

The Crown, The King And The Priest

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[0 : 00] If you could now turn with me to Zechariah chapter 6, we've been going through the book of Zechariah over the past few weeks, and we're now on chapter 6 verses 9 to 15.

And the word of the Lord came to me, take from the exiles Heldai to Baidja and Jeddaya, who have arrived from Babylon, and go the same day to the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah.

Take from them silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehoshedek, the high priest, 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.

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 council of peace shall be between them both, and the crown shall be in the temple, and the Lord of the Lord is a reminder to Heldim, to Baidja, Jeddaya, and Henn, the son of Zephaniah, 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'll diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.

Oh man, may God bless this reading of his word. Well, over the past few weeks, we've been looking at the visions in Zechariah, chapter one to six, there's been seven visions, and the visions have set out an amazing picture of what God is doing in the world.

[1 : 29] If you remember, the remnant of the Israelite people have returned from exile by the Persians, and they're pretty poor. It's a far cry from the promises of prosperity that God had promised, of restoration that he had promised before going, leaving, before, about returning from exile.

And it's into that situation, God gave Zechariah these seven visions, that each in turn repeat God's promises, and remind the people that God hasn't forgotten.

He hasn't forgotten, he hasn't deviated from his plan. All of everything that he said beforehand will still come to pass. He will give them rest from their enemies. He will drive out all wickedness and evil from the land.

He will rebuild his temple, he will come and dwell with his people. They will be able to return to him, because God will cleanse them from all their sin. Those were all the different lessons we drew out of the visions over the past few weeks.

And taken together, these visions form a stunning tapestry of God's restoring work. But the question is, how will it happen?

[2 : 37] How can it all happen? Who can make all of these things happen? We might look at our own world and ask the same question. God has promised so much, how can he do it?

Who is going to do it? Will God just click his fingers and all wrong be made right? Will all evil just disappear in a moment and sin be forgiven and Eden restored?

How will God accomplish his plan of restoration? Well, this chapter, chapter six, verses nine to 15, how he's going to accomplish all of this, it gives the answer of how God's going to make it happen.

And the answer is through one man. He's called the branch, you see that in verse 12. And he's the one who's going to sit on a throne. He's the one who's going to be a priest.

He's the temple builder. He's the exile gatherer. Let's meet him. First point, we're going to see the sign, which is a crown. The word of the Lord, verse nine, came to me, Zachariah says, and he says, take from the exiles Heldiah to Baidah and Judiah, who have arrived from Babylon, and go the same day to the house of Josiah, the son, Zeffania.

[3 : 48] Three exiles have returned from Babylon. They've brought a lot of wealth with them. But we see that they're probably, priest Zachariah is on urgent business. And so they don't even have time to unpack their bags before they're brought to the house of Josiah.

And in verse 11, we see why they're told to take silver and gold and to make a crown. There's going to be a coronation. But here's the surprise.

Zachariah is told to put the crown on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehoshedak, the high priest. It was a big deal to be high priest. It was a pretty important role, but the priest wasn't a king.

So what's going on here? Well, that's because this, what's happening here is called a sign action. It's a sign, that is an action. It's an enacted sign that points to something greater.

You might think of an architect's model that points to the actual building that's going to be built or even a wedding rehearsal where that points forward to the actual wedding that's going to take place.

[4 : 54] Well, this is a rehearsal that points to something greater. And we see that, that's the point because the person who's crowned is a priest and not a king.

And the coronation takes place in his mate's living room. This isn't some grand coronation. It's all pointing forward to something more. It's pointing forward to the coming king.

We see that in verse 12. God explains, he says, Say to him, thus says the Lord of hosts, behold, the man whose name is Branch, for he shall branch out from his place and he shall build the temple of the Lord.

It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord and bear royal honor and shall sit and rule on his throne. At the end of the day, this isn't actually about Joshua really at all.

As Jack of Zechariah places the crown on Joshua's head, he tells the witnesses that this is a sign that God is going to send his long-promised king.

[5 : 54] This is a promise. This is a sign that points forward to the promised king. And he calls him the branch. We heard that name in chapter three when Joshua was seen in a vision having his dirty clothes, which is a sign of sin removed.

And being clothed in pure garments. And in chapter three, we're told that this figure, the branch was going to do this cleansing work. Now we meet this branch person again.

We're told about this branch figure again. And the branch is a name that comes from the prophets, Jeremiah, during the exile, Jeremiah spoke of this individual who would restore the fortunes of Israel and Judah, who would cleanse them from their sin.

Now the interesting thing is that when Jeremiah was prophesying, none of that looked possible. Jerusalem was under siege from the Babylonians. People was just a matter of time before the walls were breached, the gates opened, and the Babylonians flooded in and carried everyone to captivity.

But if everyone still seemed to be in denial at that point, but Jeremiah knew that Israel would lose. And he told that said that that would happen, that there would be no king, there would be no priest, no one to lead the people to victory, and no one to offer sacrifice for sin.

[7 : 17] It was probably the darkest point in Israel's history when Jeremiah spoke about this figure, the branch. And he spoke, and let me read his words, in Jeremiah 33, verse 14, he says, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord.

When I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. And those days, and at that time, I will cause a righteous branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

In those days, Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called, the Lord is our righteousness. For as the dust says the Lord, David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel, and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to put us in a side.

It's amazing that God even made this promise because the people of Israel at that time, the Babylonians were knocking on their gates because God had sent them. They had come to judge God's people because they had again and again walked away from God.

God had sent prophets to warn them to turn back to him, but again and again they had rejected God and gone their own way. And we might, I wonder how many times someone would have to hurt you and wrong you before you said enough is enough.

[8 : 38] Would it be, I wonder how many times someone would have to hurt your family, have to reject you, have to lie and deceive you before you said, I want nothing more to do with you.

Well, that's how Israel had acted again and again and again to God. They deserved to be sent off to exile and the story could have ended there, but God hadn't, God didn't say enough is enough.

He hadn't forgotten them. It was even as the people were waiting in the streets for the doors, for the gates to be breached and the Babylonians to flood in, it was even during that time that God gave Jeremiah this prophecy that the king would come, the branch would come from the root of David, that restoration would one day happen.

And that brings us back to Zechariah who picks up on these themes. He says that actually that, he says that figure the branch that Jeremiah was talking about 70 years ago, he's still coming.

It might not look like it. It might look like a guard who keeps his promises. We see that in just in, in Jeremiah's prophecy, he speaks about the need for a king from David's line.

[9 : 54] He speaks about a priest who will forever offer sacrifices and Zechariah draws on both of these things and promises that a king and a priest is going to come who is the branch.

First of all, we see a second point, the king. How is God gonna fix the problem of no king? Well, we see in chapter six, verse 13 in Zechariah, he says that it is the branch who shall build the temple of the Lord, who shall bear royal honor and who shall rule on David's throne.

Now that's really important, not just because Israel didn't have a king, but primarily because all of God's promises were tied up with this king that he had promised.

All of God's covenant promises were tied up with the king. You see, ever since humanity rebelled against God and were exiled from Eden, God has been making promises to his people for thousands of years.

He made special promises called covenants that where God promised, special promises through covenants that often sealed with the blood of a sacrifice, that where God pointed forward in his redemption plan to how he was going to rescue his people and bring them back to him.

[11 : 13] In Genesis 15, he makes a covenant with Abraham, saying that through him all nations will be blessed. And we zoom in again and through, through eight by nine, saying that his great rescue plan is gonna happen through the Israelite nation.

And then as we read in 2 Samuel 7, that God's covenant zooms in once more and God tells David that the rescuer is gonna come from David's line. The rescuer is gonna be a descendant of David, a king.

And he's going to be the one who builds a kingdom that will last forever. He's the one that will build a temple for God. See that zooming in, all nations will be blessed through Israel, through God's promised king in David's line.

Now, initially that looked like Solomon. Solomon started off so well, he was wise, he built a magnificent temple, but then everything went downhill. Solomon took around a thousand wives and concubines, started worshipping idols.

He got greedy. And so king after king, and similarly in David's line, was born and ruled and died. And some were more good than bad, and a lot of them were more bad than good.

[12 : 25] The last king of Judah before Judah went into exile was Zedekiah. And we've got, I realized, lots of names beginning with Zed, great if you're trying to get a high score and scrabble, really bad if you're trying to remember who's who in the Bible.

But king Zedekiah, when he was finally exiled to Babylon and died there, things looked pretty bleak. You can imagine people thinking, well, this is the last king in David's line, and he's gone off and he's died.

Have God's promises failed? How is God's rescue ever going to come on the scene? How are God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to his people, the people had given up on God's promises God hadn't?

God's king was always at the center of his rescue plan. There was no plan B. And so even as they came back from exile, God sent Zedekiah to place a crown on Joshua's head.

There was no king to demonstrate this with, to place a crown on Joshua's head with a promise that the king is coming. The king will return. And after that crowning ceremony, as you notice in verse 14, the crown is placed in the temple, ready to be put on the head of this branch figure when he eventually comes.

[13 : 38] Well, 700 years, several hundred years later, the branch, the Davidic king arrived at the temple. In the triumphal entry, which we read of later in, Zekariah chapter nine, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

It's a story that many of us know as people were lined the streets and with palm branches shouted out, bless be the one who comes in the name of our father, David.

But what people maybe you've forgotten is that after Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, what does he do next? He goes straight to the temple. Now, part of that was because he was the king in David's line, the king who would build the temple.

And as we were thinking about this morning, Jesus builds the temple through his own body. He is the new temple and he builds the temple through his church. But I wonder if there's something more going on there.

I wonder if even as Jesus had Zekariah's prophecies in the back of his mind, as he rode into Jerusalem, he had chapter six in the back of his mind. But what should have happened?

[14 : 42] What I suspect what should have happened is the priest should have come out with that crown that was placed there and put it on Jesus' head. But rather, Jesus was rejected and the priest plotted to kill him.

And instead of having the crown of Zekariah placed on Jesus' head, in just a few days after arriving in Jerusalem, a different crown was placed on his head, the crown of thorns.

And Jesus, the king, was not placed on a throne but hung up on a cross. And above his head, a crude sign was placed. This is the king of the Jews.

I wonder if once more people thought, have God's plans failed? Have God's promise for a king that would come and rescue everyone? Has that failed to come to pass?

But Jesus didn't stay dead. Three days later, he rose from the dead and having ascended into heaven, he now rules at God's right hand. And the Bible tells us that once more, Jesus will return one day to establish his kingdom over all the earth.

[15 : 50] The question is, how will we respond when the king returns? Will we respond like the religious leaders in Jesus' day by rejecting him and saying, and giving him a crown of thorns rather than a crown of gold?

Or will we kneel before Christ? Will we take off our crowns and cast it before Jesus? And kneel before him as the only king of kings, the only Lord of lords?

They're only promised king. The question is, will we kneel before him or will we reject him? God only gives us two options.

If we reject him, we'll be cast out of his kingdom forever. But if we crown him, Jesus promises to give us a home in the eternal kingdom he is building.

Jesus Christ is that branch that Zechariah prophesies and promises, he's the king who sits on David's throne. But he's also the priest who gathers his people in.

[16 : 51] We saw last week that it was the job of the high priest to go as a mediator between God and man, representing the people to God and representing God to the people. And the most important part of the high priest's job was once a year to go into the most holy place in the temple on the day of Atonement, when he would offer the blood of the sacrifice in the most holy place in the Ark of the Tabernacle, a sacrifice to cleanse the people of their sins.

But the problem with high priest is that after this point, they were all sinners. They all had to offer sacrifices for their own sin. Not only that, they all died. The high priest had to keep being replaced.

And so Zechariah's vision in chapter three looked forward to a coming high priest, one who would offer sacrifice, not for his own sin, but for the sins of others, and who would in one day remove his people's sin, making them clean.

Zechariah chapter three spoke of a branch who was a priest. Now we hear a branch who is a king. And so here's some things. One thing that maybe makes this a bit confusing is in verse 13, we're told that there will be, our ESV says, there will be a priest on his throne.

A lot of translators and commentators actually say that could be as easily, and if not better translators, he shall be priest on his throne. All of the he shall, he shall, he shall, six times up to that point, all refers to the branch, the king.

[18 : 22] And so in the same way, that there shall be a priest on his throne speaking about that same figure, the branch, who will not just be king, but also be the priest.

This, this cut, this promised figure is both king and priest who sits on God's throne. And that might sound strange to us because they're separate roles in most of Israel's history, but that wasn't always the case.

Adam was the first priest king. He ruled as God's representative. He was told to have dominion over the earth, and he was also called to guard and keep the garden, language that was only used together for the Levitical priests.

Later on in Exodus 19, God called his people to be a kingdom of priests, representing his rule to the world, and pointing people to the only means of forgiveness through the temple.

We also sung in Psalm 110 of this figure Melchizedek, who Abraham meets, who is described as a priest and a king. And the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is a priest king after the order of Melchizedek.

[19 : 30] He rules as God's king, but he also offers sacrifice. And we see those things come together in the cross because it's at the cross, on the cross, where Jesus is crowned with a crown of thorns.

There he offers his body as a sacrifice for sin. There Jesus is both shown to be king and priest. And so that we who have by nature rejected Jesus as king, it's there we can have our sins forgiven.

Jesus, the branch is at the center of God's purposes in this world, everything revolves around him. Zechariah's readers were called to look forward to the coming of this figure, the branch, and to return to God, and to work at building the temple, and serving God.

And we know that King is Jesus. We look back to Jesus' work on the cross. We look forward to his return. And in the meantime, we're also called to trust in him and to serve him.

There would be times I imagine though when Zechariah's readers would begin to get doubt, would this king ever come? Maybe it felt like God's perfect, well, maybe they looked around and thought, well, nothing really looks like it's changed.

[20 : 47] Maybe God's forgotten his promises. Well, as a constant reminder that God would keep his promises, God instructs those men to put that crown in the temple.

We're told there is a reminder to them, or a reminder of what, well, a reminder that God will keep his promises. If those priests started to doubt, if they started to think, you know, is anything actually gonna come of this?

Will the king ever return? Or behold the man whose name is branch, he shall sit and rule on his throne? I think sometimes we need reminders like that, don't we?

The Christian life can feel discouraging. The Christian life can be hard. Maybe we just feel beaten down by suffering, and we wonder, is God really in control?

Maybe we wonder, is the king really coming back? Nothing's changed in 2,000 years. Will Jesus ever return? Maybe we look at our sin, and we wonder, can we really be forgiven?

[21 : 44] Maybe we are struggling with doubts, we're weary with life, and we're lacking joy. And we think, where is God's king? Is this all true?

Is this all worth it? Well, Zachariah's friends could go to that crown, and remember, the king is returning. And we have more than just a crown and a temple to encourage us and remind us of God's promises.

God gives us his word, and by his spirit, he speaks to us through his word, assuring us that Jesus will one day return. He will one day make all things new.

He saves us into a church family, so that we have that reminder from one another to keep going, to keep following Jesus. And he gives us the sacraments, baptism, and the Lord's supper.

In some ways, they're like that crown in the temple. They're a symbol, they're also a means of grace that point us to wonderful realities that Jesus has washed us clean from sin if we're trusting in him through his death on the cross, that his body was broken for us, his blood was shed for us, and that when Christ's returnation, where God will dwell with us, and we will feast with him for all eternity.

[22 : 57] They took the crown, they were reminded of the Korean king. We can look back at the cross, we can look forward to Christ's return, and we can remember that the king has come, and the king will return.

He has come to sacrifice himself for our sins, and he will return one day to gather us to himself, to make all things new. Let's continue to serve and trust him as we wait.

Hazel's