



Zechariah - Chapter Six

I Zechariah 1:1-8:23 - Oracles and Visions (continues)

I.b Zechariah 1:7-6:15 - Eight Night Visions and a Coronation (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Six

The chapter commences with the final vision of eight, which sees four chariots being sent out to patrol the earth's on behalf of the Lord.

The concluding passage recounts the coronation of Joshua as the High Priest, looking forward to the completion of the temple. It also bears all the hallmarks of a future Messianic time, when God will anoint his Son as the High Priest.

I.b.ix Zechariah 6:1-8 - Eighth Vision: Four Chariots

Zechariah sees four chariots, symbolic of God's power ruling over all the earth.

¹ And again I looked up and saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains – mountains of bronze. ² The first chariot had red horses, the second chariot black horses, ³ the third chariot white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled grey horses.

Zechariah 6:1-3

The eighth vision is clearly similar to the first. Zechariah saw four chariots with horses of different colours: red, black, white, and dappled. In Hebrew red is actually a conventional colour for a horse, i.e. dark chestnut. In the usual Scriptural symbolism red speaks of war, black of famine and death, white of victory, and dappled of pestilence; refer to Ezekiel 14:21 and Revelation 6:18.

The chariots were going out from between two mountains of bronze, whose colour reflects a shining appearance. Chariots were the ancient equivalent of tanks, the key symbol of military power. The heavenly army is finally on the move.

The horsemen of Zechariah Chapter 1 were observers on reconnaissance. These four chariots and their horses seem to be hostile agents of God's judgement, emissaries of his war against the earth. Some want to identify these four chariots with Daniel's four world empires (Daniel Chapter 2 and Daniel Chapter 7), but the colours essentially are the same as the four horsemen in Revelation Chapter 6, the emissaries of God's judgement. Some connect these with the angelic messengers of judgement in Revelation 7:1-3.

Since the original text says *the two mountains*, most assume they are the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion. Mountains of bronze associates these mountains with strength and judgement.

⁴ Then I said to the angel who talked with me, 'What are these, my lord?' ⁵ The angel answered me, 'These are the four winds of heaven going out, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶ The chariot with the black horses goes towards the north country, the white ones go towards the west country, and the dappled ones go towards the south country.' ⁷ When the steeds came out, they were impatient to get off and patrol the earth. And he said, 'Go, patrol the earth.' So they patrolled the earth. ⁸ Then he cried out to me, 'Lo, those who go towards the north country have set my spirit at rest in the north country.'

Zechariah 6:4-8

The interpreting angel explains that the chariots represent the four winds of heaven, stressing the universality of their range: nowhere in the world is outside their reach. The Hebrew word for wind, Hebrew *Ruakh*, is the same as that for spirit, so these winds also represent the agency of divine power at work in the world (5:9). The role of this group of angels is similar to those in the prophecy given by Jesus: **<<And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other>>** (Matthew 24:31)

Going out, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. Before commencing their patrols, they must come before God to seek his blessing and authority to proceed.

The chariots went in different directions: the white horses went to the west country and the black horses went to the north country, while the dappled ones

went to the south country: <<*I will say to the north, 'Give them up', and to the south, 'Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth'*>> (Isaiah 43:6). The red horses were not included in the commission, perhaps being held in reserve. Judah's main enemies always came from the north (Babylon, Assyria and Persia), or the south (Egypt), since to the west is the Mediterranean Sea, although the Philistines had inhabited the land to the west, and to the east is the desert.

Some translations have both the black and white horse drawn chariots as heading to the north country, towards Babylon and Magog (Ezekiel 38:2 and Revelation 20:8).

The horses with their chariots moved out at the divine command to patrol the earth, asserting and imposing God's sovereign rule over the whole world. The prime target was the north country, i.e. Babylon, which was the objective assigned to the chariot pulled by the black horses.

Victory is easily accomplished, and God's Spirit, Hebrew *Ruakh*, is set at rest in the north country, the former home of his enemies. This implies the full and final defeat of those opposed to God, as confirmed by God's promise when they first approached the Promised Land: <<*When you cross over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is allotting to you, and when he gives you rest from your enemies all around so that you live in safety*>> (Deuteronomy 12:10).

I.b.x Zechariah 6:9-15 - The Coronation of the Branch

This oracle looks forward to the successful building of the temple and looks forward to the Messiah taking his place as High Priest.

⁹ The word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁰ Collect silver and gold from the exiles — from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah — who have arrived from Babylon; and go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah.

¹¹ Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak;

Zechariah 6:9-11

Collect silver and gold from the exiles, who have arrived from Babylon. As the refugees continued to return from exile they brought with them gifts from wealthy Babylon. This was similar to the offering that was taken from the Israelites for the building of the tabernacle and was expected to be given with the same heart: <<*The Lord said to Moses: Tell the Israelites to take for me an offering; from all whose hearts prompt them to give you shall receive the offering for me. This is the offering that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze*>> (Exodus 25:1-3).

Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah. Taking the meaning of these names: robust, God's goodness, and God knows respectively, the intention would seem to be that God knows that, through his goodness, he will put his King on the throne, and he will do it in a robust manner.

Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest is to be crowned with a crown of silver and gold in a symbolic action. The composite crown reflects the expectation of Haggai 2:8 that both of these elements would come to the temple from afar and fill it with glory. The resources for the sign-act are provided by those who have arrived from Babylon, underlining the place of the exiles in the future of the community.

It was absolutely unusual to crown a high priest, because priests were never crowned as kings and kings were never priests. However, there is the account of Melchizedek, the king of Salem who was also referred to as a priest: <<*The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek'*>> (Psalm 110:4), and: <<*This 'King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him'*>> (Hebrews 7:1).

2 Chronicles Chapter 26 tells the tragic story of King Uzziah who tried to function as a priest, and was stricken with leprosy to the end of his life. Throughout the history of Israel God commanded a separation between the religious and the civil leadership of Israel. This elaborate crown is definitely a royal crown and is not the customary headdress of the high priest. However, the Messiah who was yet to come would be both King and High Priest.

¹² say to him: Thus says the Lord of hosts: Here is a man whose name is Branch: for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. ¹³ It is he that shall build the temple of the Lord; he shall bear royal honour, and shall sit and rule on his throne. There shall be a priest by his throne, with peaceful understanding between the two of them. ¹⁴ And the crown shall be in the care of Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Josiah son of Zephaniah, as a memorial in the temple of the Lord.

Zechariah 6:12-14

Joshua is to be crowned as a symbol of the reality to come, the Branch, a reference to: <<*On that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel*>> (Isaiah 4:2), <<*A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots*>> (Isaiah 11:1), <<*The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and*

he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land>> (Jeremiah 23:5), and: *<<In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land>>* (Jeremiah 33:15). Zechariah reiterates Jeremiah's promise of a coming king who will flourish and branch out and build the temple of the Lord and will bear royal honour, reflecting the authority and legitimacy of the king's rule.

The Branch is associated with fruitfulness and life. Jesus used the same image when he said: *<<I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing>>* (John 15:5).

Here is a man. In the Hebrew text the prophecy begins 'Behold the Man,' the very words Pilate used to present the beaten Christ to the people of Jerusalem: 'Ecce homo!' (John 19:5). However, in Zechariah's vision it is not the humiliated Jesus the reader is asked to behold, it is the triumphant Jesus.

For he shall branch out in his place. This speaks of the fruitfulness and outreaching life of the Messiah. He will come where there is little promise of new life, unexpectedly, like the root out of a dry ground.

It is he that shall build the temple of the Lord. The Branch will rebuild the temple; not the same temple Zerubbabel worked on, but the temple of his people: *<<So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God>>* (Ephesians 2:19-22), and: *<<Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ>>* (1 Peter 2:4-5).

The coming king will sit on his throne, with a priest next to him, perhaps also seated on a throne. As in Jeremiah Chapter 33, the continuance of the Davidic monarchy and the Levitical priesthood are intertwined. The king is necessary to rebuild the temple, while the Levitical priests stand before the Lord in that renewed temple, offering sacrifices.

Between the two of them, the future king and the future priest, there will be a counsel of peace, and flowing from the peace and harmony between these two offices will be peace and blessing for the nation.

The crown shall be in the care of Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Josiah son of Zephaniah. The oracle ends with the named exiles, underlining their present responsibilities.

The crown is to be stored in the temple of the Lord as a reminder for the Lord, as confirmed by Exodus 30:11-16 and Numbers 10:9-10, and as an assurance, for the people, of God's determination to act.

¹⁵ Those who are far off shall come and help to build the temple of the Lord; and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.

Zechariah 6:15

Those who are still far off will help those already in Jerusalem to build the temple of the Lord. Some interpreters think these represent Jews still in exile who will come to help; others think they represent future help from Gentiles in building the temple. They must continue diligently to obey the voice of the Lord their God, as they began to do in Haggai 1:12.