

ZECHARIAH

Chapter 6

A Vision of Four Chariots

Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze. 2 The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, 3 the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled horses—all of them strong 4 Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” 5 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. 6 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.” 7 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. 8 Then he cried to me, “Behold, those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country.”

6:1–8 The eighth and last vision. It corresponds to the first (1:7–17), though there are differences in details, such as in the order and colors of the horses. As in the first vision, the Lord is depicted as the one who controls the events of history. He will conquer the nations that oppress Israel. (CSB)

6:1 *Again ... saw.* This eighth and final vision has similarities with the first vision (1:7–17). (TLSB)

four chariots. Angelic spirits as agents of divine judgment (v. 5). (CSB)

This is unlike the first vision, where the horses were at rest, these horses pull chariots, symbolizing military power. There are four in number, corresponding to the four points of the compass, to cover the entire earth. (TLSB)

two mountains. Possibly Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives, with the Kidron Valley between them. (CSB)

bronze. Perhaps symbolic of judgment (cf. Nu 21:9). (CSB)

Possibly representing the two tall bronze pillars standing on either side of the temple entrance (1 Ki 7:15; Jer 52:17). Chariots coming out of the rebuilt temple would obviously belong to the Lord. Luther interpreted the two bronze mountains spiritually as the Law and the Prophets: “They are fixed and constant. For rust does not devour bronze, as it devours iron. Thus the Law and the Prophets are great, strong, constant witnesses of the Gospel.” (TLSB)

6:2–3 *red ... black ... white ... dappled.* The horses may signify various divine judgments on the earth. (CSB)

6:2 *red* – Sometimes represents carnage and warfare. (TLSB)

black – This usually is associated with death and doom. (TLSB)

6:3 *white* – This typically represents holiness, purity, and victory; may also represent paleness or fear. (TLSB)

dappled – The interpretation may vary; may represent famine or catastrophe. (TLSB)

all of them strong – This suggests divine power that is about to become active. (TLSB)

6:4 As in earlier visions, Zechariah asks the interpreting angel the meaning of the vision. (TLSB)

these. The chariots, with the horses harnessed to them. (CSB)

This is asked of the angel who had acted as interpreter in all the visions. (Kretzmann)

6:5 *winds*. The chariots went out in four directions: north, east, south, and west. The Hebrew word *ruchoth*, “wind” anticipates the similar word *ruach*, “spirit.” Luther: “No rider is seen here on the horses nor a man in chariots. For Christ sits and rides on these horses and chariots alone.” (TLSB)

6:6 Two chariots went northwest toward Babylon and Persia to show God’s rule over these countries. The one to the south went toward Egypt which was south of Israel and also a world power. The destination of the red chariot is not told. (TLSB)

6:7 *strong horses*. Zechariah’s attention is caught by the power and vigor of the horses. (TLSB)

patrol. The Lord released His agents to proceed with their mission of patrolling the earth. (TLSB)

They would be visiting all the countries of the world with a terrible, universal judgment, with war and bloodshed, with death and destruction; and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth, carrying out the Lord’s command upon the various nations. (Kretzmann)

6:8 *He cried to me*. The Ruler of heaven and earth has a special message for the prophet. (TLSB)

north country. Primarily Babylonia, but also the direction from which most of Israel’s foes invaded Palestine. (CSB)

God’s Spirit is at rest even in the warlike countries of Persia and Babylon. The Lord wanted His people to know that because He is in charge of world events, He can establish rest in “all the earth” (1:11). Luther: “[Zechariah] comforts and encourages his people, who have been terrified and dejected because of their fear of the nations of the north” (AE 20:63). (TLSB)

my Spirit. If the alternative translation in the NIV text note (“spirit”) is taken, the meaning is that the angelic beings dispatched to the north have triumphed and thus have pacified or appeased God’s spirit (i.e., his anger; cf. Ecc 10:4, where the same Hebrew word is translated “anger”). See 1:15, where God’s displeasure was aroused against oppressive nations. In either case, since conquest was announced in the north, victory was assured over all enemies. (CSB)

The Spirit of Jehovah has rested there, to be satisfied with the extent of the punishment inflicted upon the world-powers. It is clear that the angel is speaking of a last great Judgment, by which all the enemies of the Lord would be overthrown, in order that His Church may be safely established. (Kretzmann)

6:1–8 In this vision, the Lord reveals to the people of Jerusalem, who have suffered devastation, that He is indeed powerful and active. His authority is likened to strong horses pulling four chariots, patrolling the earth in all directions. This is also our God, powerful and active in controlling the events of this world for

the sake of His people and for the sake of the Gospel. God's word to us is that He is our refuge and strength (cf Ps 46:1). • Almighty Father, Creator and Ruler of all that exists, silence our doubts and fears by Your comforting Word. Amen. (TLSB)

The Crown and the Temple

9 And the word of the LORD came to me: **10** “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. **11** 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. **12** 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. **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.” **14** And the crown shall be in the temple of the LORD as a reminder to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah. **15** “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.”

6:9–15 The fourth and fifth visions were concerned with the high priest and the civil governor (in the Davidic line). Zechariah now relates the message of those two visions to the Messianic King-Priest. (CSB)

6:9 What follows is not a vision but a symbolic act that will incorporate a messianic message. (TLSB)

6:10 *silver and gold.* Gifts for the temple (cf. Ezr 6:5; Hag 2:8). (CSB)

Heldai...Tobijah...Jedaiah – These three men had recently arrived in Jerusalem from Babylon and who had brought silver and gold, no doubt wishing to support the temple rebuilding effort. (TLSB)

Babylon – It was the ancient capital city of the Babylonian Empire on the Euphrates River, southwest of modern Bagdad. Many of the Judean exiles continued to live in Babylon. (TLSB)

Josiah, son of Zephaniah – He was the possible descendant of the Zephaniah named as the second priest at the time of the fall of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

6:11 *crown.* The Hebrew for this word is not the same as that used for the high priest's turban, but one referring to an ornate crown with many diadems (cf. Rev 19:12). The royal crowning of the high priest foreshadows the goal and consummation of prophecy—the crowning and reign of the Messianic King-Priest (see vv. 12–13; cf. Ps 110:4; Heb 7:1–3). (CSB)

Hbr is plural but here translated in the singular. Some commentators suggest that the crown here, set on the head of Joshua the high priest, should be distinguished from the one in v 14. Usually we think of kings being crowned, but here the high priest received this honor. The headgear prescribed for the high priest did include a “holy crown” (Ex 29:6; Lv 8:9), though that Hbr word differs from the one used here. (TLSB)

6:12 *behold the man.* Cf. Pilate's introduction of Jesus in Jn 19:5. (CSB)

Branch. According to the Aramaic Targum (a paraphrase), the Jerusalem Talmud (a collection of religious instruction) and the Midrash (practical exposition), Jews early regarded this verse as Messianic. (CSB)

The Hebrew *tsemach* is a term designating the future Messiah. The coming Branch will be more than just a king; He will also be a high priest (Heb 9:11). Joshua was a type of the Coming One, who would be a vigorous and fruit-bearing plant. (TLSB)

temple. This is not a wood and stone temple currently being constructed under the supervision of Zerubbabel. This Branch will build a spiritual temple, the Church (Eph 2:21; 1 Pt 2:5). Luther: “*Tsemach* means a plant or a twig which grows to be a large tree. For Christ at first was a small shrub, or plant, in Jewish land, but then He grew until He has become a tree which fills all the world with its branches, its top reaching to heaven and its roots reaching to the abyss of hell.” (TLSB)

6:13 *shall build the temple* – He will build the real Sanctuary of Jehovah, the Church of the New Testament. He will accomplish His great work in spite of the lowliness of His origin. (Kretzmann)

bear royal honor – He will be adorned with kingly glory and honor. (Kretzmann)

The Branch will have the majesty and splendor of a king. (TLSB)

his throne. Christ’s rule as King and Priest will extend over everything and will have no end (Lk 1:32-33; Eph 1:221-22). (TLSB)

priest on his throne. The coming Davidic King will also be a priest. (CSB)

both. Probably the royal and priestly offices. Such a combination was not normally possible in Israel. (CSB)

This is a new concept. In the past, priests and kings did not mix, and rivalries often existed between Israel’s civil and religious leadership. The union of Priest and King in one person, the Branch, will not only guarantee harmony but will also bring lasting peace. (TLSB)

6:14 *the crown shall be in the temple.* Joshua’s crown or a second crown. (TLSB)

as a reminder. Both a reminder that God will carry out His purposes through the Branch, and a cherished memorial for those who brought gifts from Babylon. (TLSB)

Hen. Means “gracious one,” perhaps another name for Josiah—to honor him for his hospitality (v. 10). (CSB)

Variations of the names in v 10. Josiah seems also to have had the name Hen. (TLSB)

Future generations would be reminded of the example of these two men. Moreover, the example of the messengers from Babylon was not to be forgotten. (Kretzmann)

6:15 *Those who are far away will ... help.* Cf. Isa 60:4–7. (CSB)

This is not a reference to those who might help in the building of Jerusalem’s earthly temple, but rather to all those, including Gentiles, who would be active in building God’s spiritual temple. (TLSB)

you shall know – Many people in Zechariah’s day doubted these promises, but we have seen their fulfillment and know that the Lord of hosts did indeed send this prophet (2:9; 4:9). (TLSB)

diligently obey – This is being added by way of admonition lest any one deliberately lose the blessings which are offered in and by the coming of the Messiah. Thus the establishment and growth of the Church of the New Testament is definitely sketched, also for the strengthening of our faith. (Kretzmann)

What is called for is “the obedience of faith” (Rm 1:5). Anna modeled this obedience (Lk 2:38). (TLSB)

6:9–15 A crown made from gifts of gold and silver becomes an object lesson to teach about the coming Branch, who will fill the offices of King and Priest. Not everyone in Zechariah’s day wholeheartedly believes God’s promises that accompany this lesson. But this does not prevent their fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Likewise, the obedience of faith is lacking in many today, sometimes even in our own hearts. Jesus’ trust-building message keeps coming to us: “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). • Lord, Your voice calls me to grow in faith and life. Grant me the obedience of faith. Amen. (TLSB)