

**“O Holy Night”**  
**Zechariah’s ‘Christmas’ Night Visions**  
**Part Two**  
**Zechariah 6:9-15**  
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**Advent 2008**

Israel had returned to the land from exile in the Babylonian captivity. Yet they still cried out to the LORD:

*“O come, o come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel...”*

The Prophet Haggai (a contemporary of Zechariah) had been prophetically sent by God to tell the people to rebuild the temple and prepare for the coming of the LORD. The people obeyed but they wept when they saw the second temple and how inglorious it was compared to the first one built by King Solomon (this was the temple that had been razed to the ground some 70 years ago by the Babylonians).

At the present time all was bleak and looked hopeless. Israel had expected that upon immediate release from exile and return to the land that there would be a glorious and triumphant time for Israel, like during the time of David’s reign as king (Isaiah 40-55; Jer. 30-31; Ezek. 34:23-31). As Isaiah the prophet has promised that there would be comfort, comfort for Israel (Isaiah 40), but they had yet to experience this comfort and peace with God dwelling in the midst of the people.

This expected glorious time had not come. The questions that were asked were: When would God fulfill his promises to Abraham and “his seed”? When would the New Covenant be inaugurated? Was there still a remnant of believers who were considered God’s people even though national Israel had been declared “Lo Ammi” or “Not my people” by God (Hos. 11:1ff).

Into this bleak and dark situation of return from exile and foreign oppression the light of God’s revelation shone through a prophet named Zechariah. Although the second temple would not be as glorious as the first one, God would still build His Holy Temple where His people could access Him and worship Him in spirit and truth. God would dwell with his people!

By His grace, God would eventually build His Holy Temple and it would be glorious and eternal- -this is the message of Zechariah. We learn more of God’s plan in our passage today as we are revealed a symbolic coronation ceremony that comes as a conclusion to Zechariah’s night visions. This is a symbolic ceremony of the coronation of a king that typifies or prefigures the Branch who will rule and reign over God’s Kingdom and cause God to dwell in the midst of His people permanently and eternally.

What this passage would have taught the Israelites who had come back by faith from exile to Jerusalem was that they were part of a typological project of temple building that would have eschatological fulfillment; they were part of something bigger, something much greater than themselves in that what they were building on earth with hands was a replica of the throne room temple of God in heaven.

God desires His people corporately to work together by His grace to achieve his great salvation ends. As God's people, we are often so self-focused in our pursuit of life and even godliness, that we must be reminded that God's work is going to be accomplished corporately as God's people, as His church. Zechariah's prophecy is a reminder to us that God's temple-building project in any time of redemptive-history is achieved together as we serve God and each other in response to His grace.

Just as the Israelites under Moses were to build the tabernacle according to the specific blueprint laid out by God himself, so these returned exiles were also to build God's temple together as His people (Exodus 25:40; 26:30). As the Israelites under Moses worshipped and served in a type of the reality of heaven, so the formerly exiled Israelites were to continue to worship and serve in a type of the reality in heaven made by human hands. In God's economy, typology is very important to the people's faith as signs and accommodations to his people of the reality of God's rule and reign in heaven.

In Zechariah's prophecy the formerly exiled people of God (the remnant) are revealed a Messianic figure, a mere shadow at this point in redemptive-history, but their building project would help pave the way to his eventual coming into the temple permanently to reign and reside. Psalm 24 would one day be fulfilled- - a man with a pure heart and clean hands would come into the New Temple to serve in the New Jerusalem (Psalm 24:3-5, 10):

***Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup> He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. <sup>5</sup> He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation....<sup>10</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah***

As part of a greater building project of God in Zechariah's vision in chapter 6:9ff, the exiles Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah, who had come back from Babylonian exile, were to give silver and gold in order to fashion a crown for Joshua (in the Hebrew "crown" here is in the plural, but this is not to indicate that there were many crowns, but that it was a single splendid crown, consisting of several gold and silver twists wound together as in Revelation 19:12):

***<sup>ESV</sup> Revelation 19:12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.***

Zechariah's prophecy in chapter 6 is what is known in the Hebrew Old Testament as a sign-oracle. Sign-oracles were visual prophecies to communicate a truth such as when Isaiah walked around Jerusalem naked and barefoot as a visible sign forbidding and warning Israel against trusting in Egypt's help (Is. 20:2-4); as Jeremiah wore a yoke

around his neck to portray the kind of submission that Judah should have to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:2-7); and so Zechariah is given a sign-oracle or symbolic oracle to communicate God's truth to the people.

Who does the LORD tell us specifically about who is to come?

The LORD says in verse 12a: "Look!" or "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"*** (v. 12, ESV).

Zechariah speaks on behalf of YHWH and does not say that Joshua the High Priest *is the Branch*, but that what Joshua represents symbolically here in his office does indeed reveal the Branch. In the Hebrew, the passage says literally: ***"Behold, a man..."*** [vyaiú-hNEhi]; if the passage said: "Behold the man" we might think that it meant Joshua, but it is better translated "Behold a man" to take the attention prophetically away from the symbolic to the reality (NAS translation renders it this way; see also Hebrew scholar McComiskey's exegesis, Vol. III, pg. 1113).

McComiskey makes the note about "Behold, a man..." as the correct translation when he wrote: "In relative clauses comprised of suffixed ~ve (name) and a relative substantive unmarked by the article ("a man whose name is"), the substantive refers to a person or object in the writer's mind not yet—but soon to be—introduced into the events of the narration...Zechariah's reference here to "a man" leads us to expect him to be one who stands apart from the activity narrated in the text" (Vol. III, pg. 1113-14).

For Example, we see that in 1 Samuel 9:1: There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth.

The translation would be something like this for verse 12: ***"Behold, a man, Branch is his name..."***

**The Branch/Tsemach** ("Sprout") (6:12-13; cf. 3:8): This language of the Branch (Hebrew: xm;c,Ū) is Messianic language used in redemptive-history by other prophets:

***Isaiah 4:2*** <sup>2</sup> *In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.*

***Isaiah 11:1*** <sup>ESV</sup> *Isaiah 11:1 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*

***Jeremiah 23:5-6*** <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>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'*

The term “The Branch” was a Messianic figure that would reign as king as a greater son of David. The Branch did not belong to the Levitical line of priests who were the only ones that God would allow to serve as priests in the Old Covenant. Joshua the High Priest, did indeed belong to the priestly-Levitical family (his father was Jehozadak, a descendent of Levi, 1 Chronicles 6:1, 14).

McComiskey wrote in his commentary: “As a plant sprouts from the field, so the Branch will emerge on the scene of world history” (*Minor Prophets*, Vol. III, pg. 1113).

On a first reading of this larger passage (6:9-14), it would be easy to take Zerubbabel the ruler-governor of God’s people at that time and Joshua the High Priest as being two figures who will do or accomplish different tasks (Zechariah chapter 4 had specifically addressed Zerubbabel and his office as Davidic ruler). In fact, in chapter 4, we are taught that Zerubbabel was the king in charge of building the temple of the God in the time period in which this prophecy was proclaimed and so perhaps he is the Branch? We could read this easily as if Zechariah were speaking to both King Zerubbabel and Priest Joshua in verse 13:

*“And he (Zerubbabel) shall build the temple”*

*“And he (Joshua) shall put on the splendor-glory or “bear royal honor”*

*“And he (Zerubbabel) shall sit and rule upon his throne”*

*“And he (Joshua) shall be priest upon his throne”*

*“And a counsel of peace shall be between them (Zerubbabel and Joshua)”*

But this is not the way this should be interpreted and read!

As we learned in our last sermon that Joshua the High Priest was clothed not only with priestly garments to represent the people before YHWH, he was also clothed in glory-righteousness that only God can give to him (Zechariah 3).

In our sermon from Zechariah today, we learn that Joshua the High Priest will also symbolically become a king and this right and reign as king *only God could grant to him*; he will be crowned by God’s grace to rule over God’s Temple-House. His name shall be “The Branch” because he will indeed build the temple of the LORD (6:12).

Not only will the temple of the LORD be built, but the builder will be a High Priest to represent the people before God, *and* he will be a king to rule over the people; these two offices will be merged together into one person (6:13). As we saw in our last Christmas sermon on Zechariah 3, two offices are revealed in one person symbolically to teach the people of God that the plan of God will be accomplished according to His specific will.

Because of this glorious temple that will be built, people who are far off from the covenant, those who are not part of Israel at that time, will be brought near to build the temple of YHWH (6:15).

We should remember here that a king in ancient Israel ruled over the people on behalf of God; they were called by God and ordained to rule according to God's Word and to reveal God's reign, rule and instruction to the people. Normally, a king could not take upon himself the role of priest. We remember what happened to King Uzziah when he usurped the priestly role apart from God's call:

*ESV 2 Chronicles 26:16-20: But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. <sup>17</sup> But Azariah the priest went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor, <sup>18</sup> and they withstood King Uzziah and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God." <sup>19</sup> Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense, and when he became angry with the priests, leprosy<sup>1</sup> broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense. <sup>20</sup> And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead! And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the LORD had struck him.*

A priest in ancient Israel was not a ruler over the people (but as we learned from the Zechariah 3 study) one who represented the people before God specifically in worship. The priest in ancient Israel would wear typological glory-clothes and go through ceremonial cleansings so that they could bring a sin offering of a substitutionary animal before God's holy throne.

We see in our passage that the unique crowned high priest before us in Zechariah's prophecy is symbolic of what was yet to come because at the present time in redemptive-history this practice would have confused the traditional order in ancient Israel.

We should remember at this point however that in the tabernacle and temple, the places of God's worship in redemptive history, located in the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies, there was the Ark of the Covenant or the Mercy Seat, that represented ***both the worship of God and the rule of God***. God had given a hint as to the possibility of a king and priest being one person doing the duties of two offices.

The Ark or the Mercy Seat was the place where the sins of believing Israel were propitiated, and this was also called God's footstool showing that this was the very replica of the throne of God that was a reality in heaven.

*1 Chronicles 28:2 <sup>2</sup> Then King David rose to his feet and said: "Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparations for building.*

*Psalm 99:5 <sup>5</sup> Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!*

*Psalm 132:7 <sup>7</sup> "Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!"*

Now it should be understood that it was Zerubbabel who was governor or ruler at the time (Ezra 5:2; Haggai 1-2; Zechariah 4), and the one who should be the one according to David's line to receive the crown; why a high priest like Joshua then? Why, indeed!

What is further revealed by the Prophet Zechariah is that "The Branch" of the Davidic line will be a temple builder (v. 12). Zerubbabel was the primary leader in restoring the temple as Davidic ruler-governor in Zechariah's time who was to depend not upon might nor by power, but build the temple by the Spirit of the LORD (see Zech. 4:6-10).

However, God addresses Joshua the High Priest in Zechariah's vision, and so we are taught here that one like Joshua the High Priest will be the Branch and would be the builder of God's Holy Temple.

***ESV Zechariah 6:13 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. "***

Although Zerubbabel would rule over the people after the exile to build the temple, this passage clearly teaches us that the great temple of the LORD that was anticipated would still be a future event- -the full consolation-comfort to Israel had yet to come (cf. Isaiah 40:1 ff).

It is important to note that the language in Zechariah 6:13a is very similar language to God's covenant made with David concerning the building of God's Temple House:

***ESV 2 Samuel 7:5-16: "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in?'<sup>6</sup> I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling.<sup>7</sup> In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges<sup>1</sup> of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"<sup>8</sup> Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel.<sup>9</sup> And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.<sup>10</sup> And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly,<sup>11</sup> from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.<sup>12</sup> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.<sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.<sup>14</sup> I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,<sup>15</sup> but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.<sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.<sup>1</sup> Your throne shall be established forever.'"***

These covenant promises were initially and partially fulfilled in David's son Solomon; Solomon ruled as Davidic King and built God's Temple-House before the split of the northern and southern kingdoms and before exile came upon the people because of their sins against God. However, Zechariah's prophecy reveals to us that this covenant promise is not made to Solomon but a Messianic figure known as "The Branch" and that this rule over God's House would be eternal (2 Sam. 7:13).

First of all at this time in redemptive-history both David and Solomon had died and been buried and the temple that Solomon had built had been destroyed as we have noted earlier. Although Solomon partially fulfilled the promise of God to David about His Son, the later Prophecy of Zechariah does not point us back to Solomon, but forward to one called "the Branch" who has not yet come.

One like Joshua would be a Davidic King to build God's Temple House, and upon the throne would also be a priest (6:13: ***"And there shall be a priest on his throne..."***).

Jeremiah the Prophet had foretold before the exile of the people that one day there would be an eternal king and eternal priest:

*ESV Jeremiah 33:14-18: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup> In 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. <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.' <sup>17</sup> "For thus says the LORD: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, <sup>18</sup> and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever."*

Jeremiah had promised the believing people of God that one day in the future David's son would sit on the throne of the house of Israel permanently, and that there would also be a permanent priesthood to make sacrifices forever.

***Jeremiah prophesied from God to the people that there would one day be a perfect and harmonious relationship between priest and king, one who represents the people of God before God in worship and service, and one who rules over and shepherds them.***

At this time in redemptive history this had not come to pass as many thought it would after being brought back from exile-captivity. However, Zechariah tells us that this promise of God will still be fulfilled- -but it is still future- - *and will be fulfilled by one person.*

Although at first glance in verse 13, it seems like there are two people spoken of, a king and a priest (or Zerubbabel and Joshua) when it says: ***"And the counsel of peace shall be between them both."*** When one steps back and ponders this (especially in light of the New Testament), it should be realized that the "both" is not referring to two people, but two offices granted to one person (a "counsel of peace" between two offices that become one office eventually). These two offices merge together in one person.

And this is what makes Matthew's Gospel-Genealogy so exciting for those who were long-anticipating the Branch, or the Priest-King who was to come and build God's Holy Temple and sit eternally on David's throne.

*ESV Matthew 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. <sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, <sup>3</sup> and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, <sup>14</sup> and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, <sup>5</sup> and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup> and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, <sup>7</sup> and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, <sup>18</sup> and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, <sup>9</sup> and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup> and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, <sup>1</sup> and Amos the father of Josiah, <sup>11</sup> and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. <sup>12</sup> And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, <sup>1</sup> and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, <sup>13</sup> and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, <sup>14</sup> and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, <sup>15</sup> and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, <sup>16</sup> and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. <sup>17</sup> So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.*

Jesus Christ was born as Joseph and Mary's son who was from Zerubbabel's line from the tribe of Judah and he was son of David (v. 12). But how could he also be a priest? Zechariah clearly revealed that the Branch would be a priest and a king- -we have Jesus from the line of David, but how can he be a priest too?

There were other prophecies in the Old Covenant epoch that had yet fully to make sense to the people of God. Psalm 110 had taught the people of God that the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, or David's son would also be both a king and a priest. A Priest-King who was from David's line should have been anticipated:

*ESV Psalm 110:1 A PSALM OF DAVID. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." <sup>2</sup> The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! <sup>3</sup> Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, <sup>1</sup> in holy garments; <sup>2</sup> from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. <sup>3 4</sup> The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." <sup>5</sup> The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. <sup>6</sup> He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs <sup>1</sup> over the wide earth. <sup>7</sup> He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.*



In Jesus' ascension-glorification, He became the priest like Joshua who served in a temple not made with hands; he became the king who ruled in God's heavenly temple at God's right hand.

In fact, as Jesus was ending his Divine Messianic Mission on earth, he described his resurrection-ascension back to the Father as a clothing of glory in His High Priestly prayer from John 17:

*ESV John 17:4-5: I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

Jesus Christ would be clothed in God's glory, crowned with the throne of a king, enthroned at God's right hand and serve as priest in the Heavenly Temple. As Hebrews 1:1-3 teaches us:

*ESV Hebrews 1:1-3: Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...*

Jesus Christ is described as the one who makes purification for our sins as the High Priest of all who believe, and also the One who sat down on David's throne at God's right hand as ruling and reigning King!

### **A Divine Offering**

Let us notice the offering that is made in Zechariah's vision from the returned exiles. As God commanded Moses to requisition precious materials for the building of the tabernacle (Exodus 25:2-9; 35-36), so the people of God who had come back from the exile were to offer precious silver and gold to make a crown for Joshua's head that shall be kept in the temple as a typological pointer to the future of God's fulfillment (Zech. 6:11, 14).

Again, at this time in Zechariah's vision, this reminds us that Joshua is serving in a symbolic way in this passage; if he were the eternal Priest-King that is spoken of here as the Branch, then he would have kept the crown as the Priest-King.

But rather than Joshua keeping the crown, it is kept as a "reminder-memorial" (v. 14) that the priest-king had yet to come. In fact, the crown was to be kept until the coming of the Priest-King or "the Branch" would come and the crown would be rightfully placed on His head in a heavenly coronation.

In verse 14, the LORD is teaching through this symbolic imagery that the crown shall be in the temple of the LORD, indicating again that the place where the king will rule and reign will be from God's Holy temple.

We should remember again from the Old Testament teaching that the temple is a sacred place of worship that also houses God's throne.

***Ezekiel 43:7: "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever..."***

This is precisely the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Branch, our Priest-King in heaven. Jesus serves as Priest-King from the Temple-Throne Room of God in Heaven and all authority to rule and reign over heaven and earth has been granted to him (Matt. 28:18ff). The Author of Hebrews stated this clearly:

***ESV Hebrews 8:1-2: Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,<sup>2</sup> a minister in the holy places, in the true tent [tabernacle] that the Lord set up, not man.***

***ESV Hebrews 10:11-13: And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.<sup>12</sup> But when Christ<sup>1</sup> had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,<sup>13</sup> waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.***

Joshua was typological of the coming Messianic Branch, so in Zechariah's time, the people were requisitioned by God to offer precious metals for his crown. It is important to note that in obedience to God's word, these former exiled people were actually bringing gifts to the Messianic King through Joshua who is the type at this point in Redemptive-History.

Gifts were being brought to the priest-king who would come. As Levi offered tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham (Gen. 14; Heb. 7:9), so the believing True Israel of God were bringing precious gift offerings to Jesus.

Just as Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah offered precious gifts to crown the king, so they would symbolize and commemorate for all generations the fulfillment of their offering, and the ultimate crowning of God's Messiah-Anointed One this event pointed forward to. They also serve as three witnesses of the symbolic act (cf. Zech. 3:8- "...you and your friends who sit before you..."), showing to all the believing remnant that the king who could rightly wear the crown had not yet come. And so they were to continue to cry:

***"O Come, O Come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel..."***

This act of faith by the returned exiles was a foretaste or typological crowning of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords who would come in the fullness of the times. This act of faith by the people was similar to the Magi who brought the new born King Jesus treasures and gifts to Bethlehem as king as Matthew's Gospel teaches us:

***ESV Matthew 2:1-11: Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men<sup>1</sup> from the east came to Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose<sup>1</sup> and have come to worship him."<sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;<sup>4</sup> and***

*assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judah, for so it is written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> "' And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" <sup>7</sup> Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." <sup>9</sup> After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. <sup>11</sup> And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.*

At the birth of Christ in Bethlehem there was a partial realization of those who are far off coming to seek the king and to help to build the temple of the LORD as Zechariah 6:15 teaches. When Jesus was born, the Magi from the east came to help and to build the temple of God in Jesus Christ by their right recognition of his kingship even at his birth in Bethlehem.

God had dwelled with man in a tabernacle; God had dwelled with man in a temple; but not until the birth of Jesus Christ, had God ever permanently tabernacled or "templed" himself among his people in human flesh. Now God would take upon himself human flesh and this would be how God would ultimately dwell by His Spirit with man. God's Permanent, Eternal and Eschatological Temple would be a building made of people filled by His Spirit!

Jesus in his ascension-enthronement-exaltation-glorification reveals himself as king who has all authority in heaven and earth and sends his disciples out to make disciples of all of the nations through the preaching of the gospel and repentance (Matt. 28:18-20). As Zechariah 2:15 and 6:15 taught, Gentiles from far off will come and help to build the temple of God.

*<sup>ESV</sup> Zechariah 2:11 And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.*

Haggai the Prophet, a contemporary of Zechariah also saw the day when Gentiles who were far off from God's covenant would be included in the glorious temple-building project of the LORD; he also notes how much more glorious the future eschatological temple would be in comparison with any that have come before:

*<sup>ESV</sup> Haggai 2:6-9: For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. <sup>7</sup> And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. <sup>9</sup> The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts."*

This is precisely what the Apostle Paul understands to be fulfilled in those who are united to Jesus Christ by faith:

*ESV Ephesians 2:18-22: For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, <sup>1</sup> but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by <sup>1</sup> the Spirit.*

We are part of God's Temple dwelling place by His Spirit—all of those who believe upon the LORD Jesus Christ whether Jew or Gentile—the Church is the Temple of the LORD united to Jesus Christ, God's Holy Temple! As Psalm 2 declared many years before Zechariah and the fulfillment of these passage in the New Testament:

*Psalm 2:6-8: "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." <sup>7</sup> I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. <sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.*

*ESV 1 Peter 2:4-5: As you [both Jews and the Gentile nations] come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

But what should not be overlooked is that there is a covenant of works principle that is spoken to the people; this principle is conditional and therefore this promise of God revealed in Zechariah 6:15 cannot come to pass without obedience.

***"And this shall come to pass, if you will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God" (6:15c).***

How could this be possible? Only through Jesus Christ the representative head of His Church and people. Jesus Christ, the Priest-King would have to obey diligently to the voice of the LORD God on behalf of His own in order for this prophecy to come to pass.

And thus the reason why Jesus is "Immanuel" or "God with us" (Isaiah 7:14). Christ had to be made like is brethren in every way so that he could come and perfectly perform God's will on behalf of his own. Jesus Christ would have to be perfectly obedient in our flesh and do the will of the LORD which is precisely what he covenantally vowed before God in the passage recorded in Hebrews 10:

*ESV Hebrews 10:5-10: Consequently, when Christ<sup>1</sup> came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; <sup>6</sup> in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. <sup>7</sup> Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'" <sup>8</sup> When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), <sup>9</sup> then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your*

*will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second.<sup>10</sup> And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

*Hebrews 5:7-10: In the days of his flesh, Jesus<sup>1</sup> offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.<sup>8</sup> Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.<sup>9</sup> And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,<sup>10</sup> being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.*

In the full revelation of God's glorious temple in the New Jerusalem there is no separate temple because dwells with his people all through the world not separated by sin, but we see a Lamb, the Messianic "Branch" seated on the throne- -who is also ruler of God's Temple people:

*ESV Revelation 21:22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.*

*ESV Revelation 7:17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

*ESV Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.<sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place<sup>1</sup> of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,<sup>2</sup> and God himself will be with them as their God.*

What is vitally important to understand here is that Jesus Christ is the Temple of God, and His people united to Him are already NOW part of the New Heavens and the New Earth where God will dwell by His Spirit. God dwells in His people now and the Book of Revelation shows us the full revelation of God's glorious Temple that Jesus rules and reigns over as One Person who holds both offices of Priest and King (and even the office of prophet that Zechariah held).

In the New Creation and Jerusalem we see in the Book of Revelation the consummation and fulfillment of God's tabernacle and temple. The divine presence that was formerly limited to Israel's temple, in Jesus Christ and through His Gospel this temple began to expand through the church and this Temple of Jews and Gentiles will fill the whole earth and heaven.

And Zechariah's "Christmas" prophecy will be ultimately fulfilled as we read in the Book of Revelation:

*ESV Revelation 21:22-25: And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.<sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.<sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,<sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day- and there will be no night there.*

As Professor G. K. Beale writes: “Then the eschatological goal of the temple of the Garden of Eden dominating the entire creation will be finally fulfilled (commenting on Revelation 21-22). Hence, eschatology not only recapitulates the protology of Eden but escalates it (Quoted in *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical-Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (IVP, 2004).

This Christmas let us be reminded that the birth of Jesus is extremely important and this is where God became a real flesh and blood man. But let us never forget that this baby born in Bethlehem was called and ordained by God to live obediently and perfectly on our behalf; he was called and ordained by God to die in our place, to be raised for our justification; he was called and ordained to complete his Divine Messianic Mission in order that he would be enthroned and glorified as Our Priest-King in heaven.

We have so much to be thankful for! Heaven has a man, the LORD Jesus Christ, who serves before God, pleading his blood for our sins, and rules and reigns with all authority in heaven and on earth *for us*.

We are God’s temple. We have been justified in Christ, made holy and pure so that we can be the place where God dwells by His Spirit in our hearts.

What grace and love the Father has shown to His people- -that we might be His Temple and that Jesus might continue to build us up in Him by His grace. Keep your heart free from idols, and pray that God would allow your love for him to grow as you mediate upon the Priest-King who rules and reigns over heaven and earth- -and who loves you!

If God is for us, who can be against us?

It is true that the Most High does not live in houses made by men- -but now within us by His Spirit because of what Jesus has done for us! The glory of God dwells in His people by the Spirit and this He will do for all eternity because of what Christ has done for us as Priest-King!

Our Priest-King Jesus Christ stays quite busy. He is praying for us according to God’s will, sustaining us, he speaks to us through His Word, guides us by His Spirit, and he is preparing a place for us with him.

Let us rejoice!

CRB

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### **Bibliography for Further Reading**

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### **Scripture Lesson**

**Psalm 24:1-10** A PSALM OF DAVID. The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,<sup>1</sup> the world and those who dwell therein, <sup>2</sup> for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. <sup>3</sup> Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup> He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. <sup>5</sup> He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. <sup>6</sup> Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. <sup>1</sup> Selah <sup>7</sup> Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>8</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! <sup>9</sup> Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. <sup>10</sup> Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! Selah

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 66:1-2:** Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? <sup>2</sup> All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 2:19-22:** Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But he was speaking about the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup> When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 26:60-61:** ...though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward <sup>61</sup> and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'"

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 7:44-53:** "Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. <sup>45</sup> Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, <sup>46</sup> who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. <sup>1</sup><sup>47</sup> But it was Solomon who built a house for him. <sup>48</sup> Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made

by hands, as the prophet says, <sup>49</sup> "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? <sup>50</sup> Did not my hand make all these things?" <sup>51</sup> "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. <sup>52</sup> Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, <sup>53</sup> you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."