

Lesson 9

When we ended last week, we had just started looking at the final vision of the eight visions that make up the first section of this book. What we found was that the eighth vision has much in common with the first vision - they both involve different colored horses sent out by God to do his will on the earth.

Last week we looked at verse 1. The description continues in verse 2.

Zechariah 6:2-4

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. 4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord?

Now we can really see the similarity between the first vision and the eighth vision. Each involves horses of different colors, although the colors are different between the two visions.

What do the colors signify? We have the same difficulty with that question here as we did in the first vision. Most likely the colors depict the different missions of the four chariots. If so, white may indicate victory, red may stand for bloodshed, black for judgment, and the dappled color may signify death. We can't be certain, and it may simply be that the colors serve only to distinguish the chariots, having no further significance.

The ancient rabbis believed that the four colors represented four world powers, with the four powers of Daniel being the most likely candidates: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. If so, that would be a nice tie-in with Daniel to go along with the many other tie-ins we have already seen. But, unlike with Daniel, we are not told here that these four colors represent four world powers.

As usual, Zechariah has the same question that we have. In verse 4, he asks, "what are these?" Let's read the answer.

Zechariah 6:5

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.

The angel tells Zechariah that these four chariots are "the four spirits of the heavens" and that they "go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth."

Our first question is what is meant by "the four spirits." Are they *spirits* (as the KJV translates the word) or are they just *winds* (which is another possible translation of the Hebrew word used here)?

The same word seems to mean "winds" in Psalm 104:4, where the ASV has: "Who maketh *winds* his messengers; Flames of fire his ministers." But the KJV has: "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire," so there is a translation disagreement with that verse as well.

We saw this same Hebrew word in the previous chapter of Zechariah - the two women in 5:9 had "the wind" in their wings. There the meaning of the word was almost certainly "wind" rather than "spirit."

If the same word from Zechariah 5:9 also means "winds" here in Chapter 6, then the meaning here would be similar to what we see in Jeremiah 49.

Jeremiah 49:36 - And upon Elam will I bring the **four winds** from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward **all those winds**; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come.

But others maintain that the meaning here is "spirits" and that these chariots represent four divine spirits or emissaries sent by God to do his work on the earth. That view makes more sense to me because verse 5 is an *explanation* of a figure (the chariots in verse 2-3). Although not impossible, it seems odd for the explanation of a figure to be yet another figure.

Whether the meaning is spirit or wind, the message of verse 5 is clear: No matter who it is who thinks they can thwart God's plan, they will soon learn otherwise. God is Sovereign over the universe, and, if anyone thinks otherwise, they will soon learn the truth as God comes against them from every direction!

Why is that message important here? The Jews at this time were standing in the ruins of their city and were surrounded by the rubble of their former temple. These visions had promised them a wonderful future under their Messiah and his eternal kingdom. They may have wondered whether it would really happen - after all, they had also been promised blessings for Jerusalem and the former temple, and that was all now just rubble!

God's message in these final visions is two-fold.

First, as we saw in the prior vision, God reminds the Jews that they are the reason they are surrounded by rubble. God had told them it would happen if they forsook the covenant, and they forsook the covenant. They have no reason to act surprised about their current situation.

Second, God's message is that those future blessings are secure because God said they would happen. True, these people might fall away again and be punished. But God would always have a faithful remnant with which to work his plans on the earth. God is in charge, and what he says is going to happen will happen. These divine emissaries are being sent out to make sure it all happens, and nothing will stand in their way.

The question is not whether God will bless his people. That has never been in doubt. The question is whether we are a part of God's people. If we are, then we will share in those wonderful blessings. If we are not, then we will not. But the blessings will come to God's faithful people. That is certain.

The explanation continues in verse 6.

Zechariah 6:6-7

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. 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.

Verse 6 shifts our attention from the chariots to the horses, and this emphasis will continue throughout the remainder of the vision.

Verse 6 also contains some unexpected descriptions of the horses. For example, the order in which verse 6 mentions the horses varies slightly from their introduction in verses 2-3. Also, verse 6 fails to mention the red horses, and the grisled and bay horses for the fourth chariot in verse 3 are mentioned separately in verses 6-7. I don't think we should read too much into these minor differences in the description.

The emphasis here seems to be on the north, which is where both the black horses and the white horses go. This emphasis on the north fits perfectly with the history of the time - anyone coming from

Babylon in the east would approach Jerusalem from the north. So to Jerusalem, Persia (modern day Iran) and Babylon (modern day Iraq) were northern powers.

But what about Egypt in the south? Egypt was still an important power but its power was waning. Even so, Egypt is not left out - the grisled horses travel south.

Why doesn't the angel mention east and west?

Because if God can take care of what is coming from the north and from the south (and we know that he can!), then God can handle any problems that might arise from the east or from the west. The north and the south were the biggest problems at the time, and so God uses problems from those two directions to represent *all* problems. We will see that type of reduction again in this book.

The description of the bay horses in verse 7 is vague, but it seems most likely that the bay horses went south with the grisled horses as they are associated with the same chariot.

The phrase "walk to and fro through the earth" occurs three times in verse 7. That repetition emphasizes the message here - there is no place to hide for the enemies of God. God knows where they are, and God can reach them wherever they are. They are not safe in Babylon or Egypt or anywhere else. They can't hide from God!

Zechariah 6:8

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.

From the perspective of those in Jerusalem, all of the trouble lay in the north. Babylon was the seat of all political unrest and evil in their minds, and anyone coming from Babylon always arrived from the north.

Verse 8 tells us that these chariots have accomplished their purpose in the north. God's spirit has been quieted in the north country. Literally, God's spirit is at rest in the north. What does that mean?

Hadn't the people seen these prophecies before? Didn't Isaiah prophecy something similar against Babylon in Isaiah 13?

Isaiah 13:19-20 - And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

That sounds pretty quiet! But that had not *literally* happened in Zechariah's day, or even to the present day.

So what does verse 8 mean? Why is God at rest in the north? When is God at rest in the north? Once again, Daniel answers that question for us.

Daniel 2:44 - And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, **but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms**, and it shall stand for ever.

God would accomplish that rest through the church! The church would break and consume those other kingdoms, and so God's spirit would be at rest after that was accomplished.

Isaiah tells us the same thing.

Isaiah 2:4 - And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Those verses are describing the establishment of the church in the first century - and how is that great event described? As a time when the nations of this earth would be judged and broken, and as a time when there would be peace with God. Those are the *same two blessings* we see here in this final vision!

This final vision is pointing to the church - the kingdom of Christ that would come about 500 years later. And the description we see here of that kingdom is a beautiful description - God is in heaven, and all is right with the world!

But wait! The world was in a mess! The people of God were living among ruins! The powers of the earth seemed to be in total control! **Yes, but God is in heaven, and all is right with the world!** That was true in Zechariah's day, and that is also true in our own day.

Yes, the world is in a mess today. Yes, the powers of the earth seem to be in total control. **But God is in heaven, and all is right with the world!** Things are not what they seem.

Do we believe it?

John 16:33 - In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

And think about John 19:30 for a moment.

John 19:30 - When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished**: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

"It is finished." There is so much meaning behind those three words. What is finished? All that God had been planning for us since before the foundation of this world. All that God had promised to Abraham so long before. All that God had promised through centuries of speaking to mankind through his prophets. All that Daniel and Zechariah and the others were telling us about Christ and his mission to bless the entire world. It is finished!

Yes, Jesus would rise from that grave a few days later. And yes, Jesus would ascend back into heaven and establish his kingdom shortly after that. And yes, someday Jesus will come again to claim his own. But it was finished on that cross. **That cross was the finish line!**

We should never read John 19:30 without pausing to think about all that Jesus finished on that cross! He finished the kingdoms of this earth - they were broken and consumed. He finished his work of reconciliation - we can boldly approach God because of his shed blood. Everything changed at the cross!

Ephesians 2:16 - And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

Colossians 1:20 - And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Hebrews 12:2 - Looking unto Jesus the author and **finisher** of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

It is finished! And Jesus, the finisher, finished it! We are at peace with God, and the enemies of God have been broken. And those are the same two wonderful blessings we see promised here in this closing vision. It all happened in the first century when Jesus gave himself as the perfect sacrifice on the cross and established his eternal kingdom.

Introduction to Verses 9-15

Before we look at verses 9-15, let's consider two questions about this final part of Chapter 6. First, how does this section relate to the eight visions we just studied? And second, is this section another vision or is it something else?

As for the first question, commentaries are all over the map on how this section relates, if at all, to the eight visions. There is definitely a relation, and we can see that simply by looking at what these verses share in common with the prior visions.

We saw Joshua, the high priest, in Chapter 3, and we will see him again in these verses. Also, we saw Zerubbabel, the descendent of King David, in Chapter 4, and - although we will not see Zerubbabel here - we will see his ancestral crown. Also, we saw the Branch in 3:8, and we will see the Branch here in 6:12.

I think what we are seeing here is what we would *expect* to see at this point in the book - a beautiful capstone for the eight visions that preceded it. All of those visions were ultimately pointing to something or someone, and we are about to see what or who that is in these next few verses.

And if anyone doubts that the visions we just saw were pointing toward Christ and his church, the royal priesthood, then I believe we will see that those doubts should be erased by these final verses of Chapter 6.

What about the second question - is this a vision? Are we seeing a ninth vision? And, if not, what are we seeing here?

Commentaries are almost unanimous in saying that verses 9-15 are **not** a vision, and I agree with that conclusion.

We don't have any of the usual "vision" language that we saw with the earlier visions, and we don't

see an interpreting angel. Also, the focus here is not on what Zechariah is *seeing*, but is instead on what Zechariah is *doing*. Zechariah is told to do something - and we can be sure that he did it.

Zechariah is not the only prophet who was told to do something as a sign for the people. In fact, one might say that Zechariah got off light in that regard!

Hosea was told to marry a prostitute in Hosea 1:2. Ezekiel was told to lie on his left side for 390 days and eat bread baked over human dung in Ezekiel 4. So I suspect that Zechariah was just fine with this assignment (although it was a dangerous assignment, as we will see in a moment).

What was Zechariah's assignment?

Zechariah 6:9-11

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;

Zechariah is first told to find three people (Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah) and take them to see a fourth person (Josiah, the son of Zephaniah). He is then told to make crowns of silver and gold and to put them on the head of Joshua the high priest.

Who are all of these people? We have already met Joshua, but what about the others?

We should first ask if "Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah" are even proper names. The Septuagint translates the Hebrew words, not as names, but as descriptions: "from the rulers, from the useful men, and from those who have understood it." But most commentaries see the Hebrew words here as three proper names, and I don't see any reason to disagree with that conclusion.

But who are they? The short answer is that we don't know, but they were likely important exiles who had recently arrived from Babylon.

Why do I think they were important men? First, it seems they had some silver and gold. And second, their father's name is not given, which suggests that everyone already knew who Zechariah was talking about. I think one commentator accurately described the situation:

Zechariah's selection of truly renowned individuals to contribute to the restoration effort and to witness the solemn ceremony underscores the political and religious importance of the prophet's action. The involvement of such conspicuous people must have exerted great influence over the community and left a lasting impression.

I think that is why these three men were chosen, although it was God rather than Zechariah who chose them.

But why did Zechariah take them to see Josiah son of Zephaniah? Who is that?

Let's start with Zephaniah. Because Zephaniah is mentioned, he must have been more prominent than his descendant, Josiah.

The first Zephaniah we likely think of is the prophet whose book bears his name. That Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah. Even though Zephaniah's descendant shares the same name as King Josiah, few commentaries think that this Zephaniah is the prophet Zephaniah.

Instead, the most likely candidate is Zephaniah the priest, from Jeremiah 21:

Jeremiah 21:1-2 - This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchiah and **Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah**, saying, "Inquire of the LORD for us, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is making war against us. Perhaps the LORD will deal with us according to all his wonderful deeds and will make him withdraw from us."

Zephaniah is often mentioned in Jeremiah, and we even know how he died.

2 Kings 25:18-21 - And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest ... And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. And the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath.

That sort of illustrious background explains why Josiah is identified by his relation to Zephaniah. Most likely, Josiah was the son or grandson of this powerful priest from the past.

So, back to our earlier question: why did Zechariah take them to see Josiah son of Zephaniah?

Perhaps the simplest solution is that Josiah was someone who was able to make crowns from the gold and the silver supplied by Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah. That explanation makes the most sense to me.

And how do we know that Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah supplied the silver and gold? The Hebrew in verse 10 is literally: "take from the captives - from Heldai, and from Tobijah, and from Jedaiah." What was taken?

Most commentators agree that what Zechariah took from them was the silver and gold that he has in the very next verse. Either it was their silver and gold, or perhaps they had been entrusted with the silver and gold by those who remained behind so that it could be used for the temple.

Other possibilities are that verse 10 instructs Zechariah to take them to Josiah's house or that verse 10 instructs the prophet to take their offering. The verse is ambiguous on that point, unless you are reading the NIV, which solves the ambiguity by adding uninspired words to the inspired text: "Take silver and gold from the exiles." Don't get me started on that!

A final possibility is that this silver and gold was plunder from Babylon. If so, then we see an interesting parallel here between the departure from Babylon and the much earlier departure from Egypt. In Exodus 25:1-3, Moses accepted gold and silver plunder from Egypt for use in making the tabernacle.

Verse 11 uses the plural "crowns." How many crowns did they make, and why did they make more than one crown?

One theory is that they made two crowns, a silver one for Joshua and a gold one for Zerubbabel, but (as the theory goes) the text failed to mention Zerubbabel for fear of offending the Persian authorities. That theory is dead wrong for several reasons, not the least of which is that placing a crown on *anybody's* head (silver or gold) would certainly offend the Persians. You can be sure that King Darius did not want the Jews to crown anyone! This was a dangerous and courageous thing for Zechariah to do! And he even brought witnesses with him!

Also, that theory completely misses the entire point of this symbolic action - one that we have already seen in the visions - that of a **combined royal priesthood**. No one would be too surprised to see a crown on Zerubbabel's head - but that cannot be said of Joshua the high priest. Putting a crown on Joshua's head was shocking, and likely the most shocked person of all was Joshua himself!

The most likely answer is that multiple crowns were placed on Joshua's head. Zechariah was not told in these verses to crown anyone other than Joshua.

Perhaps the gold and silver crowns were intertwined when placed on the head so that they together became a single crown. If so, then that in itself would be a symbolic depiction of what is being shown here - a combination of two offices: priest and king.

In fact, we are seeing a theme here of two things becoming one. The descriptions of the church we saw earlier show Christ reconciling man to God. And they also showed the unity between Jew and Gentile in the church. And, of course, they showed the royal priesthood. Each of these involves two becoming one.

The key question is not what the crowns looked like but rather what did they mean? We know they were not intended to invest Joshua into the office of high priest. Why? Because Joshua was already the high priest.

Some suggest that this action was just intended to honor Joshua because of the important role he was about to play. That might be a good explanation if Joshua had been given a fruit basket, but he was not - Joshua was given a **crown**. Placing a crown on someone's head goes far beyond just giving that person honor. Crowns had a specific meaning then just as they do now.

So what did the crowns mean? We don't have to guess. Why? Because we already know, and because verse 12 tells us.

Zechariah 6:12-13

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: 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.

Before we discuss the details of these two verses, let's look at them from another angle.

Let's assume for a moment that I am a prophet, and that I prophesy that the United States president in the year 2030 will, at the same time, also be a United States senator representing the state of

Texas. That is, this one person would hold both of those offices at the same time.

You certainly can't prove me wrong today, but you can say that my *one* prophecy is really *two* prophecies. Why? Because for my prophecy to come true, there would have to be a big change in the law. The constitution forbids a sitting president from simultaneously serving in the house or the senate. The constitution would have to be changed before my prophecy could ever come true.

We see the same thing here in verses 12-13, but with the Old Testament covenants rather than with the U.S. constitution.

Under the Davidic covenant, kings came from the tribe of Judah, while, under the Mosaic covenant, priests came from the tribe of Levi. The same person could not be priest and king under both of those covenants. For that to ever be true, at least one of those covenants would have to change or be replaced with something else. Which is it? Jeremiah answers that question.

Jeremiah 31:31 - Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.

But how is that verse related to what we see here in Zechariah 6? Keep reading in Jeremiah 31.

Jeremiah 33:15 - In those days, and at that time, will I cause the **Branch** of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

That is the same Branch we see here in verse 12 - that Branch is Christ. When Christ came 500 years later, he would usher in a new covenant. And when he did, what would happen to the old covenant?

Hebrews 8:13 - In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

These verses to a Jew of Zechariah's day are just like my presidential prophecy to an American today. You know immediately that something has to change. That prophecy cannot come true under the current system.

#Zechariah