

We have come to the eighth and final vision. It relates to the first vision for in it we see some of the same horses that we saw in the first vision. In the first vision we saw that the horses represent the Spirit of God going throughout the earth like the Persian scouting teams that checked on parts of the empire. God relates to us in terms we can understand. We shouldn't limit our thinking of the Spirit of God to horses, but should see this as a symbol that Zechariah's audience could relate to. They were the swiftest means of travel at the time, so they represent God speedily having His will done in the earth. In the first vision the horses and riders reported that the enemies of Israel were at rest. This was displeasing to God because these nations had been excessively abusive to Judah. The eighth vision brings resolution to God's displeasure.

In the eighth vision four sets of horses each pulling a chariot are sent out from between two bronze mountains. <sup>1</sup> *Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze.*

Zechariah 6:1 What could the bronze mountains represent? In front of the Holy Place in Solomon's temple were two enormous bronze pillars (1 Kings 7:15<sup>i</sup>). Each was twenty-seven feet tall and had a circumference of eighteen feet. That would take three people with arms fully extended to reach around the circumference. One pillar was called Jakin, which means He establishes. The other was called Boaz, which means in Him is strength. Together they symbolize the stability and strength of God's kingdom.

The new territory of Yehud was too poor for anything so extravagant, but they knew of that past greatness. Bronze is also symbolic of judgment and justice (Numbers 21:9<sup>ii</sup>). The altar of the temple was of bronze. Those mountains probably symbolize the same things the bronze pillars represented. God's kingdom is established in strength exercised as justice. As mountains they were a greater picture of those truths, greater than those man-made pillars. Between the pillars in the temple was the entrance to the presence of God in the temple's most holy room. These chariots are going out from the presence of the Lord to bring His justice in the earth. Sometimes we see a measure justice in our lifetime, but it is often either not visibly evident or delayed until the Day of Judgment (1 Timothy 5:24<sup>iii</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> *The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, <sup>3</sup> the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses—all of them strong. <sup>4</sup> Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" <sup>5</sup> And the angel answered and said to me, "These are going out to the four winds of heaven, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth.* Zechariah 6:2-6 In the first vision there were no black horses or chariots (1:8<sup>iv</sup>). My conjecture was that the red represented war, the white peace, and the dappled a time of tension. Perhaps black would be the scorched earth after judgment had fallen. Stott translates verse five as the four spirits of heaven going out into all the world. These horses with their chariots are going into

all the world to bring God's justice. They have come out of the presence of the Lord to do His bidding as we saw in 2:13. <sup>13</sup> *Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.* Zechariah 2:13 God was about to intervene in the world. These horses with chariots represent God's all-seeing presence and intervention in the earth.

<sup>6</sup> *The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go after them, and the dappled ones go toward the south country.* <sup>7</sup> *When the strong horses came out, they were impatient to go and patrol the earth. And he said, "Go, patrol the earth."* *So they patrolled the earth.* <sup>8</sup> *Then he cried to me, "Behold, those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country."*

Zechariah 6:6-8 By this time Egypt was no longer a menace to Judah. The enemies all came from the north. To the east was desert. To the west was the ocean. While the horses are said to go to all four directions, it is only natural that two would go north, for you had to go north or south to go west or east. These that went to the north brought judgment, the scorched earth and peace that followed. It was the opposite of the rest in the land they found in the first vision (1:11<sup>v</sup>). But this brought rest to God's Spirit. When judgment is delayed, God's Spirit is not at rest until it is accomplished (2 Chronicles 19:7<sup>vi</sup>; Zephaniah 3:5<sup>vii</sup>). There is no mention of the red horses. Either a portion of the text was lost, or it was simply not essential to the message God was conveying to the people of Yehud.

The book of Zechariah ends with the LORD being king over the whole earth (14:9<sup>viii</sup>). He reigns now over all things, but He has given temporary and limited permission for man to try to rule over regions of the earth. In doing so, mankind can see how much we need the LORD to be king. Every political system of man will fail because of man's fallen nature. While God gives that opportunity to man, it does not mean He will withhold justice. His Spirit is not at rest while injustice prevails. We feel the same way to some extent when we see justice perverted. But make no mistake, God will call all things into account. **Because He is just, there will be a day of both reward and reckoning.** The only way to escape the punishment we deserve for our rebellion toward God is to accept Jesus taking that punishment for us on the cross (Romans 8:3-4<sup>ix</sup>).

I was recently skimming through Ezekiel, and what stood out to me was the anguish in God's heart when we rebel against Him. He describes it in several ways: an unfaithful wife who enjoys adulterous relationships (16:15<sup>x</sup>), a vine that, though cared for, was useless (15:2<sup>xi</sup>), briars and thorns and scorpions (2:6<sup>xii</sup>), and filled with bloodshed and injustice (9:9<sup>xiii</sup>). I thought of the parallels with our nation's moral decline. God declared that even if Daniel, Noah, and Job interceded for Judah, they would only save themselves (14:14<sup>xiv</sup>). May God have mercy on us here in the USA. God will be just because it is His nature, and we should be grateful that it is so. When injustice prevails, everyone suffers. One ray of hope is that more conservative judges are being appointed

in our nation who will judge according to law rather than their ideologies. Our judiciary has declared they are going to undo prejudices against religious establishments. But our hope cannot be placed in man's systems. It must be in the Lord to have mercy on us.

The eight visions taken together tell us that God's favor had returned to the Jews. They would rebuild the temple and their obedience would be more influential in the world than the power of nations. God appointed Joshua and Zerubbabel for the work and would lead the people through them. Joshua in his priestly role of building the temple foreshadowed the Messiah, God's servant The Branch. Wickedness was being removed, and the nations would be judged. God subdued the northern nations so they would not interfere with the building of the temple. This remnant of Jews that came out of Babylon was a lamp to light the darkness of the world and be a sign of the coming kingdom of God.

In a similar way, we who are in Christ come out of the world system to be led by the Spirit of God. As Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14<sup>xv</sup> In our reactions, our speech, our priorities, we show the world the difference Jesus makes in our lives. As they built the temple, so we co-labor with Christ to build the eternal temple of living stones. We are also a sign of the coming kingdom of God. As they prepared the way for the first coming, so we prepare the way for the Second Coming.

*<sup>9</sup> And the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>10</sup> "Take from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon, and go the same day to the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah. <sup>11</sup> Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.* Zechariah 6:9-11 The visions are completed. Next God spoke to Zechariah not in the form of a vision but words. Those words commanded him to perform a symbolic act. This was a frequent method that God used to communicate with Israel through His prophets (Hebrews 1:1<sup>xvi</sup>). A drama is much easier to remember than words and often more impactful.

Like the return of Jews to Jerusalem that we read about under Nehemiah, the men named in verse ten came with gifts of gold and silver from the Jews still living in Persia (Nehemiah 7:70<sup>xvii</sup>). Josiah must have been a metal craftsman who was to shape the crown. Once made, it was to be placed on the head of the high priest, Joshua. That is unusual. The civic leader was Zerubbabel. We do not know where he was at the time, perhaps reporting back to the king. Priests are not from the tribe of Judah and have no legitimate right to reign (Genesis 49:10<sup>xviii</sup>). So why is this priest from the tribe of Levi crowned, uniting the priesthood and the king's right to rule? The hands of power in one branch of government can be dangerous, that is, unless that one man is of incorruptible character (Ezekiel 21:26-27<sup>xix</sup>). Remember that these men are signs of things to come as we saw in 3:8<sup>xx</sup>. He is from the line Levi but representative of the One who is called the Branch who would come from the line of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1<sup>xxi</sup>). The crown does not remain on Joshua, as we will see in verse 14. This is fulfilled in Jesus, whose name is

the same as Joshua in Hebrew, and who is our great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. He will reign forever on David's throne as the King of kings (Hebrews 7:15-16<sup>xxii</sup>; Revelation 19:16<sup>xxiii</sup>).

What is pictured here is really the theme of the book. The return to God, the rebuilding of the temple, and Joshua the high priest are all a picture of what was to come. Five hundred years later John the Baptist would call Jews to return to God and prepare for the coming of the Messiah (John 1:23<sup>xxiv</sup>). Yeshua/Jesus who is the Branch of Jesse through David would come and begin to build the eternal temple of living stones (Jeremiah 23:5<sup>xxv</sup>). Though He was from the ruling tribe of Judah, He is also our priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4<sup>xxvi</sup>). He has the crown as the King of kings, but He is also our great high priest. (See Hebrews 7.)

These offices of priest and king were separate because they were to be a check for the other, just as with America's three branches of government were to keep the other branches in check. Too much power in the hands of any one person is likely to corrupt them. But we need not fear corruption in Jesus. He is unchangeably holy, abounding in steadfast love, and forever faithful and true (Revelation 3:14<sup>xxvii</sup>).

*<sup>12</sup> And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. <sup>13</sup> It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'"* Zechariah 6:12-13 In a prophetic drama, Zechariah placed the crown on Yehoshua's head and prophesied verses twelve and thirteen. Skeptics would say, "See Jesus is not the branch. It was this man Joshua. But they are forgetting that Joshua was from the tribe of Levi and that in 3:8 we are told he and those before him are symbolic of things to come. They also neglect the fact that at the end of this chapter the crown is removed. That union of king and priest, peace between both branches, would come when the Branch from the kingly line of Judah comes. He will build the eternal temple of the LORD one living stone at a time.

*<sup>14</sup> And the crown shall be in the temple of the LORD as a reminder to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah.* Zechariah 6:14 The crown placed in the temple was to remind these men, who were probably leaders in the community, of that day that was coming when the Branch would reign. But in the meantime, they were to strive for that unity between the ruler and high priest.

*<sup>15</sup> "And those who are far off shall come and help to build the temple of the LORD. And you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And this shall come to pass, if you will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God."* Zechariah 6:15 People did come from afar to help build the temple then, but even from greater distances today. People come from every part of the globe to serve Jesus and help build the eternal

temple, sharing the gospel, demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit, and pointing people around the world to Jesus. In the process we participate in building that temple of living stones. It did come to pass and is coming to pass in a greater way today. By this we know that Zechariah was sent by God.

The last line can be a disappointment to some. There is a condition attached to these wonderful promises, *"if you will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God."* John Stott describes this dilemma. *We are on the knife-edge, as often in Scripture, of the interface between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and we cannot maneuver ourselves off it by denying either of them. The truth is that the promises of God never come without requiring a response from us, and that nothing is promised to the disobedient and unbelieving but the certainty of being overthrown by God's wrath. But the truth is also that the faith to believe God's promises is itself a gift, not something we have of ourselves, and therefore the fulfillment of his promises rests with God from beginning to end. Human failure does not, in the end, cancel out God's promises; it only disqualifies the disobedient from enjoying them. The bedrock reality that guarantees the future is God's total sovereignty. By his sovereign grace he enables those who are truly his to believe his promises and live by them.* - John Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today -The Message of Zechariah: Your Kingdom Come.*

This does not remove our responsibility to obey and make every effort toward adding to our faith (2 Peter 1:5<sup>xxviii</sup>). We are told to endure hardness as good soldiers (2 Timothy 2:3<sup>xxix</sup>), to be abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58<sup>xxx</sup>), and to rejoice evermore (Philippians 4:4<sup>xxxi</sup>). We are warned not to look back, fall back, or shrink back (Luke<sup>xxxii</sup> 9:62; Hebrews 10:38<sup>xxxiii</sup>), and to study to show ourselves approved of God (2 Timothy 2:15<sup>xxxiv</sup>). If we want to participate as co-laborers with Jesus, we must be obedient to the voice of the LORD. If we want to be like these faithful Jews who had a lasting legacy of rebuilding the temple, we must obey also.

The temple would be built and the Messiah would come whether these men were faithful or not. If they weren't, God would work through someone else. God is building the temple today and His Second Coming is at hand. Will you let His resurrection power work in and through you? Will you be obedient to His Spirit, the voice of the LORD?

#### Questions

- 1 What do the bronze mountains and horses represent?
- 2 What do the horses and chariots do?
- 3 Why does this bring God's Spirit rest?
- 4 Summarize the visions. Relate them to our day.
- 5 Why was the crown on Joshua?
- 6 Why couldn't it stay there?
- 7 Who is the Branch? Why can He wear it?
- 8 Why is the greater fulfillment in our day? 9 Why is fifteen conditional?
- 10 How can we co-labor with God to build the temple of living stones?

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**i 1 Kings 7:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> He cast two pillars of bronze. Eighteen cubits was the height of one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits measured its circumference. It was hollow, and its thickness was four fingers. The second pillar was the same.

**ii Numbers 21:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

**iii 1 Timothy 5:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later.

**iv Zechariah 1:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> "I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.

**v Zechariah 1:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> And they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, 'We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.'

**vi 2 Chronicles 19:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes."

**vii Zephaniah 3:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> The LORD within her is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame.

**viii Zechariah 14:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.

**ix Romans 8:3-4 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

**x Ezekiel 16:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> "But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his.

**xi Ezekiel 15:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> "Son of man, how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest?

**xii Ezekiel 2:5-6 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. <sup>6</sup> And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.

**xiii Ezekiel 9:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. The land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice. For they say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see.'

**xiv Ezekiel 14:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord GOD.

**xv Matthew 5:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

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<sup>xvi</sup> **Hebrews 1:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,

<sup>xvii</sup> **Nehemiah 7:70 (ESV)**

<sup>70</sup> Now some of the heads of fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 darics of gold, 50 basins, 30 priests' garments and 500 minas of silver.

<sup>xviii</sup> **Genesis 49:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

<sup>xix</sup> **Ezekiel 21:26-27 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban and take off the crown. Things shall not remain as they are. Exalt that which is low, and bring low that which is exalted. <sup>27</sup> A ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it. This also shall not be, until he comes, the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him.

<sup>xx</sup> **Zechariah 3:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.

<sup>xxi</sup> **Isaiah 11:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

<sup>xxii</sup> **Hebrews 7:15-16 (ESV)** <sup>15</sup> This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, <sup>16</sup> who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

<sup>xxiii</sup> **Revelation 19:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

<sup>xxiv</sup> **John 1:23 (ESV)**

<sup>23</sup> He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

<sup>xxv</sup> **Jeremiah 23:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

<sup>xxvi</sup> **Psalms 110:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

<sup>xxvii</sup> **Revelation 3:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

<sup>xxviii</sup> **2 Peter 1:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge,

<sup>xxix</sup> **2 Timothy 2:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

<sup>xxx</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV)**

<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

<sup>xxxi</sup> **Philippians 4:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

<sup>xxxii</sup> **Luke 9:62 (ESV)**

<sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

<sup>xxxiii</sup> **Hebrews 10:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."

<sup>xxxiv</sup> **2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.