

Zechariah 6:1–15

The Lord of All the Earth and the Coming Priest-King

Zechariah 6 brings us to the end of a series of visions God gave the prophet. Visions, by nature, use symbolic pictures. Sometimes God explains the meaning clearly; other times He gives us only part of the explanation, and we have to stop where Scripture stops. It is wise to be cautious: when God explains a symbol, we can be confident. When He does not, we should avoid building elaborate theories.

With that in mind, Zechariah 6 has two parts:

1. A vision of four chariots coming from between two bronze mountains (verses 1–8).
2. A symbolic crowning of Joshua the high priest, pointing forward to the coming “Branch,” the priest-king (verses 9–15).

1. The Four Chariots: God’s Sovereign Activity in the Earth (Zechariah 6:1–8)

Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze.

With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds.

Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?”

And the angel answered and said to me, “These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.

The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country.”

Then the strong steeds went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And He said, “Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth.” So they walked to and fro throughout the earth.

And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying, “See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in the north country.”

The picture is vivid:

- Two mountains of bronze – Bronze in Scripture often symbolizes judgment. Two massive bronze mountains suggest something firm, weighty, and unshakable—God’s righteous, unchanging purposes.
- Four chariots with different colored horses – The angel explains they are “four spirits of heaven” sent out from the presence of “the Lord of all the earth.” They represent divine agents, carrying out God’s will across the globe.

We are not told every detail of what each color means. We are not invited to link them to every event on the news. What we are clearly told is this:

- God has “spirits of heaven” who go out from His presence.
- They move “throughout the earth.”

- In some sense, their mission “gives rest” to God’s Spirit in the north country—likely a reference to the regions that had oppressed His people, such as the lands of their former conquerors.

The main point is that God is actively governing the nations. Nothing happens in isolation from His awareness or apart from His ultimate oversight. Human empires rise and fall, but they do not do so outside the boundaries of His justice and wisdom.

This was immensely important for a discouraged, small group of exiles trying to rebuild in Judah. They were a tiny people under a vast empire. God is reminding them:
“You see weakness and chaos; I see the whole earth. I send out My servants. I am still the Lord of all the earth.”

2. The Crowning of Joshua and the Promise of the Branch (Zechariah 6:9–13)

After the vision of the chariots, the scene becomes very concrete and symbolic at the same time:

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying:

“Receive the gift from the captives—from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from Babylon—and go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.”

Joshua is the high priest who has already appeared in chapter 3. Now God tells Zechariah to take silver and gold from returned exiles, make a crown, and place it on Joshua’s head.

This is unusual. In Israel:

- Priests came from the tribe of Levi.
- Kings came from the tribe of Judah, from the line of David.

God had kept these roles distinct in Israel’s history. But here, a priest is symbolically crowned.

Then Zechariah is to speak this prophetic word:

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying:
‘Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH!
From His place He shall branch out,
And He shall build the temple of the Lord;
Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord.
He shall bear the glory,
And shall sit and rule on His throne;
So He shall be a priest on His throne,
And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.’”

Here God points beyond Joshua to someone greater—the Branch.

- The Branch is a messianic title used by other prophets. He is the promised descendant from the line of David who will reign in righteousness.
- The Branch will “build the temple of the Lord.”
- He will “sit and rule on His throne” and also be “a priest on His throne.”

In other words, in this coming figure, kingship and priesthood are united.

Joshua, whose name means “The Lord is salvation” (the same basic name as “Jesus” in Greek), is acting as a living illustration. He is a priest wearing a crown, pointing forward to the One who will perfectly combine both roles.

Jesus as Priest and King

In the New Testament, Jesus is presented as:

- King – the Son of David, the One with all authority in heaven and on earth.
- High Priest – the One who represents us before God, who offered Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and who intercedes for us.

There is a tension for Jewish readers: Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, not Levi. How then can He be a priest? The letter to the Hebrews explains that Jesus is a priest of a different order—the order of Melchizedek (see Hebrews 7). Melchizedek appears in Genesis as both king of Salem and priest of God Most High. His priesthood is older than Levi’s and not bound to one tribe.

Jesus, like Melchizedek, is both King and Priest—and Zechariah’s symbolic crowning of Joshua points us in that direction. The Branch, when fully revealed, will not only rule but also reconcile, not only govern but also bring us near to God.

“He Shall Build the Temple of the Lord”

In Zechariah’s immediate context, the people were rebuilding the physical temple in Jerusalem, a work led by Zerubbabel and Joshua. The Branch “building the temple of the Lord” has at least two layers:

1. Near fulfillment – God encourages them that His purposes for the temple will be completed.
2. Greater fulfillment – Jesus Christ builds the true dwelling place of God among people.

The New Testament describes believers as “living stones” being built into a spiritual house (see First Peter 2:4–5). It also looks forward to the ultimate reality where “the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them” (Revelation 21:3). The Branch builds a place where God and His people can be together forever—in Christ Himself and in the people He redeems.

3. The Crowns as a Memorial and the Promise to Those “Far Off” (Zechariah 6:14–15)

“Now the elaborate crown shall be for a memorial in the temple of the Lord for Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah.

Even those from afar shall come and build the temple of the Lord. Then you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. And this shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.”

The crowns are to be kept in the temple as a memorial—a visible reminder that:

- God has promised a coming priest-king, the Branch.
- God has not forgotten His people.
- God will fulfill His word in His time.

“Those from afar shall come and build the temple of the Lord” hints that God’s purposes are not limited to one small group. People “from afar”—physically and spiritually—will be drawn into His work and His house. This anticipates the way, in Christ, people from all nations are brought into God’s family and become part of what He is building.

The closing line matters:

“This shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.”

God’s promises stand, but His people are not to be passive spectators. They are called to respond with obedience, trust, and faithfulness.

Practical Application

1. **God rules history, even when we feel small and weak.**

The visions of the chariots remind us that God sees the whole earth and sends out His servants at His command. When you feel overwhelmed by world events or your own smallness, remember: the Lord of all the earth has not lost control.

2. **Jesus alone can unite power and mercy perfectly.**

The Branch is both priest and king. Human leaders lean one way or another—either strong but harsh, or kind but weak. Jesus is perfectly just and perfectly merciful. He rules with authority and brings us near to God by His sacrifice.

3. **The true “temple” God is building is people redeemed and indwelt by Him.**

We can get caught up in buildings and visible structures, but in Christ, God is building a people in whom He dwells by His Spirit. Ask yourself: am I letting Him shape me as one of those “living stones”?

4. **God’s promises invite obedient participation.**

The crowns in the temple were a reminder of future hope—but the people were still called to obey in the present. In the same way, knowing that Jesus is the priest-king who will complete God’s purposes should move us to faithfulness today, not passivity.

A Challenge for Believers

- Are you treating Jesus only as a helper in crises, or as your true King—Lord over your time, priorities, relationships, and decisions?
- Are you trying to deal with your guilt and shame on your own, or are you relying on Jesus as your High Priest who has already offered Himself for your sins?
- Are you cooperating with His work of “building the temple”—both in your own character and in the lives of others—or are you resisting what He wants to do?

Today, let Zechariah 6 call you to:

- Bow afresh before Jesus as King.
- Draw near to God through Jesus as Priest.
- Offer yourself to Him as a living stone, willing to be placed where He chooses, shaped as He wills.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Zechariah’s prophecy points to Someone greater than Joshua, greater than any human leader—the Man whose name is the Branch, fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Jesus came into this world not only to teach and heal, but to do what only a true Priest-King could do:

- As Priest, He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He saved us when He shed His blood on the cross. There He took upon Himself the judgment we deserve.
- As King, He rose from the dead on the third day. His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. He has authority over life and death, and He invites you into His kingdom.

You cannot make yourself right with God by your own efforts, rituals, or goodness. You need the One who can bring you near to God and reign over your life in righteousness.

Today, you can turn to Him:

- Admit before God that you are a sinner and cannot save yourself.
- Believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose again.
- Ask Him, in your own words, to forgive you, to change you, and to take His rightful place as Lord of your life.

If you come to Him honestly, He will not turn you away.

The priest-king Zechariah foresaw is alive, and He still welcomes anyone—from near or far—who will trust Him, follow Him, and allow Him to build a new life on the foundation of His cross and resurrection.