

God Himself Literally Pierced?

Zechariah 12:10 (NIV)

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

First of all, there are problems with the transmission of the Hebrew text such that the original meaning is not clear. Thus there are versions such as the *NIV* above that make the sentence refer back to God and these versions usually supply the word “me” or some equivalent. On the other hand, there are other translators that see the “one whom they have pierced” as referring to someone other than God, and those versions usually supply the word “him.” An example of this is the *Revised Standard Version*.

Zechariah 12:10 (RSV)

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born.

Translators and commentators who believe that the word “pierced” should refer back to the pronoun “him” cite textual variants that more clearly read “him,” as well as the flow of the sentence which continues with the word “him” in the phrase “they shall mourn for *him*” and “grieve bitterly for *him*.” The Jewish understanding of this verse has always been that the one pierced was one in an intimate relationship with God, but there is no record of any early Jewish commentator understanding Zechariah 12:10 to be saying that somehow Yahweh Himself would come into the flesh and be pierced in the literal sense of the word. It is apparent to us that the *Revised Standard Version* has a good translation of the verse and that Zechariah 12:10 is a prophecy of the piercing of the promised Messiah.

Another important point to make is that Zechariah 12:10 is quoted in John 19:37 after the Roman soldier thrust his spear into Christ’s side. John 19:37 reads: “and, as another scripture says, ‘They will look on the one they have pierced.’” The *King James Version* translates John 19:37 as follows: “And again another scripture saith, ‘They shall look on him whom they pierced.’”

The different versions may disagree on the Hebrew text of Zechariah 12:10, but none of them disagree on the translation of the way it is quoted in the New Testament. None of the versions have the word “me,” and most of them supply the word “him” as does the *KJV*, *NASB* and *RSV*. If the original reading of Zechariah 12:10 was “me, whom they have pierced,” we can think of no reason that it would not be quoted that way in the New Testament. On the other hand, if the reading of Zechariah 12:10 in the *RSV* and other versions is correct, then it makes perfect sense that the verse would be quoted in the New Testament the way it is. We contend that the New Testament quotation of Zechariah 12:10 gives us the proper interpretation of the verse.

Not only is Zechariah 12:10 quoted in John, but also it is alluded to in Revelation. Revelation 1:7 says, "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen." Commentators freely admit that this verse alludes back to Zechariah, and it uses the word "him," not "me." Thus we conclude that the internal evidence of Scripture is conclusive that the one pierced in Zechariah is not God but one in an intimate relation with God, the Messiah.

The third point I would make is that although we do not believe that "me" is properly supplied in many versions of Zechariah 12:10, it certainly is the case that God was "pierced" when the Messiah was tortured and put to death. When Simeon met Joseph and Mary in the Temple when they came to consecrate Jesus, he said to Mary, "A sword will pierce your own soul too" (Luke 2:35). Commentators freely admit that this statement is not referring to the physical piercing of Mary in any way, but rather is referring to the grief that Mary will endure as she watched her son be tortured and killed. Thus Scripture gives us evidence that, if Zechariah said, "they will look on [or "unto"] me who they have pierced," then he was saying that God's heart would be pierced. If "me" is the true reading in Zechariah 12:10, then the Bible tells us that both the hearts of God the Father of the Messiah and Mary the mother of the Messiah were pierced when Jesus their Son was tortured and killed.

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