

## Lesson 10

Last week we looked at the eighth and final vision in the first section of Zechariah. The prophet has relayed some very tough messages for God's people in these visions. As we study them, we should keep in mind Zechariah's age. As we discussed in our opening lesson, the prophet was likely a young man, probably still in his twenties, when these events occurred. If we are picturing the stereotypical old bearded prophet as we read these pronouncements, that picture is almost certainly wrong. Haggai was old, but Zechariah was not.

Last week we started looking at verses 9-15 of Zechariah 6, which are some of the most important verses not only in the book of Zechariah, but in the entire Bible.

In those verses we saw Zechariah placing crowns on the head of Joshua, the high priest - something that would have been seen as very shocking by most Jews of Zechariah's day. Why? Because Joshua as priest was from the tribe of Levi rather than a king from the tribe of Judah.

When we ended, we were looking at verse 12, which promised to tell us what it meant for Zechariah to place crowns on Joshua's head.


Let's look again at the text of verses 12-13. Again, verse 12 - "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."

Verse 12 tells us *why* Zechariah placed crowns on Joshua's head - it was to teach us something about the Branch, something about Jesus. We have seen the Branch before in this book, and we know that the Branch is a Messianic title for Christ.

Verse 12 ("he shall grow up out of his place") sounds much like Jeremiah 33:15, which we read earlier: "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David." And that verse also reminds me of Luke 2:52 - "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."

And verse 12 tells us that Jesus would build the temple - "he shall build the temple of the LORD."

Really? I thought Zerubbabel was building the temple. Did Jesus build a temple?

 **Mark 14:58** - We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within

three days I will build another made without hands.

**John 2:19** - Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

That temple was Jesus' body (John 2:21), but that temple had two meanings. First, Jesus built the temple in three days when he rose from the dead, but that resurrection ushered in another temple that Jesus built - one that is also described as his body - the church.

**Ephesians 1:22-23** - And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things **to the church, which is his body**, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**Ephesians 2:20-21** - And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto **an holy temple** in the Lord.

**2 Corinthians 6:16** - For ye are **the temple of the living God**; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jesus, *not* Zerubbabel or Joshua, is the great temple builder! Zerubbabel and Joshua were building an *earthly* temple, but the *heavenly* temple made without hands could be built *only* by Christ.

Once again, God is asking the people to look up and see the wonderful things that God is planning for his people - things that would come about, in part, because of their faithfulness to God.

And for those commentators who *incredibly* can read these verses and not see Jesus, I have the same advice - **look up!** Lift up your eyes to see the wonderful blessings in these verses, and then look at Jesus and his eternal kingdom to see their fulfillment.

Let's read verse 13 again:

**Verse 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.

There are few verses in the Bible more beautiful or more meaningful than Zechariah 6:13. "He shall be a priest upon his throne!"

We know from verse 12 that we are reading about Jesus, the Branch. So what we see in verse 13 is this: "Even **Jesus** shall build the temple of the LORD; and **Jesus** shall bear the glory, and **Jesus** shall sit and rule upon his throne; and **Jesus** shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

We know that Jesus fulfilled these wonderful prophecies. We have already seen that Jesus built the temple - both in his own body being raised from the dead and in his body, the church, being established in Acts 2.

We know that Jesus bore the glory.

**Revelation 5:12** - Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

And we know that Jesus was both priest and king. That is the central prophecy in these verses. That is why we see these gold and silver crowns being placed on the head of Joshua, the high priest. Jesus is King.

**Revelation 19:16** - And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

**1 Timothy 6:15** - Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And Jesus is High Priest.

**Hebrews 3:1** - Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

**Hebrews 4:14** - Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

And you mean to say that couldn't happen under the Old Covenant? Right! That is exactly what Hebrews 7 tells us.

**Hebrews 7:12-14** - For the priesthood being changed, **there is made of necessity a change also of the law.** For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no

man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

But what does that last phrase in verse 13 mean - "and the counsel of peace shall be **between them both**"?

Those who think the crowns were meant for Joshua and Zerubbabel point to this verse for support. But Zerubbabel is not mentioned here anywhere, so what then is meant by the phrase "between them both"?

The "both" in that phrase are the two offices we just saw - priest and king. Both of those two offices would be a counsel of peace; they would never be in disagreement or conflict. Why? Because they would be perfectly combined in the same person - and because that one person would be the prince of peace! (Isaiah 9:6)

What does it mean that Jesus is both King and High Priest? As King, Jesus has all authority and all power.

**Matthew 28:18** - And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

And as High Priest?

**Hebrews 7:24-27** - But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

The Messiah could not just be one or the other - the Messiah had to be both, and he is both.

Jesus is the perfect King and the perfect High Priest. And that is *not* just a New Testament idea. Instead, that was something prophesied centuries before the New Testament was written. We see it here in Zechariah.

But can we trace it even earlier than that? When did God start planning the combined priesthood and

kingship? Long before the the time of Zechariah! How do we know that? Because the Bible in Genesis 14:18 tells us about Melchizedek, the mysterious king of Salem to whom Abraham gave a tenth part of all.

Jesus is both priest and king, but so was Melchizedek. But Melchizedek was not priest and king under the Mosaic covenant. Why not? Because Melchizedek predated Moses. The precursor of Jesus' priesthood goes back further than the Levites and the Mosaic covenant.

Psalm 110:4 links Melchizedek with Christ, describing Jesus as "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." And Hebrews 7 explains how a change in the law was required for this change in the priesthood to occur - a change that had to happen if Jesus, from the tribe of Judah, was to be both king and priest. No Jew reading about this in the New Testament could ever claim surprise. It was described in the Old Testament starting with the very first book!

We should also pause to look at Jeremiah 33, which like Daniel 2 is a chapter that is very helpful in our study of Zechariah. We just looked at verse 15, which describes the Branch. Let's look now at verses 17-18.

**Jeremiah 33:17-18** - For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.

That prophecy is pointing to the same thing that we see here in Zechariah - the combined kingship and priesthood of Jesus, and his church, the royal priesthood.

But wait - where is Melchizedek in that description? How did Jesus, from the tribe of Judah, be a man from the Levites?

Simple. The prophecy is not that Jesus would be **from** the Levites, but that he would be **for** the Levites. He would do the things that the Levites were charged with doing: "offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually." And, of course, Jesus did just that with his own perfect sacrifice on the cross. All of the atoning works of the Levites was done to perfection and for eternity by Jesus. The Levites would never lack of man to do these things as Jeremiah prophesied because Jesus did them all on the cross.

**Hebrews 7:26-27** - For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to

offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: **for this he did once, when he offered up himself.**

**Hebrews 10:11-14** - And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, **after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. **For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.**

And we, the church, the royal priesthood, also offer up sacrifices.

**Romans 12:1** - I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, **to present your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

**Hebrews 13:15** - Through him then **let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God**, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

Oh, but we should take all of those prophecies in Jeremiah literally, we hear. Really? Are we to take everything in Jeremiah 33 literally? How about verse 22?

**Jeremiah 33:22** - As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

By one estimate there are over 7 quintillion grains of sand in the world. That's 7 followed by 18 zeroes. The current world population is over 7 billion. So if we were to have 7 quintillion Levites, that would mean we would have enough Levites to populate one billion worlds, each with our own current total population! That's a lot of Levites!

You can mark it down - those who claim they take everything in the Bible literally never do so. Instead, they take everything literally except for all of the parts they don't take literally! And they are never consistent in how they pick and choose.

Those premillennialists who are looking for a literal return of the Levitical priesthood and a literal return of animal sacrifices, need to sit down and read the book of Hebrews. When they do they will discover (1) that Jesus is our perfect High Priest, (2) that Jesus is not a priest under the Levitical priesthood, and (3) that we are saved by his blood, not by the blood of bulls and goats.

## Zechariah 6:14

**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.**

Verse 14 is a bit of a puzzle. Let's start with the easy part at the end of the verse.

These crowns would apparently be left in the temple as a memorial. They would remain a constant reminder of the symbolic action that Zechariah performed with them, and of the wonderful perfect King and High Priest who would come to bless the entire world as God had promised to Abraham long before.

But would they be a memorial to everyone or just to "Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah"?

I think they would be a memorial to everyone, but they would especially be a memorial to those who had provided the materials and the workmanship that created the crowns, which is why I think these men are mentioned here by name.

So where's the puzzle?

We recognize Tobijah and Jedaiah from verse 9, but where we had Heldai in verse 9, here we have Helem. And where we had Josiah the son of Zephaniah in verse 10, here we have Hen the son of Zephaniah. Did Josiah have a brother named Hen? As I said, it's a bit of a puzzle.

The short answer is that we don't know for sure what is going on here. But, again, there is also a longer answer!

The longer answer is that we are likely seeing something here that we often see in the Bible - two different names for the same person. We see that in the books of Daniel and Esther, for example, as well as elsewhere in the Bible.

But why would God use two names here for the same person? Remember the context. What are we seeing here? We are seeing two offices combined in one person. Perhaps God is emphasizing that theme by using two names for the same person.

If that is not what is going on here, then most likely Helem is just a variant spelling of Heldai.

And what about Hen? The Hebrew word means grace, and so perhaps Hen was an honorary title for Josiah, who, as we said, might be the workman who crafted the crowns. Others suggest that the name Hen instead means that Josiah was the temple steward responsible for donations to the temple treasury.

We don't know for sure; they could both just be nicknames, or even different people.

## Zechariah 6:15

**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 first half of verse 15 confirms our interpretation that these verses are pointing to Christ and his church. It reminds us immediately of that great prophecy of the church in Isaiah 2.

**Isaiah 2:2-3** - And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob.

It also reminds us of Ephesians 2.

**Ephesians 2:17** - And came and preached peace to you which were **afar off**, and to them that were nigh.

**Ephesians 2:22** - In whom ye also are **builded together** for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

But what does that last phrase in verse 15 mean? "And this shall come to pass, **if** ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God."

**If?** Do you mean if the people had been unfaithful, then God would have changed his mind about bringing Christ into the world? No. Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8) and foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). We were chosen in him before



the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). None of those plans of God were ever going to change.

We were chosen? Does that mean we were *individually* chosen? No, and that is the answer to our question here in Zechariah 6. Look again at the passage from Ephesians, and notice the pronouns.

**Ephesians 1:4-5** - According as he hath chosen **us** in him before the foundation of the world, that **we** should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated **us** unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

Notice the pronouns - we and us rather than I and me. What was chosen was the faithful remnant. I was not personally predestined, but the church was. God knew there would be a faithful remnant, and God knew where that faithful remnant would end up.

If these people did not obey God, that did not mean God would change his plans to bless the entire world through Christ. How do we know that? For many reasons, but one of the clearest is in Psalm 89.

**Psalm 89:30-34** - If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. **My covenant will I not break**, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

So, in what sense was the faithful remnant predestined? Simple. God had unconditionally promised to bless the entire world through the coming Messiah, and for that to happen there had to be a faithful remnant through which that Messiah would come and establish his eternal kingdom. Thus, that faithful remnant was predestined. They had to exist. Why? Because it is impossible for God to lie.

So what does the end of verse 15 mean? It means that if these people disobeyed God, then God would accomplish his plan with another people. God would choose another faithful remnant. And eventually (and sadly) that is exactly what happened.

**Matthew 21:43** - Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

## Chapter 7

## Zechariah 7:1-2

**1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; 2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezzer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,**

The "fourth day of the ninth month of Chisleu" in the fourth year of King Darius' reign occurred in December 518 BC. That means that the events in Chapters 7 and 8 occurred about two years after Zechariah received the visions in Chapters 1-6.

The completion and rededication of the temple occurred in 515 BC, so that event is still about three years away.

The month of Chisleu is the Babylonian name for the month. Its usage here, along with the people we have already seen with Babylonian names (such as Zerubbabel) show the strong cultural influences that Babylon had on God's people.

Verse 2 is difficult to translate. The language of the verse is relatively straightforward, but there is a difficulty in identifying the subject and the object of the verb "sent."

The KJV has: "When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezzer and Regemmelech, and their men..." The ESV is clearer: "Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men to entreat the favor of the LORD." (Also, the ESV is correct that Bethel should be retained as a proper name rather than translated as "the house of God" as it is in the KJV.) The Hebrew literally reads, "He sent Bethel Sharezer and Regem-Melech and his men." At least three different interpretations have been suggested.

Some suggest that Darius from verse 1 is the subject of the verb "sent" in verse 2. They suggest that King Darius sent these men to safeguard his contributions toward the temple. We can safely reject this idea - it makes little sense in the context, and grammatically there is no basis for going all the way back to Darius to find the subject of the verb in verse 2.

A second approach is to take "Bethel Sharezer" as a proper name of a person who would then be the subject of the verb "sent." Jeremiah 39:3 has a similar compound personal name, "Nergal Sharezer." And non-biblical texts have several examples of "Bethel" used in compound names. A text from the time of Nabonidus, a Babylonian king who reigned slightly before the time of Zechariah, includes the Akkadian equivalent of "Bethel Sharezer." Some suggest that is the same person we see here, but we

can't say that for sure. It does, however, show us that at least someone had this compound name, so that may be the case here as well.

A third approach is to understand verse 2 to say this: "the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech." Although the Hebrew text does not include the word "people," this interpretation would mean that the people who lived in Bethel sent a delegation consisting of "Sharezer and Regem-Melech." Bethel was located slightly more than ten miles north of Jerusalem, and it had long been a center for pagan worship. (We know from 1 Kings 12:29 that Jeroboam I set up a calf worshipping cult there.) But after the exile, Ezra 2:28 tells us that Bethel was home to 223 faithful exiles.

Either the second or the third view could be correct, and the third (in my opinion) is the most likely. Grammatically, it would mean that Bethel was being used here as a singular name for the people who lived there. We do the same thing today. For example, if we read that "Wall Street remains skeptical," we know that "Wall Street" is being used as a singular term for the all of the people who work there.

What about the object of the verb "sent"? Who was sent? Although there are some dissenters, most commentators take Sharezer and Regemmelech as the names of the two people who were sent. They and "their men" were sent from Bethel.

Why did they come? Verse 2 tells us they came to pray, and verse 3 tells us what seems to have been the primary reason for their trip to Jerusalem - they had a question they wanted to ask.

## Zechariah 7:3

**3 And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?**

Again, the ESV has a better translation of the question: "Should I weep **and abstain** in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?"

The word "abstain" here refers to abstaining from food. That is, their question involved fasting, and whether they should continue fasting in the fifth month.

Why in the fifth month? That month had an important historical meaning for the exiles.

**2 Kings 25:8** - And in the **fifth month**, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem.

During the exile, the people had commemorated the downfall of their city by fasting in the fifth month. That had been going on for about 70 years, and so now these men had been sent from Bethel to ask whether that practice should be continued now that they were back home from Babylon.

It certainly seems like a reasonable question (at least on the surface), but these travelers from Bethel will soon have reason to regret ever having asked it. Before we see why, let's look at one more interesting thing about verse 3.

Notice that the request is made to both the priests and the prophets. One might have expected a question such as this to be directed only to the priests, but that is not what happened. Presumably, the word "prophets" refers to Haggai and Zechariah, but there could have been other prophets as well. That tells us something about the people's high regard for the prophets, which suggests that they had at least learned that lesson from the exile.

These men of Bethel could have taken it upon themselves to end the fasting all on their own, but they did not. Instead, they first wanted to make sure it was all right to do so, and so they asked both the priests and the prophets in Jerusalem.

It seems like they were being very careful to make sure they did everything right. And so one might expect a quick yes or no answer from the priests and the prophets, but that is not at all what happens. In fact, they don't get any answer to their question until near the end of the next chapter!

## **Zechariah 7:4-6**

**4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? 6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?**

Have you ever asked someone a question, and then immediately wished you hadn't? I think that Sharezer and Regemmelech did that here.

God does not answer their question about fasting (at least not yet). Instead, God shifts the focus by questioning the sincerity of their fasting and by asking some questions of his own (much as he did with Job!).

Having a fast each year in the fifth month to remember the fall of Jerusalem may have started off well, but it seems that by now it had become just another empty ritual. (That is always something that God's people must guard against, both in Zechariah's day and in our own day.)

Were they fasting and mourning unto God, or were they fasting and mourning unto themselves? Were they fasting and mourning over their sins, which had caused all of this to happen, or were they fasting and mourning just because of all the hardships they had personally experienced? Had their fasting become the sort that Jesus described in Matthew 6?

**Matthew 6:16** - Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

In short, God's question was this: Was their fasting for God (as verse 5 asks) or was their fasting for themselves (as verse 6 asks)?

Their question to the priests and the prophets was simple, and they likely wanted a simple answer, but that is not what they got. Yes, their question was simple, but it was not *only* simple; their question was also superficial, much like their worship.

God listened to their question, but God then turned their attention to the real question - were they as a nation committed to God, or were they committed only to themselves? The question came from just a few, but God's question in verse 5 is directed to "all the people of the land, and to the priests."

These questioners had opened the proverbial can of worms!

Verse 5 also expands the scope of the original question. In verse 3, the question asked about a fast observed during the **fifth** month. Verse 5 also mentions a fast observed in the **seventh** month. Which fast was that?

#Zechariah