

The Case for Jesus the Messiah— Incredible Prophecies that Prove God Exists

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14. Zechariah 9:9—Who Is the King of Jerusalem, “Righteous and Having Salvation” Who Comes “Gentle and Riding on a Donkey”?

The Biblical Text

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold! your King comes to you! He is righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)

The Context of the Passage

This verse occurs in the context of God's judgment on Israel's enemies and the promise of Israel's coming King.

The Explanation of the Text

“Perhaps in no other single book in the Old Testament scriptures is Messiah's Divinity so clearly taught as in Zechariah.”¹⁰⁴ The prophet in Chapter 2:9, 10 has already stated that God Himself would live among the Jewish people—“*Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you, declares the Lord.*”

Now, according to Zechariah 9:9, there will be a Messianic King, who is “righteous and having salvation,” who will enter Jerusalem. It says He will be “gentle and riding on a donkey.” Who else but Jesus Christ ever claimed He was righteous and had salvation (Jn. 3:16, 18; 5:24, 34, 39; 8:29-30, 46)? Who else claimed that He was the personal fulfillment of this prophecy and entered the city of Jerusalem, gentle and riding on a donkey (Jn. 12:13-16; Mt. 21:1-11)?

Was Zechariah 9:9 Recognized by the Jews as Messianic?

The Jews accepted this Scripture as a Messianic prophecy. For example, Delitzsch and Gloag observe,

This prophecy cannot possibly refer to Zerubbabel, or to any Jewish monarch or ruler after the time of Zechariah; but can only have a reference to the Anointed King, or the Messiah. This the Jews themselves are constrained to admit. “It is impossible,” observes rabbi Jarchi, “to expound this text of any other than the Messiah.”¹⁰⁵

It is a fact that Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly, riding on the colt of a donkey (Mt. 21:6-11).

Clues to Identify the Messiah

Whoever the Messiah is, He *must* fit the following descriptions:

Clue #1—He, a male child (the Hebrew text specifically uses a 3rd person, singular, masculine pronoun—“he”), will be born of the seed of the woman.

Clue #2—He will come from the race of the Jews, and specifically from the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Clue #3—He will be a great prophet, with the authority to teach like Moses.

Clue #4—He will be mocked, and people will cast lots for His garments while He suffers.

Clue #5—He will be David’s Lord.

Clue #6—He will be the child born who is God, and will have an everlasting kingdom.

Clue #7—He will be wounded and bruised, smitten and spit upon, mocked, killed with thieves, bear the sins of many, be rejected by His own people, pierced for our transgressions, be buried in a rich man’s tomb, and come back to life after His death.

Clue #8—He will be Jehovah our Righteousness.

Clue #9—He will be the Messiah who comes to Jerusalem 483 years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem is given. At that time He will be killed.

Clue #10—He will be born in Bethlehem but has existed eternally.

Clue #11—He will be the King, who has salvation and comes riding on a donkey.

Zechariah says Israel will someday realize they have killed Him—Jehovah, and will begin to mourn over Him as a family would mourn over the death of their only son.

This prophecy only fits Jesus Christ. Why? Jesus Christ is the only One who ever claimed to be God, claimed to be the Messiah, and was crucified by the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Jews in the New Testament recognized only Jesus fit the words of this verse. The Apostle John wrote, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father full of grace and truth*” (Jn. 1:1, 14). Jesus Christ was the very incarnation of God.

The Apostle Paul believed Jesus was God and that He volunteered to die for our sins. Paul taught, “*Who [Jesus], being in very nature God,... made Him self nothing, taking the very nature of a servant,... And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!*” (Phil. 2:6-8).

The Apostle Peter must have been thinking of Zechariah’s prophecy when on Pentecost he said, “*Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ [Messiah]*” (Acts 2:36).

Related to this, some wrongly teach that only the Jewish people are responsible for crucifying the Messiah. Apparently, they have *not* read where the New Testament Scriptures record, “*Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed*” (Acts 4:27). Both Jew and Gentile, all of us, are equally guilty of crucifying Christ. Also, Jesus, being God, volunteered to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. His death was for each one of us. In a real sense, all of our sins put Him there.

But let us ask, who else but Jesus Christ could the Prophet Zechariah be speaking about? Who else could possibly be Jehovah, and also claim to be thrust through and killed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem? Remember, the word “pierce” is a word which means “to pierce as with a spear.”¹⁰⁹ This is exactly what happened to Jesus on the cross. A spear was thrust through His side (Jn. 19:32-35).

Finally, it says that the entire nation will mourn and grieve bitterly over the death of this One who has been pierced, “as one mourns for an only child.” Would the Jewish people mourn for this One as for the death of their only son, if He weren’t actually one of their Jewish sons—as Jesus Christ was?

What if the Jewish people someday come to recognize, after all these centuries of rejecting Him, that Jesus really was their Messiah? What if they come to understand who He really is? What if

they someday look upon Him as God, “the One whom they have pierced”? Wouldn’t Zechariah’s prophecy be fulfilled? Wouldn’t there be great weeping in Jerusalem?

Remember, God pours out His Spirit on His people so people will come to know His true Messiah, who loved them so much He gave His life (was pierced through) for them. As Isaiah said, “*the Lord has laid on him the iniquities of us all*” (Is. 53:6).

Was Zechariah 12:10 Recognized by the Jews as Messianic?

That this prophecy refers to the Messiah was admitted by the rabbis.¹¹⁰ For example, this prophecy “is applied to the Messiah the Son of Joseph in the Talmud (Sukk.52a) and so is verse 12,...”¹¹¹

Thus, some Jewish interpreters, trying to avoid the clear implication of the words, have attempted to apply this passage to the “other” Messiah who would suffer, Messiah Ben Joseph:

...the later interpreters explaining it of Messiah Ben Joseph, or the suffering Messiah, whom they invented to meet the passages of Scripture that speak so clearly of this characteristic of the promised Redeemer. But as they believed that this Messiah son of Joseph was a mere man, the difficulty met them that Jehovah declared “they shall look on ME whom they have pierced;” so that if it refers to the Messiah he cannot be a mere man, but must be divine.¹¹²

In spite of this, when Jehovah says, “*they will look on me, the one they have pierced,*” this prophecy uniquely fits only Jesus Christ.

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Clue #12—He will be Jehovah, the One pierced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem.