



ZECHARIAH, Being the People of God

The Victor's Perspective

Lesson 6 Zechariah 6:1-15

EIGHTH NIGHT VISION (6:1-8)

6:1 “And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains *were* mountains of brass.”

As with most of the other eight night visions, this one begins with Zechariah lifting up his eyes. As this last night vision unfolds, we cannot help but see the parallels to the first night vision with the four horsemen. The two together form bookends for the visions. What Zechariah sees are chariots moving out from between two brass mountains. That the mountains are brass tells us that they are symbolic of something. In other places in the Scriptures, mountains sometimes speak of kingdoms or kings (see Isaiah 41:15; Jeremiah 51:25; Daniel 2:35; Revelation 17:9). That the mountains are brass here seems to indicate strength (compare feet of Christ in Revelation 1:15). As the meaning of the chariots is explained, we will see that the number of them (four) seems to have the same significance that the number had in chapter 1, namely that it signifies a complete worldwide extent (like the four angels that surveyed the earth). Note that chariots were a most lethal weapon of war in the ancient world. Other passages speak of God commanding His chariots. (Isaiah 66:15-16; Psalm 68:17).

Recall that in the first chapter the focus is on a ravine and a myrtle tree in the ravine. The rather insignificant looking myrtle tree, guarded by an angelic rider, was representative of Israel. The four horsemen reported that the earth was at ease, and the reason seemed to be because of the present condition of Judah. It is not difficult to imagine the mindset of the people of Judah at this time, having only recently returned from Babylonian captivity and with little reason for hope. They were so far removed from the former glory the nation of Israel enjoyed under King David. It would seem impossible to them that God would again make them a nation and would deliver on the promises and covenants made to the fathers. This vision shares elements with the first, but is different in profound ways. Rather than just scouts obtaining information, here God's agents are outfitted for warfare. The camera that was zoomed in on the ravine and the myrtle tree has pulled back to reveal to Zechariah (and hence to us) the much bigger picture, the picture that God sees, and it is one of victory. Where there was only a ravine and myrtle tree before, there are now bronze mountains. This last of the night visions is a promise of victory over the enemies of God's people.

The verse actually says “the two mountains” and so the reference could be to specific mountains. Most commentators that view these as specific mountains would propose Mount Zion, the Mount of Olives, or Mount Moriah, since Zechariah was in Jerusalem and these are prominent mountains there. The more prevalent view is that these are Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives. The Kidron Valley runs between these two mountains. Another possibility is that this is one mountain that has been split in two, namely the Mount of Olives, an event we will see unfold in chapter 14.

Note that modern translations typically say “bronze” and not “brass.” The Hebrew term is *nechoshet*. The two metals are both copper alloys, with bronze containing copper and tin, and brass containing copper and zinc. According to historians and archaeologists, bronze was used as early as 3500 B.C. by the Sumerians in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, and spread from there to Persia and later Egypt and China by 2000 B.C. Brass did not appear in Egypt until about 30 B.C. This is the reason newer translations prefer “bronze.” With either translation, the point is the same because the metal mountains indicate strength.

6:2 “In the first chariot *were* red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; 3 And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses.”

Zechariah sees four chariots, one is pulled by red horses, one by black horses, one by white horses, and one by grisled and bay horses. The horses in chapter one were two red horses, one speckled and one white. Commentators debate the significance of the colors, and it is difficult to be dogmatic as to what the significance is.

6:4 “Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What *are* these, my lord? 5 And the angel answered and said unto me, These *are* the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.”

As before, an angel talks with Zechariah. It is probably safe to assume that this is the same angel as before, namely the angel of the LORD. (See Zechariah 1:9, 13, 19; 2:3; 4:1, 4, 5; 5:5, 10; 6:4). As in prior visions, Zechariah asks the angel to explain the vision. As before, the point is that Zechariah cannot understand it without God’s explanation. The angel explains to Zechariah that the four chariots are the four spirits of the heavens. The term spirits indicates that they are likely angels. (see Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 1:14) They take direction from the Lord and go forth throughout the entire earth. Based on the parallel with chapter 1 and the reference to there being four of them, we understand them to canvas the entire earth and do God’s bidding.

6:6 “The black horses which *are* therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country.”

The phrases “north country” and “south country” indicate the people groups to the north and south of Israel, which geographically is everyone since all Gentile countries were essentially north or south of Israel in terms of traveling to them by land. The chariot pulled by black horses and the chariot pulled by white horses go north. The chariot pulled by grisled and bay horses goes south from Israel. We are not told about the direction of the chariot pulled by the red horses. It may be that two chariots go north and two go south, in which case the chariot pulled by red horses goes south with the chariot pulled by grisled horses.

6:7 “And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.”

The chariots go for the purpose of walking to and fro through the earth. As in chapter 1, the phrase “to and fro through the earth” indicates the complete worldwide extent of their work and denotes God’s sovereignty over the world. In chapter 1, Zechariah saw only horses and riders because the mission was a scouting mission. Here, while we are not explicitly told what the riders are supposed to do as they roam the earth, we should understand that their actions are consistent with their equipment, namely the chariots of war. The next verse will aid our understanding. Also note that the angel of the LORD that talks with Zechariah gives the chariot riders their marching orders, which indicates his authority over them.

6:8 “Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.”

We must keep the historical context in mind. The north country had been the Babylonian Empire, which fell to the Medo-persians some 20 years prior to this vision, which occurred in 519 B.C. The chariots that went to the north country have reported back news to the angel of the LORD that comforts him, namely victory over God’s enemies. By implication, if there is victory over the north country, the seat of all that is wicked and opposed Judah, there is victory over all. Whereas in the first night vision it is the gentile powers that are at ease, it is now God who is at ease. The victory

over Babylon had already occurred, but remember that in the seventh night vision, the woman Wickedness was sent back to Babylon (Shinar). Thus, while the Babylonian Empire that had prospered under King Nebuchadnezzar had fallen, the Babylon that is God's enemy has not finally fallen. In the first night vision, the Gentile nations were "at ease" because of their oppression of God's people, and in Zechariah's day that had changed temporarily, but this vision looks also to a future complete destruction of God's enemies, and in particular, a victory over Wickedness or sin.

QUESTIONS

1. This last of the eight visions parallels the first. What are the similarities and differences?
 2. Why might God have used the first and eight night visions as bookends in view of the purpose of the book of Zechariah?
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THE FUTURE PRIEST-KING (6:9-15)

6:9 "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 10 Take of *them* of the captivity, *even* of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; 11 Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set *them* upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;"

Beginning in verse 9, we have the concluding oracle, the eighth night vision having completed with verse 8. Zechariah is told by God to take three men that have returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity (Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah) and to go to the house of a fourth man, Josiah, son of Zephaniah. The four men are to make crowns or a crown. The Hebrew term is plural but most commentators understand there to be only one crown in view. Some Hebrew terms, like the term for a human face, are plural even when indicating only one. Other commentators believe that they are to make two crowns of silver and gold, one for Joshua the High Priest, and the other for Zerubbabel the governor. In the text, we will only see Joshua crowned, and so probably the better view is that there is only a single crown. Crowns indicate regal authority. In the first instance, this means that the people are to follow the leadership of Joshua, particularly as it relates to the rebuilding of the Temple. But more fully, this image of a priest-king looks forward to Jesus who will be our High Priest and King (Hebrews 9:11; Revelation 19:16). This passage, along with Psalm 110, provides the strongest Old Testament evidence that Messiah would fulfill the roles of priest and king. For New Testament confirmation, see Hebrews 5:1-9.

6:12 "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:"

Zechariah is to deliver the Lord's message to Joshua the High Priest, namely to call his attention to the person who is called "The Branch." It is The Branch that will become a great leader ("*grow up out of his place*") and build the Temple. The priestly functions of The Branch were the focus in Zechariah 3, but here it is more the royal or kingly functions, namely leadership in the temple construction. Just as the prior verse looked in the near term to Joshua and in the future to Messiah Jesus, this verse has near and future referents. In the near term, through the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel the governor, the people will rebuild the Temple. But no single person in Zechariah's time could fulfill both the priestly and kingly functions. A priest must be a Levite, and a king must be from the line of David, the tribe of Judah. The term "The Branch" is a Messianic title (Isaiah 4:2; Jeremiah 33:15) that points to Jesus, the root of David (Revelation 5:5, 22:16).

We must remember that Israel is unique among all the nations because God made promises to Abraham, which included the promise that his seed would be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 15,

17). These promises were amplified also to David (2 Samuel 7) when God promised David that one in his line would take his throne forever. Probably at the point in time where we are at in Zechariah, following the fall of Jerusalem and the return of a small remnant from Babylonian captivity, the hope of a Davidic king was mostly gone. The reconstitution of the nation of Israel will require the Temple and a High Priest, which have already been the subject of the book thus far, but will also require the reestablishment of the Davidic line. Although not titled “king,” Zerubbabel is a Davidic ruler and, indeed, Jesus is in his line (Haggai 2:23; Matthew 1:13). All of this said, the fulfillment of this verse will not be in Zerubbabel, but in The Branch, of whom we will learn more about in the rest of the passage.

Of course, Jesus did not build the temple that was constructed under the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel and later renovated by Herod. We know from New Testament revelation that Jesus was a temple (John 2:20-21). Further, God will construct a millennial temple as well. (Ezekiel 40-43) The reference is likely to the future millennial temple.

6:13 “Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”

Zerubbabel will see to the completion of the Temple under his leadership, but he will not fulfill this verse. Although he will rule, he will not be king, nor will he be a priest. This verse speaks of the Branch, the Messiah, who will build the future millennial temple and rule from his throne there. (Ezekiel 43:7) The Branch will therefore fulfill both priestly and kingly functions. He will be a priest after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 6:20) and a Davidic king. Only Jesus could do both, and it is in that sense that there is a “counsel of peace ...between them both.” In the near term, there was peace between Joshua and Zerubbabel, but this verse is fulfilled by The Branch, one person, and thus can be neither of them.

6:14 “And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD.”

These men will take the crown that was made and place it in the Temple when it is completed and the crown will be a memorial. A memorial is an object that serves the purpose of calling something to memory. In this case, it calls to memory the functions and work of the coming Branch, and that it was God that called out certain specific men (Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen) to construct the crown and place it in the Temple as a memorial. The memorial looked back to Joshua and Zerubbabel and the picture their lives presented, but most importantly it looked forward to the office of the Messiah to come as a priest-king. It is fitting that this memorial should be placed in the Temple, awaiting the only One for whom it was made. Note that Jesus is pictured as wearing a crown in the Revelation (see Revelation 14:14, 19:12).

6:15 “And they *that are* far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And *this* shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.”

The effect of the unity of leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel, and the message it sends to the people in terms of the reestablishment of a proper High Priest and a Davidic ruler, will be a tremendous encouragement to the people. Indeed, more Jewish people will come to Jerusalem (“*they that are far off shall come*”) to be involved in the construction of the Temple. When the people see the Temple’s completion, they will recall Zechariah’s words and know that his message was God’s message. God assures the people through Zechariah that this blessing will be theirs if they are obedient (they must start building). This connects the vision back to the opening vision of the book where they were warned not to be like their forefathers who did not heed the words of the prophets.

QUESTIONS

3. What are some purposes of prophecy?
 4. Is there a Biblical test for determining whether a prophecy is true prophecy? Does a prophet of God ever get it wrong if his message is from God? What scripture verse is violated when a person claims a message from God that is not from God?
 5. How might 6:9-15 be an encouragement or motivation to the people?
 6. What is the principle taught in the last sentence of verse 15?
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