earlier exiles, the length of each was revealed beforehand. Abraham knew that Israel would remain in Egypt 400 years, and Jeremiah knew that Judah would

remain in Babylon 70 years; but the extent of this exile was revealed to no one. Troki replies that the extent of the first exile was made known to Abraham in order to confirm the promise which was made that his children will inherit the land of Canaan, though not immediately. The term of the Babylonian exile was revealed in order to let the people know that it was an atonement for their sin of the neglect of the Sabbatical year. But the present exile is punishment for all the sins of the people, from the day they entered Canaan until they were driven from it....Israel is to remain scattered and dispersed until the people are purged of all their wickedness. Persecution and massacre are cleansing and purifying them. Redemption depends, then, on their repentance. God, therefore, did not reveal the end to anyone, not even to his prophets...it is therefore impossible to place a definite time for the duration of the exile....although the end is known to God.”⁶⁵

The Good News

Even for downcast Israel there will be victory in the end for that fortunate generation of Jews who, after being purged and prepared through the Tribulation, will come into national redemption and a kingdom life in a transformed Land.

Zechariah 12:2-5 reads,

“Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. 3 It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it. 4 In that day,” declares the Lord, “I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. 5 Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the Lord of hosts, their God.’”

The Branch, the donkey-riding King who will be pierced offers salvation now to all who will believe the gospel of the crucified and risen Savior. That same divine Person will offer salvation to Jews and Gentiles who, wearied by seven years of earthly troubles, will fall at the feet of the returning Savior and believe unto eternal life.

⁶⁵ Silver, 226-227.

Bibliography

- Baron, David. *Commentary on Zechariah: His Visions and Prophecies*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1988.
- Berlin, Adele and Brettler, Marc Zvi. *The Jewish Study Bible*. Oxford University Press, 1985.
- “Bible Hub Commentaries Zechariah 9:9”, accessed August 2019.
- Boda, Mark. *The Book of Zechariah*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016.
- Briggs, Charles; Driver, Samuel; Plummer, Alfred. *The International Critical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*. New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1912.
- Carson, D.A. *The New Bible Commentary*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1994.
- Cohen, A. *The Twelve Prophets*. London: The Soncino Press, 1948.
- Constable, Thomas L. *Notes on Zechariah 2017 Edition*, accessed August 2019.
- “Enduring Word Commentary-Zechariah”, accessed August 2019.
- Feinberg, Charles. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1952.
- Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999.
- Fruchtenbaum, Arnold. *Messianic Christology*. San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 1998.
- Ironside, H. A. *Notes on the Minor Prophets*. New York: Loizeaux Brother, 1928.
- Jewish Virtual Library*, accessed October 2019.
- “Jews for Judaism, ‘Does John 19:37 Misquote Zechariah 12:10?’”, accessed August 2019.
- Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, Franz. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982.
- Korman, Baruch. “Zechariah and the King”, accessed August 2019.
- McComiskey, Thomas. *The Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.
- Meyers, Carol and Meyers, Eric. *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.
- “Pierced Messiah Zechariah 12:10,” accessed August 2019.

Rydernik, Michael and Blum, Edwin, Gen Eds. *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy*. Chicago: Moody Press, 2019.

Silver, Abba Hillel. *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1927.

Smith, Garrett. "The Returning King: The 'Two Messiahs' in Zechariah", accessed August 2019.

"The David Williamson Talmud", accessed November 2019.

"The Prophet Zechariah: Prophecy for Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow", accessed August 2019.

"The Tanakh Online", accessed August 2019.

"Who is the Branch of Zechariah 6:12?", accessed August 2019.

Wiersbe, Warren. "Zechariah" in *The Bible Exposition Commentary/Prophets*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2002.

Wilson, William. *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*. McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co, Orig. 1870.