

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Lesson 11, Chapter 6 Continued

The first half of Zechariah chapter 6 is a symbol-laden prophecy of something in the future; for Zechariah, just how far into the future was not calculable. The symbol consisted for 4 horses pulling chariots and being dispersed from Jerusalem to the outermost parts of the known world.

We discussed that, by all I can tell, the colors of the horses cannot be connected to anything concrete to help us decide if there is some direct correlation between their color and their mission or their characteristics. Rather, it seems to me that the different colors are simply a convenient means to sort out and add an identity to each horse, in the same way that identities are established for individual people by means of assigning proper names. So, while color doesn't have any symbolic meaning about what each horse's exact mission is, there is a common overall mission for the 4 as a group. And the mission is something that generally flies in the face of Christian orthodoxy, and so some Church doctrine has been created to deal with this apparent contradiction.

Clearly, God the Father is sending these chariots out to incite war upon our entire planet. Since it is God who is doing it, it is officially Holy War meaning there are rules. And the rules are nothing like the manmade Geneva Convention. These Holy War rules are covered by the biblical Law of the Ban; in Hebrew it is the Law of **Herem**. And rule #1 is, God makes the rules. Rule #2 is that the enemy and all its possessions belong to God and He will decide what to do with it all. Since there is no tangible or material way to turn over a physical object or person to God the same way we would give an object or a gift to someone, then the usual solution is to treat those physical objects and people similarly to the way an animal sacrifice is given to God: it is killed and burned up. While that might seem controversial, even barbaric or unsavory to us, our solution is simply to refer back to the Rule #1 and not fret over it.

This brings up the second matter: Christianity is very uncomfortable with a God who starts wars and kills people. In response, Constantinian Christianity has evolved a doctrine that describes God as having but one attribute: love. If

there is a second, it is mercy. There is left no room for a God of justice, punishment, or as a taker of blood in retribution. Therefore, it is rather standard within Christianity... though not quite universal... to explain that Jesus has replaced His Father, so mercy has replaced severity. And therefore, since Christ is the new god and all the rules have changed, then we can say that God's very nature and character has changed, even though the mantra that "God never changes" continues to be sung in countless songs and spoken from pulpits all over the globe. I could spend a long time fleshing this out further, but I'll cut to the chase. This is a false doctrine that is nothing less than idolatry and it mimics pagan religions. It is the re-making of Yehoveh God into an image we prefer. It is a great sin and has led countless millions astray. Do not buy into it.

Perhaps the greatest conundrum of this new idea that Jesus is the replacement god who is only love, peace, tolerance and mercy, is how to explain His coming return when the New Testament plainly says that He leads a huge band of combatants in a war to retake the earth from Satan, riding sword in hand upon a white steed, wearing garments soaked in the blood of God's enemies. I'll leave that line of thought for the time being, but I want you to see the definite connection to what God's true nature is (versus that which has been contrived over the centuries) with what is being foretold here in the 1st half of Zechariah chapter 6.

Let's re-read some of Zechariah.

RE-READ ZECHARIAH 6:6 – 15

War for our entire planet will be the order of the day as is prophesied in verse 7. While the epicenter of the coming conflagration will be Israel, clearly many other parts of the earth are not going to escape severe destruction, because the idea that the 4 chariots are going out to wander the planet symbolically describes just how broad will be the consequence of this future End Times battle. That the North and the South are specifically called out is more about emphasis than exclusiveness. That is, it seems that the regions of Israel's historic enemies will be where the bulk of war and destruction happen.

Verse 8 is most challenging to discern. The first half of it says in straightforward words that it is God that is delivering this prophetic message, as opposed to a courier or a surrogate like an angel. It's the second half where the meaning is most difficult. It says something about God's spirit being taken to the North. If I were to list 6 or 8 of the most common Bible version translations of this verse, you would see 6 or 8 different understandings of it. While some versions use the word "spirit" others use the word "wrath". The Hebrew is *ruach*, which is nearly always rendered as spirit or wind. On the other hand, a rare form of this word is used a couple of times in the Bible (in Judges and in Ecclesiastes) to indicate God's wrath. So, which of these translations and interpretations is closer to correct in our Zechariah passage?

First, contextually alone I rule out that we ought translate *ruach* as wrath in this case. Rather, what is more likely being explained is that the presence of God is being carried especially to the Northland by these war chariots. The most widely held belief among Bible commentators is that this is speaking about God bringing angry wrath to the Northlands. I don't think so. We must remember the era and the place this prophecy is being written. The region is generally at peace, and Judah is not suffering oppression because the Persian Empire was now in full swing, and they had a somewhat enlightened view in governing that Empire. Further, during this time some 5 centuries before Yeshua would be born, the universal belief was that all gods were gods only over certain specified territories. The idea that one god would invade the territory of another god was a most serious thing, and most wars between nations were fought with a belief that this was actually a battle between gods for superiority. For Yehoveh, God of Israel, to say that His spirit (His presence) would be carried to the Mesopotamia region where several other god-systems were in operation meant a deliberate encroachment on the territories claimed by other gods. It also meant a claim of sovereignty over (or an intent to conquer) a certain nation or region. This continues with the underlying theme of all of Zechariah in which Yehoveh is declaring and claiming His authority, power, and universal sovereignty over every square inch of planet Earth.

So, the idea is that God is planting His flag in a place where the false-god systems say He doesn't belong. Here, then, the term *ruach* is neutral. That is, Yehoveh is neither bringing wrath nor peace; only His presence. In fact, I think

this revelation while applying to End Times scenarios is also meant to apply to Zechariah's era, and the returned Jews are to find reassurance in this. That is, God is operating in the very place from which they have returned from exile. And, with these startling words, the first series of prophetic oracles to Zechariah (all received in one night) are concluded.

Beginning with verse 9, a new message is imparted to the Prophet, and so we see the rather standard prophetic protocol announcing a new oracle. It's important to note that once again God's formal name...Yehoveh... is invoked as the One bringing this oracle to Zechariah (even though nearly all Jewish and English Bible versions obscure it). Verse 10 begins the actual message, which is in the form of an instruction for Zechariah to personally carry out.

CJB Zechariah 6:10 ***"Take [gifts] from the exiles of Heldai, Toviya, and Y'da'ya, who have arrived from Bavel; then you, go to the house of Yoshiya the son of Tz'fanyah.***

There are some nuances about the way the Hebrew is presented grammatically that clouds exactly what is happening here. What is plain enough is that the Jewish exiles are offering a gift of high value to help advance something associated with the Temple. Where it gets problematic is just who these 3 named people are, and who they represent. The ambiguity allows for one or all to be Jewish exiles from Babylon, but not necessarily exiles that have returned. That is, recalling that probably no more than 5% of Jews living in former Babylon (now Persia) had actually migrated back to Judah, this passage could be speaking about an offering brought by Jews who had made the decision to remain living in Persia (which is why God ordered Zechariah to go to these people to receive their offering). Or some Hebrew language experts think that it could be that only the first name mentioned (Heldai) is a Jew who elected to remain in Persia, while the other 2 are living in Yehud among the returned exiles. And yet another option is that all 3 names are Jews who had returned from exile. The reality is we can't possibly know where each of these men fit within the overall Jewish community, but clearly they want to identify with the Holy Land and with the God of Israel.

Most translations leave out an important nuance. When Zechariah is told to take the contributions those 3 men bring with them to the house of Yoshiyah, the Hebrew includes the phrase ***bayyom hahu***, which means “on that day”. While in many cases in the Bible that term is speaking about the End Times Lord’s Day (the Day of Judgment), that is not the case here. Here, it is only indicating the idea of immediacy. The very day the Prophet collects the contributions he is to go to the house of Yoshiyah son of Tz’fanyah (which in English is Zephaniah) and apparently deposit it there. There is no way for us to determine exactly who this Yoshiyah is (Josiah in English). However, clearly for Zechariah to be told to take these funds to Josiah means this person had some well-known standing within the Judean community. This was an important man, and perhaps he had some position as a sort of trusted treasurer for the community funds, but not as part of the local Persian government apparatus. If it had gone through official channels, it would necessarily have been taxed. Or, maybe he was a craftsman proficient in working with gold and silver. This is because we quickly learn that the offering being brought, which was in the form of silver and gold that was standard for that time, was to be used to make an ornate crown... or as the grammar dictates... crowns (plural). We’ll come back to that in a moment.

Let’s back away from Zechariah’s complex symbolism, yet again, to try and understand this as a Judean who was among the first to hear this prophecy in the 6th century B.C. would have. Trying not to be too repetitive, I must continue to impress the strange social and political situation the returned exiles from Babylon found themselves in. Zechariah is fully acknowledging this issue in the precise way he words God’s oracle to him. Prior to the conquering of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar soon after the entry into the 6th century B.C., the Hebrews of Judah were still organized according to their traditional political and religious structure that had been set down by Moses 6 or 7 centuries earlier. The political side revolved around a King who had full authority to rule and judge as he saw fit... although it was always supposed to be in harmony with, and within the boundaries of, The Law of Moses. The religious side revolved around a High Priest who had full authority over the Temple, all of its operations, the Priests, and the Levite workers of every level, and it, too, was to operate within the boundaries of the Torah. He was also charged with teaching the Law to the people. The King had the most power by far over

Israelite society. It was a royal office. Further, a king had much attachment to a Temple in the sense that He was responsible to build one if it didn't exist, or to provide funds and impetus to improve upon it if it was already in operation.

The problem was that by Zechariah's day, even though the Jews were operating semi-independently, back home in Judah (now called Yehud by the Persians), the reality is that it was their Persian masters who owned the land (it was but one province among many in the Persian Empire). And so, it was the Persian King who appointed the High Priest as well as who appointed someone to govern the province. This meant that for the first time since before King Saul, Judah (Israel) was ruled over by a person who was not a Hebrew monarch. Zerubbabel was a Jew, but he was a governor with limited power... not a king. In fact, for the first time in their history the High Priest (at that time a fellow named Joshua), received power to judge the people... something that until then belonged exclusively to the king. The bottom line was that the High Priest had more wide-ranging authority than their ruler, Zerubbabel... who was no more nor less than a Persian civil servant.

It is very hard for we moderns to grasp just how strange and unsettling this was for the Jewish community, including for Joshua and Zerubbabel. After having been exiled for 70 years because of their unfaithfulness to God, they were terribly worried that God was not present with them because although they were back in their homeland, their sovereignty had not been restored and for them this was a sign of possibly a continuing divine disfavor upon them. Therefore, they wondered if Joshua and Zerubbabel were illegitimate in God's eyes, and this was reflected in the strange new political and religious structure that now had overlapping areas of authority that had never before existed in their long history. They longed for a return to the comfort level of being governed in a way and under a structure as they always had been... for them, it would be a comforting sign that God's favor had returned.

I'm sorry that I can do no better than this to try to explain the background for the entire prophetic panorama of Zechariah's book (as well as for Haggai's), and I hope you can adjust your minds to see what is happening in these prophecies through that lens. It will make far more sense, because it actually approaches being quite logical...at least if you were a 6th century Judean.

Therefore, let's move on to verse 11 that introduces us to some of the most Messianic-oriented passages in the Old Testament.

CJB Zechariah 6:11 *Take silver and gold; make crowns; put one on the head of Y'hoshua the son of Y'hotzadak, the cohen hagadol;*

The KJV says it this way:

KJV Zechariah 6:11 *Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;*

Other than the KJV butchering the High Priest's father's name, do you see the important difference between these 2 translations? The first says **one** crown is to go on the head of Joshua, the second says to set "**them**" (plural) on Joshua. So, the very first thing we need to deal with is: is there one crown or two that is to be made? The second thing is, is it that both crowns (if there are 2) are to be placed on Joshua's head? Or is it that one of the two is, or is it that only one crown is actually being made and it is to be placed on Joshua's head? This has flummoxed Bible scholars for centuries.

The Hebrew word for crowns (plural) is **atarot**, because **atarot** is plural of **atara** (which is singular for crown). Trying to make this verse harmonize within itself, scholars have suggested different solutions, the first being that **atarot** is a copyist error and it should be **atara**, so we're only dealing with one crown. But, if we do that, then other issues arise. The first is that crowns were always made of gold; not silver. In this era, silver was considerably more abundant than gold, and therefore gold the more valuable. Thus, the crowns of kings were always made of gold. So, was this crown to be made of some kind of a mix of gold and silver? But, if there were 2 crowns (as the various ancient texts in Hebrew say it is) and not 1, were the two crowns to be made the same? Or was it that one was to be gold and the other silver? Does it matter? Yes, it does; and this is why I took a few minutes to review with you the major boiling social issue that was ever-present among the returned exiles about how the Jews' new government in Yehud was structured, and how much this troubled them.

But, now, more issues. A High Priest didn't wear a crown of any kind; a crown was meant for royalty. So, some Bible scholars say that a long time ago some sloppy editing was done, and that in fact instead of Joshua being the recipient of the crown it was supposed to be Zerubbabel. But, for some reason, the editor removed Zerubbabel and instead put down Joshua. That is, this was an intentional redaction and not a simple error. Other Bible scholars suppose that originally both Zerubbabel and Joshua were mentioned because there were to be 2 crowns, and not 1, to be made. But, somehow, Zerubbabel got dropped out. All I can say is that there is not a shred of evidence to support any kind of redaction, error, copyist or otherwise. Rather, there indeed are 2 crowns to be made, and for sure Joshua is to get one of them. It's only that the reason behind this is so cloudy that Bible scholars have been unable to figure it out, therefore (for them) this has to be an error.

Yet, when we better understand the circumstances of the times, and how silver and gold were valued, and the purpose of a crown, then it opens the likely probability that one crown was silver with the other one gold. Joshua likely would have received a silver crown; not a gold one. So, might then Zerubbabel have received the 2nd crown? The gold crown? *Not* likely. He was not a king, and if the Persian monarch would have heard of him wearing a king's crown it would have been an open statement of rebellion. Then the question is, would Joshua have actually worn a crown? According to Torah, the High Priest was to wear a miter, or a turban. I suspect that although Joshua was presented with a silver crown, it was more a symbol to possess than a piece of official apparel to wear. The symbolism being that Joshua carried more extensive powers than any prior High Priest...some of those powers resembling the powers usually reserved for the king. But, there was more; and that begins to emerge in verse 12.

CJB Zechariah 6:12 and tell him, 'ADONAI-Tzva'ot says: "There is coming a man whose name is Tzemach [Sprout]. He will sprout up from his place and rebuild the temple of ADONAI.

So, when the crown is handed to Joshua, or perhaps ceremonially placed upon his head, the one who places it there (probably Zechariah) is to say: "There is coming a man whose name is ***Tzemach***...He will sprout up from his place and

rebuild the temple of Yehoveh (it says God's name, not Adonai)". Before we dissect those words, let's see another translation of this verse that is much more literal.

^{TNK} **Zechariah 6:12** *and say to him, "Thus said the Yehoveh of Hosts: Behold, a man called the Branch shall branch out from the place where he is, and he shall build the Temple of Yehoveh.*

Branch, shoot, sprout are all synonymous terms for ***tzemach***. The words "Behold a man..." are to be pronounced to this shoot, sprout or branch. Pontius Pilate uttered these same words about Christ as the hours of Yeshua's life could now be counted in single digits. This is a picture of Messiah, and most scholars...including Jewish scholars... agree that these might be some of the most important and poignant ever to be found in the Old Testament concerning Him. So, because these words are said to Joshua (whose name, by the way, is identical to Yeshua's when spoken in Hebrew), then Joshua is portrayed in this prophecy as a type of Messiah. He is a High Priest, but more than a High Priest. The crown adds a royal quality to his role.

Now, we must again back away and understand that prophecies typically apply or even happen in the era they are given, and then again later under different circumstances. Thus, the symbolism of Joshua receiving that crown could only actually be carried out so far, but no farther. Politically and socially, there is no way Joshua could have donned a crown of royalty and survived (any more than could have Zerubbabel). But, clearly when we understand that it is not the *action* that followed but rather the *symbolism* that is the point, then we get it that the future Messiah was to be a Priest-King. A combination of High Priest and Royal King. As modern Believers, when reading this passage can we legitimately attach a future nature to what is happening here? Or would we would be only anachronistically attaching what we are told in the New Testament about Yeshua's future return to Zechariah's prophecy?

Before we get there, recall that this is not the first time in Zechariah that the term ***tzemach*** has been used. In chapter 3, we first hear about this branch or shoot.

CJB Zechariah 3:8-10 ***⁸ Listen, cohen gadol Y'hoshua, both you and your colleagues seated here before you, because these men are a sign that I am going to bring my servant Tzemach [Sprout].***

⁹ For look at the stone I have put in front of Y'hoshua: on one stone are seven eyes; I will engrave what is to be written on it,' says ADONAI-Tzva'ot; 'and I will remove the guilt of this land in one day. ¹⁰ When that time comes,' says ADONAI-Tzva'ot, 'you will all invite each other to join you under your vines and fig trees.'"

This is obviously a future event to the days of Zechariah, and just as obviously there is a relationship between Joshua the High Priest and the future branch or shoot...the Messiah. It is not that Joshua is the Messiah, he only typifies Him. Later, in other books, we'll read of prophecies about Messiah that say that He will be a scion... a royal offspring... a descendant... of King David. So, David also typifies Messiah, even though David himself is not the Messiah. It is Joshua together with David that gives us the fuller picture of the purpose and nature and work of that coming Messiah. The crown upon the typified Messiah (the High Priest Joshua) says that the Messiah will retain the role of High Priest, but that role will be expanded beyond what it had been historically (just as Joshua's was). And, be aware than the Jewish Targum and the ancient Aramaic translation of this passage both read: "Behold the Man, Messiah is His name, who is to be revealed!" In other words, it was recognized early on among Jewish scholars and sages that this ***tzemach*** could only be speaking about a Messiah. But, there's more that confirms the future nature of this event, such that while part of the fulfillment will occur immediately for Zechariah when he places that crown before Joshua (mostly symbolic of what will happen far later), other parts of the prophecy did not, and have not yet, occurred.

Towards the end of verse 12 it says:

CJB Zechariah 6:12b ***...He will sprout up from his place and rebuild the temple of ADONAI.***

Or in a better, more fully literal translation, it says: ***the Branch shall branch out from the place where he is, and he shall build the Temple of Yehoveh.***

The point is, it is the branch or shoot that is going to build the Temple. Therefore, this action cannot be contemporary with Zechariah since by the time of this prophecy the Temple has already been rebuilt. And because God said that the newly rebuilt Temple is to be credited to Zerubbabel, and over the next few centuries it would be alternately damaged and then improved several times until that fateful day it was fully destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., and has yet to be rebuilt, that means the Temple this passage is speaking about is still future to us.

Let's take this up one more level. The Temple that the Romans destroyed was the 2nd Temple... Zerubbabel's Temple. Although centuries later King Herod had greatly improved it and expanded its grounds so magnificently to the point that it became known worldwide as Herod's Temple, it was nonetheless but the 2nd Temple. So, the next Temple to build (which has yet to happen), will be the 3rd. Is that what is being contemplated that ***Tzemach*** will build? That is actually fairly easily answered.

CJB 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 But in connection with the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and our gathering together to meet him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be easily shaken in your thinking or anxious because of a spirit or a spoken message or a letter supposedly from us claiming that the Day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For the Day will not come until after the Apostasy has come and the man who separates himself from Torah has been revealed, the one destined for doom. ⁴ He will oppose himself to everything that people call a god or make an object of worship; he will put himself above them all, so that he will sit in the Temple of God and proclaim that he himself is God.

So, what we learn here is that the BEFORE Yeshua (the ***Tzemach***) returns, and while the Anti-Christ still rules, a 3rd Temple will be built because the Anti-Christ desecrates it. Then afterwards Armageddon happens. Considering what

Ezekiel has to say about the amazing coming Temple, along with what Zechariah just said, then the Temple that the branch (the Messiah) will build must be a 4th Temple. Although we don't find specific mention of the destruction of the 3rd Temple, we do know that Jerusalem and much of Israel will be decimated in an End Times war. And, it is not imaginable to me that the Messiah is going to repair and rebuild a Temple that the Anti-Christ had brought into existence to order to glorify himself. To sum it up: a Temple to Yehoveh will be built by the returned Yeshua, and it is the Temple that is best known as the Millennial Temple that is described in detail in 8 consecutive chapters of the Book of Ezekiel beginning with chapter 40. Let's move on in Zechariah.

CJB Zechariah 6:13 *Yes, he will rebuild the temple of ADONAI; and he will take up royal splendor, sitting and ruling from his throne. There will be a cohen before his throne; and they will accept each other's advice in complete harmony.*

I'm afraid the CJB does a less than stellar job with this verse. Here it is more literally.

YLT Zechariah 6:13 *Yea, he doth build the temple of Jehovah, And he doth bear away honour, And he hath sat and ruled on His throne, And hath been a priest on His throne, And a counsel of peace is between both.*

One of the first issues to address is that the Temple the Branch is going to construct is NOT a rebuild, but rather a new-build. Thus, this will not be a repair or expansion of the previous Temple, but rather a wholly new one. The second issue is that the Branch (agreed that it is the Messiah) is going to sit on the throne, and as this and other prophecies imply, the throne will be in the Temple and not a separate palace. Then, there is this strange wording about a priest on the throne, and a peaceful harmony between them. And, between the two, they will rule and reign... meaning operating the justice system.

Just as with the situation with Joshua as High Priest who also bears the uncharacteristic responsibility for judging the people, even wearing a sort of

crown, we find it similarly with the coming Branch. Admittedly, it is hazy about how exactly this works and what it will look like because a most delicate balance is to be achieved. This verse uses grammar that mixes the singular and the plural. That is, on the one hand it appears that there will be two figures at the throne of the new Temple...one a priest, the other royalty... but on the other hand, two people cannot occupy the same throne simultaneously. Quite mysterious. Of course, mystery is the nature of prophecy especially since it always combines separate near term and far term fulfillments.

The thing is, Joshua, even with bearing a measure of judicial authority that High Priests didn't usually have, in no way was to be seen as a monarch. The High Priest NEVER sits upon a throne. But, the ***tzemach***, the Shoot or Branch, *will* be a monarch (this is verified because it is said that He *will* sit upon a throne). Thus, in rather typical prophetic style, we find that the first fulfillment of a prophecy will always have the least scope and completeness of all its elements, but a later fulfillment will have a much broader scope and greater completeness. Joshua the High Priest is the first fulfillment, the returned Messiah Yeshua will be the final fulfillment with the greatest scope and the highest level of completeness of this prophecy.

One final thing for today that is most interesting and revealing. When this verse speaks of the Branch as ruling, it uses the Hebrew root word ***mashal***. But, there is another common Hebrew verb in the Bible that is equally translated to "rule" and it comes from the root word ***melek***. When we do a word study we find that in reference to all the kings that come from King David's line, the verb ***mashal*** is used only of David, Solomon, and Hezekiah. What makes them unique is that their rule extended beyond the historical borders of Israel. That is, these kings were monarchs over territory and people Israel had won in battle. A territory that is more than what was naturally theirs. When Yehoveh's rule over all the earth is discussed, it too uses the verb ***mashal***. However, when the verb ***melek*** is used to denote rule, it is of a king over his own natural territory and people.

Bottom line: this is another intricate validation that just as Yehoveh is declared ruler over all the earth, so will Yeshua (the Branch) become ruler over all the

Lesson 11 - Zechariah 6 Continued

earth, as His Father's agent, during the period of the Millennial Kingdom. We'll close here, and next week complete chapter 6 and get into chapter 7.