



### **A crown for Joshua**

The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>10</sup>Take silver and gold from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon. Go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. <sup>11</sup>Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jozadak.

<sup>12</sup>Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. <sup>13</sup>It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two." <sup>14</sup>The crown will be given to Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Hen son of Zephaniah as a memorial in the temple of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>Those who are far away will come and help to build the temple of the Lord, and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the Lord your God.'

(Zech.6:9-15 NIV)

### **The Crown**

The image of the crown begins with the command to take silver and gold from those who have brought it out of Babylon. This reminds me of two other events, one past and one future:

- In the past, when God's people came out of the land of Egypt, so mighty was God's hand against the god's the Egyptians worshipped and against the Pharaoh who had set his mind against the God of Jacob, that the Israelites collected precious gifts; 'plundering by consent', from the Egyptian people.
- In the future wise men (Magi) would come from the land of what was once Babylonia, then Persia to present gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh to the one born King of the Jews. A symbolic returning of what already belonged to him and was stolen in the ransacking of Solomon's temple.

Here, Zechariah is told to collect what the people have brought out of Babylon; gifts from their own savings and a collection taken among the heads of the households of the exiles.<sup>i</sup> While we are not explicitly told through Zechariah that others gave toward the temple rebuilding project I am mindful that the Lord spoke through Haggai (a colleague of Zechariah) saying he would shake the nations and that the silver and gold are his (see Haggai 1:7-8) and that Ezra tells us Darius decreed the expenses of the elders was to come from his royal treasury (see Ezra 6:8).

For me it represents,



- that everything belongs to the Lord and his people are required to bring their tithes and offerings to him; a mere sample from what the Lord has given them.
- that other nations would contribute as they too are joined with the Lord and become his people (See Zech.2:11)
- an image of the Lord building a precious and beautiful kingdom that is carefully crafted, reminding us of the four craftsmen in the first vision.

It is a man named Josiah, a craftsman who is tasked with making the crown from the silver and gold. That also reminds me of the craftsman of Moses time, Bezalel and Oholiab tasked with making the tabernacle for the Egyptian plunder.

What did we learn last time? That it is not by earthly might or power but by His spirit that the Lord builds and so we should not dare despise the day of small things (see Zech.4:6&10).

Here I think that is confirmed again, reminding us that the Lord uses his people in the building of his Kingdom. Some have particular skills in leading the people, others in kingdom trades and it is important for us to know that the trades are not restricted to metal work, carpentry, pottery or any specific modern trade. Neither is it restricted to skills of the hand. Paul later examples apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. (see Eph.4:110-12)

Whatever skill we have, are practicing and/or learning should be dedicated back to the Lord as an offering and used for the building of God's Kingdom.

### **The Branch**

We now move on to the master builder.

“Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.” (v12-13 NIV)

Who is this 'branch' that will build the temple?

For Zechariah and the people there is again a present and future meaning:

The present task of rebuilding a temple in Jerusalem is not forgotten. Various people were assigned roles and Zechariah is told to inform Zerubbabel, governor of Judah that he will both lay the foundation stone and complete the building. However, there is more to come who represent a future temple...



The one called the branch would be both a priest and a king, uniting the two offices. Now, Joshua was already anointed as high priest (See Zech.3), and he would wear the crown symbolically but briefly. Priests do not wear crowns and others are named to look after it as a symbol for what is to come.

**So, what (or rather, who) is to come?**

Would Zechariah have recalled the prophetic words of Isaiah?

“A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD (Isa.11:1-3 NIV)

If not that one, I wonder if Zechariah recalled Jeremiah's more recent prophecy, made some 70-80 years earlier,

‘The days are coming,’ declares the Lord, ‘when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.’ (Jer.23:5 NIV)

In both those earlier prophecies there is a clear reference that this branch will be a king of the line of David, the highly regarded King who united the clans of Israel, set up Jerusalem as the capital, prepared the plans for the temple that his son Solomon then built.

In Zechariah's vision:

- the branch is more than a wise and understanding king, one in whom is the rightful knowledge and mastery over good and evil; unlike Adam and Eve who attempted to steal it for their own desires.
- this person called the branch will build the temple to come, rule on the throne and be the high priest. He will be both King and Priest, bringing harmony as those two roles become one.

These observations, of both the craftsmen building the kingdom and declaration of the high priest and king remind me of the craftsman who entered Jerusalem on a donkey and famously declared,

‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ (John 2:19 NIV)

It further reminds me of the bold claim made in the letter to the Hebrews,

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. (Heb.4:14NIV)



## The Promise

“Those who are far away will come and help to build the temple of the Lord, and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the Lord your God.” (v15 NIV)

The confidence that Zechariah is given must have been so welcome.

- Again, he is told that ‘those who are far away will come and help build’.
- And again, there is both a present and a future meaning for Zechariah for the Lord is beginning a new thing in his time and it will be held as a memorial for the time to come. (see v14)

However, there appears a sudden sting in the tail, a condition upon which this will happen, **‘This will happen if you diligently obey the Lord your God’** (v15)

I was so enthusiastic with you all just now; sharing my thoughts of how the vision comes to fruition in Jesus. It clearly does happen, so why the condition?

Thankfully I had Barry Webb’s commentary to turn to for additional advice. He says, ‘we are on a knife-edge [...] between divine sovereignty and human responsibility’ and he talks to two truths, one that God’s promises do not come without requiring our response and the other that the fulfilment of God’s promises rests with God from beginning to end. Using Ephesians 2:8, Webb confirms that ‘the faith to believe God’s promises is itself a gift.’<sup>ii</sup>

I like Webb’s summary of these points too,

‘Human failure does not, in the end, cancel out God’s promises; it only disqualifies the disobedient from enjoying them’.<sup>iii</sup>

The Lord’s promise will come to fruition. For us it has already begun because the one for whom the crown was fashioned was born king has come, declaring the Kingdom of God has come near (See Matt.4:17) and saying that those who hear and obey the word of God are blessed (see Luke 11:28).

## Response

Let us respond in repentance and faith, whether for the first time or to flee an identity of being an ordinary, insignificant person.

Take up the promise and join the as-yet unfinished story of the Lord building his Kingdom, using his people to assist in his royal task.

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<sup>i</sup> See Ezra 2:68-69

<sup>ii</sup> Barry Webb, *The Message of Zechariah, The Bible Speaks Today* (Nottingham: IVP, 2003), p.110.

<sup>iii</sup> Webb, p.110.