

Zechariah Chapter 6 — The Four Chariots and the Crown of the Branch

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Zechariah Chapter 6 brings the prophet's night visions to a dramatic conclusion.

The chapter opens with four chariots moving out from between two bronze mountains. These chariots represent heavenly agents sent out under God's authority to carry out His purposes throughout the earth.

Then the scene changes.

Zechariah is instructed to take silver and gold, make a crown, and place it on the head of Joshua the high priest.

This act is deeply symbolic.

Joshua was a priest, not a king.

Yet he is crowned.

Why?

Because Joshua is being used as a picture of Someone greater to come:

The Branch.

This coming Branch will build the temple of the Lord.

He will sit on a throne.

He will rule.

He will also serve as priest.

In one Person, kingship and priesthood will be perfectly united.

That points unmistakably to Jesus Christ.

Zechariah 6 therefore moves from **God's rule over the nations** to **the future rule of the Messiah**.

Its central message is:

The Lord governs history, judges the nations, and will establish His perfect Priest-King through the Branch.

I. THE FOUR CHARIOTS — GOD’S SPIRITS SENT OUT

Zechariah 6:1

“I looked up again and saw four chariots coming out from between two bronze mountains.”

Zechariah sees four chariots.

Chariots in the ancient world were instruments of war, speed, authority, and conquest.

These chariots emerge from between two bronze mountains.

Bronze in Scripture is often associated with strength, durability, and judgment.

The image therefore suggests heavenly forces emerging under divine authority to carry out judgment.

Cross References in Simple American English

Revelation 6:1 — John saw heavenly horsemen released as part of God’s judgment upon the earth.

1 Kings 7:15 — Bronze pillars were used in Solomon’s temple, emphasizing strength and permanence.

Psalms 68:17 — God is pictured as surrounded by countless heavenly chariots.

Spiritual Lesson

The nations may appear to control history, but heaven remains in command.

Application

Do not interpret world events as though God is absent.

Human rulers act, but God remains sovereign.

Zechariah 6:2

“The first chariot had red horses, the second had black horses.”

Different colored horses appear again, similar to Zechariah’s earlier vision.

The specific colors may suggest different aspects of divine activity or judgment.

Red can suggest conflict or bloodshed.

Black can suggest mourning, famine, or judgment.

But the primary focus is not the colors themselves.

The important point is that the chariots are commissioned by God.

Cross References in Simple American English

Revelation 6:4 — A red horse is associated with conflict and bloodshed.

Revelation 6:5 — A black horse is associated with scarcity and judgment.

2 Kings 6:17 — God opened the servant’s eyes to see heavenly horses and chariots surrounding Elisha.

Key Truth

God has resources and agents that human beings cannot see.

Zechariah 6:3

“The third had white horses, and the fourth had dappled horses—all strong.”

The remaining chariots are pulled by white and dappled horses.

White can symbolize victory or purity.

The dappled horses may suggest variety in judgment or mission.

All of the horses are described as strong.

God’s messengers are fully equipped to accomplish what He commands.

Cross References in Simple American English

Revelation 19:11 — Christ appears on a white horse in righteousness and victory.

Joel 2:4 — An invading army is compared to powerful horses moving quickly.

Judges 5:22 — Horses are pictured as charging powerfully in battle.

Spiritual Lesson

God’s purposes are never weakened by lack of strength.

Application

What God sends, God equips.

Zechariah 6:4

“I asked the angel who was speaking with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’”

Zechariah again asks for understanding.

He does not assume the meaning.

This repeated pattern throughout the visions shows spiritual humility.

Cross References in Simple American English

Daniel 7:19 — Daniel asked for the meaning of the symbols in his vision.

Ezekiel 37:18 — Ezekiel was asked to explain the meaning of a prophetic sign.

Revelation 7:13 — John received interpretation concerning a vision he did not fully understand.

Principle

Good Bible study asks what the text means before deciding what we want it to mean.

Zechariah 6:5

“He replied, ‘These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing before the Lord of all the earth.’”

The angel identifies the chariots as the **four spirits of heaven**.

The expression may also be understood as heavenly winds or agents.

They stand before the Lord and then go out from His presence.

They are not independent powers.

They serve the Lord.

He is called:

“the Lord of all the earth.”

That title is important.

God is not merely the God of Judah.

He is sovereign over every nation.

Cross References in Simple American English

Revelation 7:1 — Four angels are associated with the four winds of the earth.

Daniel 7:2 — Daniel saw the four winds of heaven stirring the nations.

Psalms 104:4 — God makes His angels and spiritual servants instruments of His purposes.

Key Truth

God’s authority is universal.

Application

No nation exists outside His rule.

No government is beyond His reach.

Zechariah 6:6

“The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white follow after them, and the dappled go toward the south.”

The chariots are sent in different directions.

The north country is especially significant.

From Israel’s perspective, major enemies often came from the north.

Assyria and Babylon had both threatened Israel through northern approaches.

The south would point toward Egypt and surrounding regions.

God’s judgment reaches the places where hostile powers have arisen.

Cross References in Simple American English

Jeremiah 1:14 — Disaster against Judah was described as coming from the north.

Daniel 11:6 — Daniel describes conflicts involving northern and southern kingdoms.

Isaiah 43:6 — God commands north and south to release His scattered people.

Spiritual Lesson

God knows the direction from which opposition comes.

Zechariah 6:7

“The strong horses went out, eager to patrol the earth. And He said, ‘Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth.’ So they did.”

The strong horses are eager to carry out their assignment.

They move throughout the earth under God’s command.

The phrase **“to and fro”** emphasizes complete movement and inspection.

Nothing is outside their assigned reach.

Cross References in Simple American English

Job 1:7 — Satan said he had been going throughout the earth.

2 Chronicles 16:9 — The eyes of the Lord search throughout the whole earth.

Revelation 6:6 — God's judgments operate under controlled authority.

Key Principle

God's oversight of the earth is complete.

Application

Nothing taking place in the world escapes His attention.

Zechariah 6:8

“Then the angel called out to me, ‘Look, those going toward the north have quieted My Spirit in the north country.’”

The mission toward the north has brought satisfaction to God's Spirit.

The idea of **quieting His Spirit** suggests that judgment has been carried out and divine anger has been satisfied.

Babylon and the powers associated with the north had once been instruments of judgment.

Now God's justice toward them would also be carried out.

Cross References in Simple American English

Ezekiel 5:13 — God's anger is described as being satisfied after judgment is completed.

Ezekiel 16:42 — God speaks of His wrath coming to rest after justice has been carried out.

Isaiah 12:1 — God's anger can be turned away and replaced by comfort.

Spiritual Lesson

God's judgment is never uncontrolled anger.

It is righteous justice.

Application

God will not allow evil to continue forever.

II. THE CROWNING OF JOSHUA — A PICTURE OF THE BRANCH

Zechariah 6:9

“The word of the Lord came to me.”

The visions now transition into a symbolic prophetic action.

God directly instructs Zechariah concerning what he must do next.

Cross References in Simple American English

Jeremiah 1:4 — The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah.

Ezekiel 1:3 — God’s word came to Ezekiel with divine authority.

1 Samuel 15:10 — The Lord spoke to Samuel concerning His purposes.

Principle

Prophetic action must be grounded in divine revelation.

Zechariah 6:10

“Take silver and gold from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from Babylon. Go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah.”

Some returned exiles brought silver and gold.

They were participating materially in the work of restoration.

God instructed Zechariah to use these precious metals for a symbolic purpose.

Cross References in Simple American English

Ezra 1:6 — People contributed silver, gold, goods, and offerings for the rebuilding work.

Ezra 8:25 — Silver and gold were entrusted for service connected with the temple.

Haggai 2:8 — God declares that all silver and gold ultimately belong to Him.

Spiritual Lesson

Resources placed in God’s hands can become part of His larger purpose.

Zechariah 6:11

“Make a crown from the silver and gold and place it on the head of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest.”

This is highly unusual.

Joshua is the high priest.

Priests did not normally wear royal crowns.

Kings from David’s line ruled.

Priests from Aaron’s line served in the sanctuary.

The offices were distinct.

Yet Joshua is crowned.

This act was symbolic.

Joshua was not being made king.

He was being used as a prophetic picture of the coming Messiah, who would unite kingship and priesthood perfectly.

Cross References in Simple American English

Exodus 29:6 — Aaron the high priest wore a sacred headpiece for priestly service.

Psalms 21:3 — God is pictured placing a crown of pure gold upon the king.

Revelation 19:12 — Christ appears wearing many crowns, showing supreme royal authority.

Key Truth

Joshua’s crown points beyond Joshua.

Application

Biblical symbols often reach their fullest meaning in Christ.

Zechariah 6:12

“Tell him, ‘This is what the Lord of Hosts says: Here is the man called The Branch. He will branch out from where He is and will build the temple of the Lord.’”

The focus now moves directly to **the Branch**.

This is the same Messianic title introduced in Zechariah 3.

The Branch is the promised descendant of David.

He will rise.

He will build.

He will accomplish God's redemptive purpose.

The phrase **"He will branch out"** pictures growth emerging from what appears small.

Cross References in Simple American English

Isaiah 11:1 — A shoot would come from the family line of Jesse, and a Branch would grow from his roots.

Jeremiah 23:5 — God promised a righteous Branch from David who would reign wisely.

John 2:19 — Jesus spoke of raising the temple of His body, pointing toward His death and resurrection.

Christ Connection

The Branch is Jesus Christ.

Application

God's greatest work often emerges from what the world overlooks.

Zechariah 6:13

"He will build the temple of the Lord, He will receive honor, and He will sit and rule on His throne. He will also be a priest on His throne, and there will be perfect harmony between the two."

This is one of the clearest Messianic statements in Zechariah.

The Branch will:

Build the temple.

Receive glory.

Sit on a throne.

Rule.

Serve as priest.

This is extraordinary.

Under the Old Testament system, king and priest were separate offices.

But the Messiah will unite both.

He will be:

King and Priest.

The phrase “**perfect harmony between the two**” means there will be no conflict between royal authority and priestly ministry.

In Christ, rule and intercession are perfectly united.

Cross References in Simple American English

Hebrews 7:1 — Melchizedek is presented as both king and priest, foreshadowing Christ.

Psalms 110:4 — The Messiah is declared to be a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 8:1 — Jesus is our great High Priest who is seated at the right hand of God’s throne.

Key Doctrine

Jesus Christ is both King and High Priest.

Application

The One who rules us is also the One who represents us before God.

III. THE CROWN AS A MEMORIAL

Zechariah 6:14

“The crown will be kept in the temple of the Lord as a memorial to Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen son of Zephaniah.”

The crown was not to remain on Joshua’s head.

It was to be preserved as a memorial.

This proves that Joshua’s crowning was symbolic rather than permanent.

The crown pointed forward.

Every time people saw it, they were reminded of God’s promise concerning the Branch.

Cross References in Simple American English

Exodus 12:14 — Passover was established as a memorial of God’s deliverance.

Joshua 4:7 — Memorial stones reminded future generations of God’s mighty work.

Numbers 16:40 — Objects were preserved as reminders of God’s holiness and authority.

Spiritual Lesson

God uses memorials to keep His promises before His people.

Application

Remember what God has done.

Remember what God has promised.

IV. THOSE FAR AWAY WILL COME

Zechariah 6:15

“Those who are far away will come and help build the temple of the Lord, and you will know that the Lord of Hosts has sent me to you. This will happen if you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God.”

The chapter ends by widening the vision.

Those **far away** will come and participate.

Historically, this may include Jews still scattered among the nations.

Prophetically, it also points beyond Israel toward the inclusion of the nations in God’s redemptive work.

The final sentence emphasizes obedience.

God’s people are called to respond faithfully to His revealed Word.

Cross References in Simple American English

Isaiah 60:10 — Foreigners would help rebuild Jerusalem’s walls.

Ephesians 2:13 — Those who were once far away have been brought near through Christ.

Isaiah 1:19 — Those willing to obey God will enjoy His blessing.

Key Truth

God’s redemptive plan reaches those who are far away.

Application

No one is too distant for God to bring near.

V. MAJOR THEMES OF ZECHARIAH 6

1. God Rules Over the Nations

The chariots move under His command.

He is the Lord of all the earth.

2. God Judges Evil

The chariots carry out His righteous purposes among the nations.

3. God's Spirit Is Satisfied by Justice

The north country is quieted after judgment has been completed.

4. The Branch Is the Messiah

The Branch is the promised Davidic ruler who fulfills God's redemptive plan.

5. Christ Is King

He sits on a throne and rules.

6. Christ Is Priest

He represents His people before God.

7. Christ Unites Kingship and Priesthood

What remained separate in Israel's institutions is perfectly united in Jesus Christ.

8. Christ Builds God's True Temple

The Messiah builds the people among whom God dwells.

9. The Nations Are Included

Those far away are brought near and participate in God's work.

10. Obedience Remains Necessary

God's grace never eliminates the call to obedience.

VI. CHRIST IN ZECHARIAH 6

Zechariah 6 is one of the strongest Christ-centered chapters in the book.

1. Christ Is the Branch

He comes from David's line.

He fulfills the promises of the prophets.

2. Christ Is the Builder

He builds the true temple of God.

The New Testament presents believers as living stones built together into a spiritual house.

3. Christ Is the King

He sits on the throne.

He possesses authority.

He reigns.

4. Christ Is the Priest

He intercedes.

He represents His people.

He offers the sufficient sacrifice.

5. Christ Is the Priest-King

The two offices meet in Him.

Authority and mercy are perfectly united.

Justice and grace meet in Him.

Rule and intercession meet in Him.

VII. THE PRIEST-KING THEME

The crowning of Joshua is intentionally unusual.

Under the Mosaic system:

Priests came from Levi.

Kings came from Judah.

The offices were normally separate.

But the Branch would unite them.

This prepares us for the New Testament teaching about Jesus.

Jesus is from the tribe of Judah.

He is the Son of David.

He is King.

Yet Hebrews also identifies Him as the great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

He does not merely rule over us.

He also represents us.

He does not merely command.

He also intercedes.

He does not merely wear the crown.

He also carried the cross.

That is the beauty of the Messiah.

VIII. GOD GOVERNS HISTORY

The four chariots teach an important doctrine:

History is not random.

Empires do not rise outside God's knowledge.

Nations do not fall outside His authority.

Wars do not surprise Him.

Political power does not intimidate Him.

God allows human beings genuine responsibility, but His sovereign purposes remain greater than human plans.

Application

When the world feels unstable, remember:

The Lord still rules the earth.

IX. THOSE WHO ARE FAR AWAY

Verse 15 offers a beautiful glimpse of God's worldwide saving purpose.

Those far away will come.

This theme becomes clearer throughout Scripture.

The gospel would go beyond Jerusalem.

Beyond Judea.

Beyond Israel.

To the nations.

Paul later tells Gentile believers that they were once far away but have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Key Principle

The gospel turns outsiders into members of God's household.

X. KEY LESSONS FROM ZECHARIAH 6

1. God governs the nations.

The four chariots move under His command.

2. God has heavenly agents who carry out His purposes.

The visible world is not the whole picture.

3. God judges wickedness.

His justice will eventually be satisfied.

4. The Branch is Jesus Christ.

The promised Messiah fulfills the hope of this chapter.

5. Christ is both King and Priest.

He reigns and intercedes.

6. Christ builds the true temple.

He gathers and forms the people of God.

7. God remembers faithful service.

The crown became a memorial to those who contributed.

8. Those far away can be brought near.

God's salvation reaches beyond national boundaries.

9. Obedience matters.

God's promises call for faithful response.

XI. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Zechariah 6 challenges us to ask:

Do I truly believe God rules over the nations?

Am I more afraid of political powers than I am confident in God?

Do I understand Jesus not only as Savior but as King?

Do I understand Him as my great High Priest?

Am I submitting to His rule?

Am I trusting His intercession?

Do I believe God can bring those far away near to Himself?

Am I faithfully obeying what He has revealed?

XII. QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What did Zechariah see coming from between the two bronze mountains?

Answer

He saw four chariots pulled by different colored horses.

Question 2

What did the four chariots represent?

Answer

They represented heavenly agents or spirits sent out from before the Lord to carry out His purposes throughout the earth.

Question 3

Why is God called the Lord of all the earth?

Answer

Because His authority extends over every nation, government, and people.

Question 4

What was significant about the north country?

Answer

It was historically associated with major enemies such as Babylon and represented a region where divine judgment would be carried out.

Question 5

What does it mean that God's Spirit was quieted?

Answer

It means His righteous judgment had been carried out and His wrath had been satisfied.

Question 6

What was Zechariah told to make?

Answer

He was told to make a crown from silver and gold.

Question 7

Whose head received the crown?

Answer

Joshua the high priest.

Question 8

Why was Joshua's crowning unusual?

Answer

Because Joshua was a priest, not a king. The act was symbolic and pointed toward the coming Messiah.

Question 9

Who is the Branch?

Answer

The Branch is the promised Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Question 10

What will the Branch do?

Answer

He will build the temple of the Lord, receive glory, sit on the throne, rule, and serve as priest.

Question 11

What does it mean that He will be a priest on His throne?

Answer

It means the Messiah will perfectly unite kingship and priesthood in one Person.

Question 12

How is this fulfilled in Jesus?

Answer

Jesus is both the King from David's line and the great High Priest who intercedes for His people.

Question 13

Why was the crown kept in the temple?

Answer

It served as a memorial of God's promise concerning the coming Branch.

Question 14

Who are those who are far away?

Answer

Historically, they include scattered people returning to participate in God's work. Prophetically, the language also anticipates God drawing people from the nations.

Question 15

What is the central message of Zechariah 6?

Answer

God governs history, judges the nations, and promises the coming Messiah who will perfectly rule as both King and Priest.

XIII. FINAL THOUGHT

Zechariah Chapter 6 begins with chariots moving across the earth and ends with the promise of people coming from far away.

At the center stands the Branch.

The chapter tells us:

God rules the nations.

God judges evil.

God directs history.

God keeps His promises.

And God has appointed a King.

But this King is unlike any other king.

He is also Priest.

He wears the crown.

He sits on the throne.

He builds the temple.

He receives glory.

He intercedes for His people.

He unites authority with mercy.

He unites justice with grace.

He unites kingship with priesthood.

That King is Jesus Christ.

When nations shake, He remains King.

When guilt troubles the conscience, He remains Priest.

When God's people need protection, He rules.

When they need intercession, He represents them.

When they need a future, He builds.

And when those far away seem beyond hope, He brings them near.

Key Verse

**“He will sit and rule on His throne. He will also be a priest on His throne.” —
Zechariah 6:13**

Key Phrase

The Branch is Jesus Christ—the perfect King, Priest, and Builder of God’s people.