

LESSON 9

When we ended last week, we had started discussing verse 12 of Chapter 6, which is an explanation for why Zechariah had been told to do certain things in verses 9-11. In those verses, Zechariah was told to find three people (Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah) and to take them to see a fourth person (Josiah). Zechariah was then told to make crowns of silver and gold and to put those crowns on the head of Joshua the high priest.

***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 a crown on Joshua's head — it was to teach us something about the Branch, something about Jesus. And verse 12 tells us that Jesus would build the temple, which he did. 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.

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. We know 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 the 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 the 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. 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!

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 saw that very often in our studies of Daniel and Esther.

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 name means grace, and so perhaps it was an honorary title for Josiah. Last week we suggested that Josiah might be the workman who crafted the crowns. Some suggest that the name Hen means instead that Josiah was the temple steward responsible for donations to the temple treasury. But we don't know for sure; they could both just be nicknames.

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.

But do those verses mean we were *individually* chosen? No, and that is the solution to our problem here in Zechariah 6. 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 he knew where they 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 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. He 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 King Darius’ fourth year as king 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. Also,

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

The month 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. Some of those influences were benign, such as the name of the month, but others were not. The people of God, in whatever age they are living, must always try to change the surrounding culture rather than be changed by the surrounding culture. It's a constant struggle.

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 Sharezer 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 Babylon-

ian 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 “prophets” refer 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 an 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? In short, was the fasting all about God or was the fasting all about themselves? Was their fasting 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."

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? We don't know for sure, but it may have been a fast intended to remember the assassination of Gedaliah, which is described in 2 Kings 25:25 and Jeremiah 41:1-3. (Gedaliah was the governor of Judah appointed by Nebuchadnezzar and murdered by Ishmael.)

This section of Zechariah reminds us of similar statements in Isaiah.

Isaiah 1:10-17 — (verse 15) *And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*

Isaiah 58:1-7 — (verse 4) *Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. ... (verse 6) Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*

To apply Isaiah's language to the question posed here, had their fasting allowed their "voice to be heard on high"? The emphatic answer was a resounding no! It had not! The charge here was a very serious one — false worship. It is serious at any time in history, but particularly at that time when the people had just returned from a long exile that had been brought upon them because of their false worship.

Verse 6 completes the thought from verses 4-5. Fasting for the wrong reason displeased God, but so did *feasting* for the wrong reason. I think these verses are well summarized by Paul:

Colossians 3:17 — *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

Whether we are feasting or fasting, we must do everything in the name of Christ, giving thanks to God by him. Colossians 3:17 is hard to misunderstand, and it puts to death the idea that a Christian can compartmentalize his life so that he lives as a Christian on Sunday but lives differently during the week. That just doesn't work. "**Whatsoever ye do** in word or deed" — that is everything we do and everything we say. If we can't do it or say it in the name of the Lord Jesus, then we should not be doing it or saying it.

Zechariah 7:7

7 Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?

Zechariah was not proclaiming a new message. The "former prophets" had proclaimed the same message. What was missing here was not the truth; what was missing was a will to obey the truth. "Truth may be scarce, but the supply has always exceeded the demand!"

Also, we should not miss a clear but subtle message from verse 7 — God expected his people to know what the former prophets had said. There is no room here for any excuse in not knowing what God had said earlier through his prophets. And if

God expected that of them — when written scrolls were few and far between — how much more must God expect of us who live in a country where God’s entire word is freely and readily available at any time and in any place?

What if the people had heard and heeded those earlier prophets? How would things be different? In short, everything would be different. The exile would never have occurred, and the people would be surrounded by prosperity rather than desolation.

Why does verse 7 mention the **south**? Perhaps no part of the geography of Israel painted a more desolate picture of their plight than did the “Negev,” the southernmost part of the nation. These “foot lands” lay between the Judean hills and the plains of Philistia, and they were once filled with orchards. But now they were a desolation, and it was all because the people had not listened to the prophets. Would they make that same mistake again?

Verse 7 is a bridge between verses 1-6 and the verses that follow. In verses 1-6, Zechariah declared that the people were guilty of failing to worship God with a sincere heart. Verse 7 ties that same sin to what the people had done before the exile. It points to the desolate countryside as evidence that those earlier prophets were true prophets. But verse 7 also points forward. If the people did again what they had done before, then God would do again what God had done before. The desolation would continue, and the exile would return.

What we are seeing here is a **theme** that is running throughout this book. That theme was clearly stated in the opening verses:

Zechariah 1:2-3 — *The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.*

Verse 7 concludes the thoughts in verses 1-6, but it also introduces the remainder of this chapter, which will call upon the nation to repent.

God had previously spoken to his people when they were prosperous, but they did not hear him.

***Jeremiah 22:21** — I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice.*

God was now speaking to them, not in their prosperity, but in their desolation and insecurity. Would he get a different response? Would they hear him now?

Zechariah 7:8-10

8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, 9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: 10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

What we see in these verses are themes that run all throughout the Bible. From the books of Moses to the sermon on the mount and all throughout the rest of the New Testament, we see these commands over and over again. God wants his people to

live in a certain way, and no one can ever claim ignorance of those requirements. They are repeated over and over again in the Bible.

The question that had been posed here in Zechariah dealt with an outward show of religion — fasting. God is telling them to instead focus on what is inward. Having done that, what is outward would take care of itself.

Verse 9 has two positive commands, and verse 10 has two negative commands. The first positive command is to “execute true judgment” or “administer true justice.” This theme runs all throughout the prophets.

Amos 5:21-24 — *I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.*

Jeremiah 7:5-7 — *For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.*

The word “true” in verse 9 carries with it the idea of reliability, permanence, and faithfulness. This is the kind of justice on which men can rely. It will not change based on the person involved, with perhaps the rich living under a different set of

rules than the poor. In our own society, it is denoted by the idea that justice is blind, or at least should be.

Again, we should follow our perfect example in this. Acts 10:34 tells us that God is no respecter of persons; that is, we are all living under the same set of rules, and we will all be judged by the same standard. If that were not the case, then how could we rely on or trust in the promises of God?

Psalms 146:5-6 — *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever.*

God's people are a faithful people. They are faithful to God and to his word, and they are faithful with other people. Those characteristics go hand in hand.