

Zechariah Chapter Six

The final night vision (vv.1-8) concerns the solemn subject of God's judgment upon the nations of earth. There is a clear parallel with the *first* night vision (1.7-17) as the judgment determined upon the Gentile nations (1.15) is now executed (6.8). Reconnaissance teams have become military forces ready for battle. The final vision is followed by a revelation of the future enthronement of the 'man whose name is the Branch' (6.12). Sin has obscured the revelation of God's glory, but it will yet shine forth in the pre-eminent Priest-King, clothed in the splendour of deity (6.12-13). The judgments of 6.1-8 clearly foreshadow the tribulation *before* the coming of Christ to reign (6.9-15). The night visions are now at an end. Israel has moved from the darkness of the valley of captivity (1.8) towards the dawning of millennial day.

The Chariots of Judgment (vv.1-8)

v.1: For the sixth and final time, Zechariah lifts up his eyes to see the vision. Four chariots 'came out' from between 'two mountains' of brass. According to **v.5**, the chariots represent 'the four spirits of the heavens' – angelic agents executing God's judgments. The message of this vision seems to be closely connected to that of *Haggai 2.21-22: I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, And I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; And I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them.* In Haggai, Zerubbabel foreshadows the coming King (Haggai 2.23). In Zechariah, Joshua foreshadows the coming Priest (6.11). Christ shall truly be a King-Priest. Chariots are a symbol of the military power and might of kingdoms. Thus, God is ready to set forth His heavenly army that divine purpose in relation to Israel might be realised, the chariots being the vehicles of divine judgment upon the nations (Isaiah 66.15; Jeremiah 4.13; Habakkuk 3.8). The fact there are 'four' chariots suggests this judgment is *universal* in character. 'The' two mountains (definite article) may suggest two well-known mountains such as Mount Zion and Mount Olivet, between which lay the valley of Jehoshaphat (meaning 'Jehovah shall judge'), which valley is associated with God's judgments upon the nations (Joel 3.2). But these mountains are not specifically identified, and were made of bronze suggesting they are symbolic, not literal. 'Brass' speaks of divine righteousness in judgment (e.g. brazen altar). Thus, it is perhaps better to see these mountains as an allusion to the heavenly dwelling place of God, especially since the angelic agents go forth from the presence of the Lord (v.5). God has witnessed (hence *two pillars*) the activities of the nations. He has been roused from His holy habitation (Psalm 11.4; Zechariah 2.13) and now acts in accordance with the two pillars of His throne – righteousness and justice according to truth (Psalm 36.6; 89.14; 96.13; 97.2; Zechariah 8.8).



v.2: Harnessed to the chariots were horses of varying colours (cp. Revelation 6.1-8). Horses denote swiftness and strength in executing God's judgments; the colours indicate the different *character* of judgments employed. 'Red' is a colour linked with *blood, death* and *vengeance* (Isaiah 63.1-2; Revelation 6.4). 'Black' is associated with *famine* and *judgment* (Revelation 6.5-6; Jude 13). **v.3:** In a military scene, 'white' represents *victory, triumph* and *conquest* (Revelation 6.2). Finally, the 'grised' (having patches or spots of colour) symbolise a *mixture of judgments* and *plagues* (Ezekiel 14.15, 17, 19; Revelation 6.8). At the end of the list is a description which applies to all the horses – they are 'powerful ones' (translated 'bay'). **v.4:** Zechariah asks for an explanation of the chariots. **v.5:** As noted above, the chariots represent the 'four spirits [*ruah*] of the heavens'. Whilst *ruah* has a wide range of meanings including 'wind' (Exodus 15.10), it most often refers to spirit beings, including the Spirit of God (Genesis 1.2). Thus, there are four angelic agents, moving swiftly as the wind, administering God's judgment on the nations. Daniel 7.2 makes mention of 'four winds' which 'strove upon the great sea' to bring forth four Gentile world powers ('great beasts'). Now 'four winds' are sent forth to break up and judge the same. 'Lord of all the earth' is a millennial designation (Micah 4.13) suggesting the Messiah's subjugation of His enemies and universal rule in the kingdom age.

v.6: In describing the movements of the horses, the red horses are not mentioned. This maybe because when these visions were shown to Zechariah, Babylon was already overthrown. The first act of judgment on the first great Gentile world power was already accomplished through the agency of the red horses and its associated chariot. Mission complete! Alternatively, the red horses are incorporated in the remaining 'strong' (bay) horses sent forth in v.7. The black and white horses are sent to the 'north country', the direction from which Israel's greatest enemies came (Assyria, Babylon and Seleucid Greeks). Indeed, in tribulation times, the 'king of the north' will prove to be a formidable foe (Isaiah 10.12; Daniel 11.13, 15, 40). The 'grised' go forth into the 'south country', where Israel's first oppressor, Egypt, was located. Again, the 'king of the south' shall be active in end times (Daniel 11.25, 40). **v.7:** Speaking now more generally, the New English Translation (NET) reads: 'All these strong ones are scattering; they have sought permission to

go and walk about over the earth.’ Thus, the angelic agents are eager to establish God’s righteous judgment in *all* the earth, not just the immediate north and south of Israel. **v.8:** The Lord Himself ‘cries’ (a verb used of raising a battle cry). Judgment has been executed in the ‘north country’ and pacified God’s anger which now *rests* upon the region (cf. 1.15). Justice is satisfied. This was fulfilled in measure by the overthrow of Babylon by Medo-Persia but looks on to the tribulation and final judgment of Israel’s enemies (cf. Ezekiel 38.14-39.7; Revelation 17-18).

The Crowning of Joshua (vv.9-15)

A **Commandment** (vv.9-11a). **v.9:** The position of these verses *after* the eight visions is significant. All opposing rule has been subdued, and thus the way made clear for kingdom of God to be manifested on earth. This is typified by the crowning of Joshua the high priest. So, the order is clear; first, the judgments of the Day of the Lord (Revelation 6-19), second, the millennial reign of Christ (Revelation 20.6). **v.10:** Three exiles had apparently arrived from Babylon with a gift of silver and gold (possibly from the Jewish community in Babylon) for the rebuilding of the temple. It is possible they were of priestly stock (cp. Ezra 2.36, 60) and commissioned to transport silver and gold from Babylon into the care of the priests in Jerusalem (cp. Ezra 8.24-32). The individuals were called *Heldai (my time or endurance)*, *Tobijah (the Lord is good)* and *Jedaiah (the Lord knows, from a root meaning praise)*. The names must have been an encouragement to the remnant in Jerusalem! Zechariah was to go to the house of *Josiah (Jehovah supports)* son of *Zephaniah (hid or protected of the Lord)* where apparently they were lodging. **v.11:** A crown was to be made from the silver and gold. Though ‘crowns’ is plural, the same is used in Job 21.36 for *one* crown. It is likely that a single splendid crown is denoted, consisting of several gold and silver twists (as Christ who wears several diadems as one crown, Revelation 19.12).

A **Coronation** (vv.11b-13). The crown was to be placed on the head of Joshua the high priest. This was quite unexpected since it was normally kings, not priests, who wore crowns. We remember that Joshua and his fellow priests were men symbolic of things to come (3.8), and thus the crowning of Joshua represents the crowning of the mighty King-Priest of a coming day. **v.12:** ‘Behold the man’ were words spoken by Pilate (John 19.5). It should have reminded the Jews of this prophecy – Christ is the promised man of Zechariah. ‘The Branch’ [*semah*] refers to a tender shoot springing from the root (lineage) of David, to become the future Messianic ruler (cf. Isaiah 4.2; Jeremiah 23.5; 33.15). *Semah* suggests *humiliation* (growing up from the earth, cf. Isaiah 53.2), *growth* and *fruitfulness*. His entrance into the world at Bethlehem was small and seemingly insignificant, but He will rise to a place of highest honour and dignity. **v.13:** This same one will build the temple of the Lord (repeated for emphasis). ‘He’ is emphatic in the Hebrew text – not Joshua, but the Branch – He will build the temple of Ezekiel’s vision which will stand during the millennium (cf. Isaiah 2.2-4; 56.7; Ezekiel 40-48; Micah 4.1-7). The temple they were now building was a type and pledge of a greater to come (Haggai 2.6-9). ‘He shall bear (carry or wear) the glory’ – Christ shall be clothed in royal majesty (Isaiah 22.24). For the first time there will be one governing on earth adequate to all the requirements of the glory of God (Dennett). He shall ‘sit enthroned’ upon the throne of *His* glory (Isaiah 9.7; Matthew 25.31; Luke 1.32). Kingship suggests *power* and *authority* to both *reign* and *rule*. Yet this same one is also Priest suggesting the thought of tender *grace* and *sympathy* (Hebrews 4.14-16). He will have compassion on the ignorant and erring (Hebrews 5.2) but righteous severity on the rebellious and disobedient. No *king* of Israel could ever be a *priest* for kings sprang from Judah and priests from Levi. But the precedent was set by Melchizedek, who was both king and priest of the Most High God (Genesis 14.18). Thus, Christ is King from the royal tribe of Judah, and Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110; Hebrews 7.1-3). The ‘counsel of peace’ (i.e. planning and procuring of peace) shall be ‘between them both’, referring *either* to the offices of priest and king, *or* the King-Priest and Jehovah. Both are true. The perfect combination of Priest and King in the person of Christ guarantees universal peace. It is only possible because of the work of Christ as Priest at Calvary, and His righteous rule as King in all the earth. Alternatively, this is reference to the counsel of Father and Son in planning and procuring a universal reign of peace (as indicated in Psalm 110). *Ironside: Having made peace through the blood of His cross, He is the agent through whom the reconciliation of all things in heaven and earth will be effected.*

A **Commemoration** (vv.14-15). **v.14:** The crown was to be stored in the rebuilt temple as a ‘memorial’ to the symbolic act of the crowning of Joshua. The crown was a *pledge* and *earnest* of a glorious future, reminding the priests (and people) of the coming King-Priest of whom Joshua was a mere shadow. Note. Josiah son of Zephaniah (v.10) is here referred to as ‘Hen’. This is not a proper name but an honorary title meaning ‘gracious gift’, possibly referring to the hospitality and kindness he had shown his brethren from Babylon. **v.15:** The deputation from Babylon were themselves a foreshadowing of scattered Jews and Gentiles who will come from afar bringing offerings for the construction of the temple (cf. Isaiah 2.2-4; 56.6-7; 60.4-11; 61.6; Haggai 2.7-8; Zechariah 2.11; 8.22). In His grace, Christ will permit others to labour under His direction and control in the building of the temple (cf. 1 Corinthians 3.9). When these things are realised, the world will know that Christ is the One sent of Jehovah for the blessing of the nation. The chapter closes with a call to obedience (a quotation from Deuteronomy 28.1). Great blessing was promised the nation, but their *individual* share in that blessing depended on complete submission to God’s word. It is also true that Christ will not appear as the great King-Priest until the nation turns to Him in repentance and obedience.