

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
Lesson 27, Chapter 12 Continued

Before we re-open the amazing, mysterious, informative, complex Zechariah, I want to spend some time with a subject that is greatly entangled within its pages, which is also in some ways the elephant-in-the-room for Bible students, and for those that haven't notice it yet, it ought to be. It revolves around the notion that I have brought up with you countless times; it is that as modern Believers... most of us having come from a Christian Church background... we tend to read things into the Bible... and especially into the Old Testament... that aren't actually there due to all we had heard in Church. Or we read certain of its words, and attach a meaning to them that was not at all what was intended, because our mental filters from all those years of Church teaching, modify them. Sometimes we even assume that what we are reading must have meant to the writers and people of that era, what it does to our modern Western minds. At times, that *can be* the case; but in a larger scope than most of us have realized, as often as not it doesn't work that way and so we walk away with wrong impressions that then go on to affect how we view other Scriptural subjects. The people of the Old Testament era often had an entirely different understanding of the meaning of the Scriptures than we do, and it is their understanding of them that we need to grasp if we are going to correctly unpack what those precious words mean. And, yes, it matters because it will color how we understand the New Testament, or how the New Testament reflects the Old.

This can be so hard to do especially as it regards this profound matter of what we today term The Messiah. Without thinking about it, we tend to anachronistically read Yeshua out of the New Testament and place Him back into situations we read about in the Old Testament that happened centuries before He was born (and, frankly, that is the way the Church as trained us to do). And, while sometimes this might be proper in the limited sense of referring to Yeshua as a prophesied figure who came much later in history, in fact neither the Old Testament writer or the reader had any such concept, nor is it what they meant. But even more, some of the things that the Church attaches to Yeshua as works that He supposedly did long before His own birth, are not.

It is a common academic and Bible teacher error to think that the concept of The Messiah occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Tanakh), that is wrapped up in the meaning of the Hebrew word *mashiach*. But, to ancient Hebrews, *mashiach* is actually but a more broadly applied term that means "anointed one". It is not just another word for a Deliverer. It is also not a technical or official title of any kind, nor is it a proper name designating a future or End Times figure, much less the designated divine agent of God's will and the sacrificial lamb for the salvation of His people. While the term *mashiach* most often refers to the several Israelite kings, it also refers to other anointed individuals such as priests and prophets. The association of *mashiach* with an ideal king coming from the line of David only occurred later, and it was taken from some of the Psalms, where it originally was all about the current king that was on the throne.

What needs to be factored into our understanding of God's word, and as it comes to comprehending the concept of The Messiah, is the principle and reality of progressive revelation. Progressive revelation comes in two forms. The first is from the structure of the Bible itself. That is, as time passes, each successive new Bible book reveals more than the previous ones. Each book builds upon the knowledge base of the previous ones (which is why it is so important to read the Bible in book order and not skip around). The second is that we as readers and worshippers are given progressive revelation in the sense of suddenly and mysteriously understanding something in the Bible that had not been realized before. Often, this is merely due to the passing of history in which some new element of society or some new series of historic events, brings with them new light about the ancient Scriptures. Newly discovered archeological evidence can contribute to it or can trigger a new line of thought. And it also happens at times that God, as the Holy Spirit, seems to give a scholar or leader or even several people an inspired revelation about what long ago been written, that they then pass along to others. So, to help us better read the Tanakh (the Old Testament) as it was intended... not coloring it with revelations that they didn't yet have and wouldn't come until long after the Old Testament was completed and closed... I will begin with this detour today that will require your close attention.

In our modern-day Western vocabulary... at least the part that revolves around Judeo-Christianity as well as Hebrew Roots and Messianic Judaism... the title

"The Messiah," refers to a unique person who comes onto the scene in the End Times (but has also appeared before, according to Christian doctrine and the New Testament) as God's agent of salvation for those who will believe, and He also brings in God's eternal kingdom over which He will have global-wide authority for 1000 years. By means of biblical progressive revelation, we know this person to be Yeshua of Nazareth. The issue I'm going to focus on, then, is the term "the Messiah" and the reality of it as it concerns history up to about 100 B.C. As a proper noun, a name or a title, this term does not occur anywhere in the Old Testament including in the Prophets, even though you might think it must. Rather we only begin to find some reference to an unnamed mysterious figure in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, where the Prophets speak about a number of End Times issues and figures that will appear... just as we are finding in our reading of Zechariah. But, these End Times figures go by different names and titles, and never The Messiah.

By the time we exit the B.C. era and enter into the first-century A.D., the term "The Messiah" was created and it had become an accepted title for a hazily-defined deliverer of the Hebrews, although there was not yet a unified or fully fleshed-out conception of what that someone called "The Messiah" might do, or who he might be. That this figure was connected in any way with the forgiveness of sins was the furthest thing from their minds. After all, they had a functioning Temple and Priesthood, so sacrificing for atonement of sins was already an everyday opportunity. Mostly, this hazy figure was seen as a great military leader and king that would rid the Holy Land of the Romans, and usher Israel into a new golden age of regional dominance. From their vantage point in history, what else could this Messiah be, then, but a great warrior leader... a deliverer or a savior of Israel from their long period of foreign oppression?

After the Jews' exile to Babylon, and the loss of their nation, there would no longer be a Davidic king to rule over an independent nation of Israel, because there would be no longer exist an independent nation of Israel. That matter was not resolved until 1948 when Israel was re-born as an official nation of Jews. So, biblically we find that God inspired His small group of Old Testament Prophets through His divine oracles to tell the Israelites to have hope... there would eventually be an ideal king of the future who would restore the Davidic dynasty... and he will rule over a sovereign and restored Israel. But...this person

was not yet designated "The Messiah". We see illustrations of this in Jeremiah and Ezekiel as well as in the book we're currently studying, Zechariah.

CJB Jeremiah 23:5-6 ⁵ *"The days are coming," says Yehoveh when I will raise a righteous Branch for David. He will reign as king and succeed; he will do what is just and right in the land.* ⁶ *In his days Y'hudah will be saved, Isra'el will live in safety, and the name given to him will be Yehoveh Tzidkenu [Yehoveh our righteousness].*

CJB Ezekiel 34:23-24 ²³ *"I will raise up one shepherd to be in charge of them, and he will let them feed- my servant David. He will pasture them and be their shepherd.* ²⁴ *I, Yehoveh, will be their God; and my servant David will be prince among them. I, Yehoveh, have spoken.*

Notice we don't see any reference to a, or the, Messiah. I want to quote some expert scholars on this matter, because they are dealing with the point I am making. In the paper *Judaism and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, Jonathan Goldstein notes, **"Beginning with some of the writings of the first century BCE and perhaps earlier, that royal figure came to be called 'the Lord's anointed,' 'the Messiah.' This eschatological (End Times) meaning of 'Messiah' cannot be found in the Hebrew Bible. Scholars have struggled with the problem of explaining how the usage could have evolved."**

In other words, the 1st century B.C. was long after when the final book of the Old Testament had been written. But, it is only well after that time when we first see the concept of a figure called The Messiah arise in the way we all think of one, today. That is, the title of "The Messiah" had never existed in the Old Testament, and only started to surface and take form in the few years leading up to the birth of Yeshua. The sum of the knowledge of what this figure would do or be was fragmented into several Prophetic books over many years because, apparently, God was not ready to fully reveal His name or nature.

In another excellent work, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context*, the author defines the concept of "The Messiah" as an eschatological (an End Times) figure who plays a central role in the drama of the End Times, especially as a

king who restores King David's royal line to the throne of Israel. The author comments that in Old Testament usage, **"the 'anointed one' (*mashiach*) in no way refers to an eschatological or a divine figure whose coming would initiate a new era of redemption, but rather it was referring to contemporary biblical kings and priests. By the first century BCE, however, *mashiach* and its Greek equivalent *christos* did begin their slow evolution to carry implications that were distinctly eschatological in nature, connotations that continued to influence both Judaism and Christianity in succeeding centuries."**

I know we're using some big and scholarly words here to deal with a complex but important subject, but the gist of what these 2 scholars are saying is that the entire concept of someone called The Messiah coming in the future, simply didn't exist in the Old Testament era in any recognizable form (that is, recognized by the people of the Old Testament era) and we won't find it in the Hebrew Scriptures. No one had any idea of such a thing, and we shouldn't read that back into those passages. Nor should we judge those Old Testament Jews for not knowing it. That is not to say that it turns out when looking to the distant past from the vantage point of the year 2025 to some parts and passages of the Old Testament era, that Yeshua wasn't at that time the one being vaguely referred to (but they didn't know that, and they thought in entirely different terms and even in a different concept of what this figure would do). Instead, in the Scriptures we find words like Deliverer, Shepherd, or King, and by no means did the people or religious authorities envision anything like what Yeshua came to be or to do.

I also want to draw your attention to one other thing that needs to be better exposed, which relates closely to this matter of The Messiah. It is that the Greek word for *mashiach* is *christos*. When we translate the Hebrew to English it literally means "anointed one". So, both *mashiach* and *cristos* mean "anointed one". The historical reality is that in the Old Testament era when Greek speakers used the term *christos*, they meant it in the same way Hebrews did when they used the term *mashiach*; it was referring to an Israelite king or prophet. Even more, once Yeshua was born and later revealed Himself, and a few Jewish Synagogues in the Holy Land and the Diaspora began to understand who He was, it was then that the term The Messiah took hold, still using a similar term

(*ha mashiach*). So, it is no surprise that His followers became known as Messianics... *mashiach-anics* to coin a word). In fact, we're told that it was in Antioch where they first called themselves by this name. But, Church doctrine revised history to say that they started calling themselves "Christians", and we'll even find that word edited into our Bibles. This is incorrect; such a term never existed the New Testament era. Let me say it this way: Christians and *cristos* are not the same thing. The early Believers never called themselves Christians. Rather, at one point they *did* start calling themselves Messianics, indicating people who followed Yeshua.

Not today, nor ever, would any typical Church-going gentile Christian allow himself to be called Messianic because it sounds too Jewish. And, in an ironic way, he is correct. The term for Christian didn't actually come into being until the 4th century A.D., when Constantine and his bishops created a new gentile religion that centered around a newly developed Greek view of Jesus, who (in this Greek view) rejected His own Jewishness and His own Jewish people. The term Christian is derived from the Latin *Christianus*. Here's the bottom line: when you call yourself a Christian, even though you thought it was with the biblical New Testament faith that you were identifying yourself, it is not. The newly formed Constantinian Church sort of co-opted the term *cristos*, changed its meaning and what it referred to and used a new Latin word *Christianus* in their vocabulary. Many more centuries later, *Christianus* was adopted by the new English language, and with but a minor modification turned into the word Christian, meaning a follower of Jesus. But, in reality, this new word was in relation to the new gentile-based faith developed by Constantine's bishops in the 4th century and beyond.

I'll remind you as we go along, today: by no means am I saying that Yeshua as the Messiah who comes to save us from our sins is wrong or suspect or is not the one pointed to in the Old Testament. I'm saying that none of the writers of the Old Testament or its readers or teachers or priests or Synagogue officials of the New Testament envisioned this by what God told them, by what they wrote down, or by what they heard or read. The amazing progressive revelation that finally happened which opened eyes to learning that these prophetic words were actually about God sending His Son to die for our sins, didn't come about until around the era of Yeshua. Paul and others speak about its mystery that hadn't

been revealed until very recently, and (for whatever reason) only to a relative few. That is, Jewish society and their religious leadership knew nothing of the concept of a biblical Messiah that Yeshua was talking about and represented.

So, as we read God's oracles given through His Prophets about things that have yet to come to pass even in our day, we need to keep in mind that some of the more mysterious and cryptic things that we can't quite grasp their meaning, will probably not be known or understood until God reveals them to us at the proper point of its progressive revelation. What that means for us is that we are to keep an open mind as history continues to play out, because what you speculate those words might mean today, may wind up looking different in a few years from now as those End Times events actually begin to unfold.

It is quite fascinating that in both Catholic and Protestant faiths, their academics often have different views and stances about the Bible and what it tells us than those of their governing bodies and their Pastors and Priests. Sometimes these views are very much in conflict. So, I want to quote what, to me, is an unlikely voice that agrees quite readily with what I have just taught to you. Here is a quote directly from the Southern Baptist Dallas Theological Seminary listing of their doctrines as concerns this subject of The Messiah.

"We believe that it was historically impossible that they should have had as the conscious object of their faith the incarnate, crucified Son, the Lamb of God (John 1:29), and that it is evident that they did not comprehend as we do that the sacrifices depicted the person and work of Christ. We believe also that they did not understand the redemptive significance of the prophecies or types concerning the sufferings of Christ (1 Pet 1:10-12)".

Yet, this is not what you will hear from the pulpit. Further, the blame the Church typically heaps upon the Jews who lived when Yeshua was teaching and preaching for NOT understanding who He is even though they had all of those prophecies available to them, is a most disingenuous position to take. So much of what the ancient Jews thought their Prophets were telling them didn't seem to line up with what this Carpenter's son from Nazareth was saying or doing. Goodness, in our time the bulk of Christians have yet to understand the

incredible fulfilment of the prophecy of Israel returning as a Jewish State... something that happened over 75 years ago but doesn't seem to have altered Church doctrine or perspective about Jews and the End Time even a little bit! But the Jews of Jesus's day, they contend, were supposed to instantly overthrow centuries of understanding in a matter of days or weeks because Yeshua was born? Today, in this vast world of 8 ½ billion gentiles, only a fraction believe that Yeshua is who He says He is, and this with mountains of information and proofs available.

OK. With that as a new piece of the ancient and cultural backdrop for studying the Prophets and all the Old Testament for matter, let's get back to our study of Zechariah. Let's re-read chapter 12 beginning at verse 7.

RE-READ ZECHARIAH 12: 7 – end

We are reading about the different outcomes for Jerusalem (and all of Israel for that matter) as opposed to the gentile nations that have attacked her. Although grave damage will be done to Jerusalem, she will be delivered.

The opening words of verse 7 are "Yehoveh will save". The Hebrew word used here is *yasha*, and it is meaning save in the sense of deliverance or rescue from an enemy. Yehoveh will first rescue the "tents of Judah". Of a few possible interpretations of this phrase, the one that seems most plausible to me is that this is speaking of the many small villages that surround the more sophisticated and well-defended part of Jerusalem that lay inside its tall stone walled perimeter in Zechariah's day. The outlying districts of course are more exposed to attack than the stronghold itself. And if we picture Israel today, even though the Old City part of Jerusalem still stands, its walls offer no defense against modern warfare. So, this is really more pointing to how any nation gives extra attention to the defense of its capital city, therefore, the City of Jerusalem is bound to be heavily defended buy the armies of Israel.

Why this priority of "the tents of Judah"? It is so that the common people are not seen as less valuable than the royal family or its elite. Since when this happens, a Davidic king and his family will certainly not be ruling, then this is no doubt using language of Zechariah's era to speak about the coming future

ruler and his government. This may go so far as to imply the weaker will get as much of God's attention as the stronger. It is the Lord Himself that will defend and will give additional strength to Israel's warriors. In the end, the point is that whether in the capital or in the less politically consequential outlying towns in Israel, both will be rescued by Yehoveh's might, and both will be unable to say that it could have been anyone or anything else than their God who did it.

In verse 8, unlike the CJB that adds the word "when" as the verse's first word, the literal reading is "in that day" or "on that day". Again, this reminds the reader that what is being depicted happens at the End Times, and no other. 7 times this phrase appears in the 12th chapter, and because 7 is numerically significant as an ideal number, it emphasizes the divine nature of what is happening. This is further emphasized by repeating that Yehoveh will be the defender of Jerusalem and Israel, so the outcome is no way in doubt.

King David is, in Hebrew literature and in the Bible, the epitome of a military leader and king of Israel. The words here explain that even he who stumbles, meaning the warriors who aren't the best or strongest, will fight with great strength and courage... like that of David. Here again is implied the weak versus the strong of Israel, and that essentially with the Lord endowing Israel with strength, essentially there will be no weak when it comes to battle. The stronger, spoken of as being like the House of David, will be as **elohim**, not as God (like we usually find it interpreted). Recall that the **elohim** are those who populate God's Divine Council in Heaven and are given God's direct commands to carry out some aspect of His will. They are the highest ranking of all Heavenly created beings. It is this to whom the House of David is being compared, and not to God directly. The House of David is meaning the royal household, pointing to those that typically are the most admired and in times past, were the nation's military leaders.

In fact, this goes one step further even comparing the **elohim** to the Angel of Yehoveh. We've of course encountered the Angel of Yehoveh before in the Bible, and this is a manifestation of God in the same way that The Glory, The Holy Spirit, The Shekinah, and other manifestations are. These are NOT all synonyms for God, but each in its own way depicts a certain role or attribute of God. It is interesting that interpreters and translators of the Bible in centuries past as

even today, have had a real reluctance to use a literal translation because it compares humans to God (in their eyes). Rather, a good illustration of the gist of the matter in using these somewhat unorthodox words and comparisons, is probably from Exodus 4:16. I'll quote it to you, and I you will see what I mean.

CJB Exodus 4:14-16 ***¹⁴ At this, ADONAI's anger blazed up against Moshe; he said, "Don't you have a brother, Aharon the Levi? I know that he's a good speaker. In fact, here he is now, coming out to meet you; and he'll be happy to see you. ¹⁵ You will speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and his, teaching you both what to do. ¹⁶ Thus he will be your spokesman to the people, in effect; for you, he will be a mouth; and for him, you will be like elohim.***

Thus, in Exodus Moses is not going to be like God per se, but rather like the **elohim**. And this is essentially the same idea with Zechariah 12:8, with the House of David being like the **elohim** and not like God. Both the House of David and Moses were to be middle men on earth, so to speak, just as the **elohim** are in Heaven. It is most difficult for Believers to get a grasp on this until we are ready to accept the Bible as it is, and to realize that God had a hierarchy in Heaven to which He delegated the things He wanted done.

I said it earlier, but for the sake of clarity I'll repeat: Zechariah is fond of using language from his day and even his past, to project the future. I am great defender of this because all any of us can do is to use our existing terms to explain the future, when no doubt newer terms will come into existence as needed. For instance, if people in the Old West wanted to compare something about how people might communicate differently in the future as compared to their present-day postal system or even telegraph, they certainly couldn't speak of the Internet or of iPhone. They could only use existing terms and concepts of their day, no matter how inadequately those terms are to properly revealing the realities of the future.

Continuing that current line of thought in verse 9, God says through Zechariah that when that day of battle arrives, He is going to seek to destroy all the nations that are attacking Jerusalem. So, this is the 6th time that the End Times term

"on that day" has been used. When we read that God "seeks to" destroy the nations, it is meant to imply the strongest intention to do so. Very often the meaning automatically includes the notion of destroying human life...which is, indeed, the case here.

The phrase "all the nations" is not meant to be precise. We are not to take the term ***kol*** (all) as meaning 100%. Nor are we even to take the meaning about those as attacking Israel too literally. While it is not out of the realm of possibility that every last nation on earth is what is meant, it is highly improbable. And, what it means about those attacking Jerusalem is more than those particular soldiers or armies that are present in the Holy Land and doing the direct fighting. These are generalities. With the way the world works in modern times, the nations or people groups doing the actual fighting and attacking are often backed by other nations or people groups who support them but don't supply fighters, nor are they present in the area of the war.

We have already seen that the nations in the closest proximity to Israel are prophesied as going to be thoroughly wiped out; while other enemy nations that are further away will be badly damaged, but not necessarily brought to extinction. The same concept is present here. Those who play different roles in attacking Israel and Jerusalem will suffer different fates, but all will suffer to one level or another according to God's judgment on the matter. Verse 10, however, once again shifts gears.

CJB Zechariah 12:10 ***...and I will pour out on the house of David and on those living in Yerushalayim a spirit of grace and prayer; and they will look to me, whom they pierced." They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son; they will be in bitterness on his behalf like the bitterness for a firstborn son.***

With verse 10, and through the remainder of chapter 12, Zechariah presents us with the most incredibly powerful words and mental images how the Lord is going to redeem and rescue Israel from these enemies that He is devastating. More than one Bible scholar even characterizes these final verses as greater than any other in the Holy Scriptures when it comes to the issue of salvation.

The verse begins with an expression to "pour out". It connects to another typical expression about "a cup" of something (a cup of wrath, a cup of trembling, etc.). So, the idea is that the cup that is full of something is being emptied out of that something, onto somebody. The vast majority of the time the use of "cup" and "pouring out" are used in the Bible, it is meant in a negative and punitive way. It certainly is not something anyone would want to happen to them. But, here, and rarely, the image is reversed. Rather the cup is full of God's grace and prayers. These most positive, lovely contents are going to be emptied out onto the House of David and onto the Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Once again, we need to understand the term House of David as the leaders of Israel... political, military, and religious. The verse extends the scope of the positive pouring out to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, which I take to mean the average common man. The phrase "grace and supplications", is meaning that there will be, through the Holy Spirit, an outpouring of conviction and confession of the truth of Yeshua's ministry and person, and of God's fullest substance, by the common people and by all forms of Israel's leadership. More specifically, the Hebrew word for supplications means seeking God for favor. This can be a cry for help or even begging for forgiveness. It is through this supplication that the spirit of Grace is realized. It can be no other way, even for people of the true faith in all eras.

I must take a moment to comment about this. Having had the immense privilege of hearing hundreds and hundreds of stories from people about how they first came to belief in God, then into their trust and salvation in Yeshua, and now into the greater dedication of the Hebrew Roots movement to more deeply understand God's Word to us and to obey it, there is a common thread of mystery. How does this happen? Why did it happen to me and not to my spouse or parents or siblings or friends? Why can I see these things that are suddenly obvious when I never did before? The only answer I can give is this: just as receiving the faith necessary to trust that God exists, and the further receiving of faith that Yeshua is who the Bible says He is, and then onto realizing that there is more to our walk than the act of salvation...these things are all an act of God. They are all God's grace. But, it is also God responding to our supplications. Even if we don't exactly understand what we're seeking, but we are wanting to know more, and maybe it doesn't come to God in the form of a

formal prayer, our inquisitiveness can of itself be seen by Him as supplication. I cannot tell you the where's or why-for's. I can only observe it, hear of the same from so many people, experience it and know that it is so.

If you are hearing this, the odds are high this is what happened to you. You know what it feels like and what it has done for you, even if trying to express it...especially to those who are not like-minded... seems almost impossible. So, all I can say is that what we see here in verse 10, is just that. It is mysterious, unlikely, but yet unchallengeable as real. Zechariah says in this End Times attack on Jerusalem, that God will move within this surviving remnant of Israel, and they will accept it and be changed. We who have experienced this should, above all others, understand what is going to happen and how it will affect those folks. And, equally, how those around them who are not affected will not understand the results at all.

And then we get to those words: "and they will look to me, whom they pierced". It might not seem so, but the Hebrew wording and syntax is very difficult, and has caused much confusion. I won't go into too much depth, but briefly the issue is this. The words "to me" come from the Hebrew **elay**. This is technically called a first-person singular. The problem is that it seems to refer to the one who was pierced, which is presented in the third person; so, to Bible grammarians, this is a conflict. Therefore, it is pretty certain that here is a minor copyist error involved, yet how one proposes to correct it can have major implications in meaning.

Without going through all the gyrations, the most accepted correction is to change **elay** to **et-aser**, partly because this involves correcting a common copyist error in the biblical texts. Doing this changes the sense of the phrase "to me" to "whither" (meaning to which or to what). What this results in is a different reading. So, to completely rephrase it, that part of the verse concerning the one who pierced would become: "*...so they will look to Me concerning the One they have pierced*". This is a much superior translation that works as it should within the syntax and the context. What next happens, however, among Christian translators who agree with this rephrasing is that they remove the clear reference to Yehoveh and replace it with Yeshua as the one who was pierced. But, in keeping with the context and syntax, a better and more appropriate

solution is that the “Me” and the “One who was pierced” are 2 different people. Rather than keep going with this explanation, here is how newer commentators and translators think it ought to read, if we can keep both Jewish and Christian doctrine from being thrust upon it. *“...so, they will look at Me, Yehoveh, concerning the One (whom I have sent) that they have pierced”.*

If we look at this from our vantage point in history, then rightfully so it would eventually be revealed that the one whom Yehoveh sent and was pierced was Yeshua. But it is unimaginable that Zechariah or his readers could ever extract that from its difficult meaning. Too much more time, history, and progressive revelation had to come before such an enlightened understanding could happen.

We’ll stop here, and finish up chapter 12 and get into chapter 13 next time.