

# The Crown that Endures

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[ 0 : 00 ] As Don mentioned, my name is Luke. I come to you from Emmaus Road Church here in Appleton from the PCA denomination. And it is an honor and a privilege to be with you again here.

This last fall at Emmaus Road, we preached through the book of Zechariah. And I don't know if any of you have ever heard a sermon from Zechariah before. It's not one that, you know, a lot of churches typically spend a lot of time in.

But it's a great book, and I encourage you to read it. And if you do, do spend some time in it. Take your time, because it is maybe one of the more difficult books in the Old Testament.

But it is a great one. And if you know a lot about the Old Testament, you know that the people of Israel were conquered, and they were exiled by the Babylonians for 70 years.

And eventually, the Babylonians, the ones who conquered Israel, they were taken over by the Persians. And then the Persian king Cyrus, he allowed those Jewish exiles to finally return to their homeland.

[ 1 : 10 ] And that's where this book, that's where Zechariah takes place. Back in Jerusalem, after the exiles had returned. And so these exiles, they're back home, and they're trying to put the pieces back together after 70 years in exile.

Now, the first six chapters of Zechariah, they're about these visions that God gives to Zechariah about life after exile.

And we are going to be looking at the end of this section of visions, where God gives Zechariah some instruction about the leadership of Jerusalem.

So with that said, let's read from Zechariah chapter 6, verses 9 through 15. And the word of the Lord came to me.

Take from the exiles, Heldai, Tobijah, and Jediah, 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 Jehozadak the high priest.

[ 2 : 22 ] 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 of the Lord, as a reminder to Helm, Tobijah, Jediah, and Hen, 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 diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God. This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have spoken to us in your word. And we ask that you would give us ears to hear, and hearts that are ready to receive your word this morning.

[ 3 : 30 ] May your Holy Spirit be working in us, teaching us, informing us, more and more into the image of Jesus. It's in his holy name that we pray.

Amen. Amen. Well, in the 1960s, in Los Angeles, there was a man named Jim Baker, who was starting a new chapter in his life.

He had served in the military in World War II, and since then, he was kind of trying to find his new purpose in life. And his latest idea was this, to open a vegan restaurant in Hollywood.

Now, you know, nowadays, that's nothing new, you know, especially in a place like Hollywood.

There are vegan restaurants all over the place. But back then, this was new. This was cutting-edge stuff.

And this restaurant, called The Source, this was the place to be. Remember, this is the 60s. There were young hippies from all over who were coming to this restaurant.

[ 4 : 34 ] But they were not just going to the restaurant. They were drawn to the owner himself, to Jim Baker. See, he was this charismatic, good-looking guy.

He embodied all the countercultural trends that were revolutionizing the youth of that time. Things like peace, freedom, sexuality, and lots and lots of Eastern religion.

People started flocking to the restaurant. But they weren't just flocking to the restaurant. They were flocking to him. They didn't just want to eat his food.

They wanted to learn from this Jim Baker, this man who seemed to be everything that these young people wished that they could be. Well, his following grew and grew, and eventually it got so strong that he was able to buy this massive mansion for himself and his followers, about 150 people.

And these people, they would do whatever Jim said. Soon, he had them cut off all ties with their families.

[ 5 : 54 ] Then, he had them sell all their worldly possessions. He told them, it's the only way that you'll ever become enlightened like me.

It became a cult. Before long, Jim married one of his followers.

Then he married another. And another. Eventually, he had a harem of about a dozen women, some of whom were under 18 years old.

He was drunk with power. He was getting to his head, and soon he even claimed to be God himself. He claimed that he was here to save these people, to bring utopia to earth.

Sounds crazy to us. Why would so many people give up their lives to follow this creep who's taking everything from them? They believed that he was this savior that he said he was.

[ 7 : 03 ] They believed that he was the man who would fix all their problems, who would bring heaven to earth. Well, to make a long story short, the cult eventually fell apart, and Jim Baker ended up taking his own life.

He was not the savior that he told them all that he was. See, the thing is, this isn't an isolated incident. We've seen this throughout American history, throughout world history.

People latch on to these leaders who promised to bring their version of utopia to earth. Jim Baker, Charles Manson, Adolf Hitler.

Dare I say, even more mild examples today, like our modern politicians, self-help gurus with their books and their podcasts.

See, people are looking for someone to bring restoration to this world. People are hurting, and they so desperately want someone to bring healing, someone to fix this broken world.

[ 8 : 26 ] How has that worked out? Who can you point to in history who has solved all the problems and ushered in utopia like they promised to?

By God's grace, there have been world leaders who have done great things, who have brought positive change.

But we look around, and we see the world is still just as broken as ever. Even here in America, right, the most prosperous nation on earth, arguably in world history, we have a mental health crisis. We have homelessness. We have an opioid epidemic. Riots in Minneapolis. Cancer. Spousal abuse.

I mean, I don't need to go on. We all see it. We all feel it. And we long for someone to fix it.

[ 9 : 32 ] And that's not a foolish desire. It's a good desire to long for someone to fix this broken world. The prophet Amos writes that actually we have a responsibility to hate evil, to love good, to establish justice.

Those are godly desires. And that's what the book of Zechariah speaks to. This is a book about a people, the nation of Israel, who return to a decimated land, a shadow of what it once was.

And it was hard for these people to not feel hopeless about their future. But what we're going to see in our passage today is that God did not leave them without hope.

When God's people are at their lowest point, wondering what the future will hold, and if things will ever be put right again, God reminds them that he is on his throne and that there is a Savior who will restore his people.

Jesus will restore his people. And that is where we can find our security. There are two ways that this passage shows us our security in Christ.

[ 11 : 00 ] We are secure in him because his plan is secure and his provision is secure. Verse 9 begins with a statement.

It says, The word of the Lord came to me. What follows is God's instruction to Zechariah. Zechariah. If you had read the previous chapters, all these visions leading up to this, this passage is not one of those visions.

This is God telling Zechariah to do something. It's not a vision. It's instruction. And he says in verse 10, Take from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah, and Jediah who have arrived from Babylon and go the same day to the house of Josiah.

And what is he to take from them? Verse 11 says, Take from them silver and gold. See, these three men, Heldai, Tobijah, and Jediah, we don't really know much about these men other than they were some of the returning exiles from Babylon.

And when God tells Zechariah to take silver and gold from them, of course he's not telling him to go rob them or something like that. No. This silver and gold that these three men had was likely given to them by the king of Persia in Babylon who released the exiles to go and use the silver and gold for their religious purposes.

[ 12 : 25 ] And so this is a proper use for that silver and gold. These men would have been more than willing to give it to Zechariah for God's purposes. And verse 11 continues.

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

Now if you are not familiar with the Old Testament priesthood, the high priest was the priest of the people who was appointed to atone for the sins of all of God's people by making sacrifices to God on their behalf.

And the thing is that it's not usual for a high priest to wear a crown. In one of the previous chapters before this one, this same high priest, Joshua, he's fitted with not a crown but a turban which is the typical headwear of a high priest.

But here, he's being given a crown which is usually reserved for kings only. So we're going to talk a little bit later about why this priest is wearing a crown but for now, just know that the point of these verses is that God has restored the priesthood for his people.

[ 13 : 50 ] See, the Israelites, they're back from exile and they're wondering, are things ever going to be the way that they used to be? Will there even be a temple?

Will there be a king? Will there be a priesthood? And God is showing them that yes, he is restoring his people first by restoring the priesthood, placing Joshua in the position of high priest.

Now this meant more to the people than we can probably imagine. God is showing them that he is bringing restoration. A few months ago, I was driving home from a church event with our nine-year-old and our seven-year-old in the car and we were driving on this stretch of highway that's 55 miles per hour and we're just traveling along minding our own business and there was a van a little bit ways ahead of us that was signaling that he was turning right and so he gets into the right turn lane and we just travel on past him like you do.

But at the last minute, he's in the right turn lane and rather than turning right, he instead turns left, back out into traffic, into the middle of the highway, like as if he's doing a U-turn.

I probably had about two seconds to slam into my brakes but there wasn't enough time. I couldn't stop in time and we T-boned him. Airbags went off, our front end was all smashed up, it was the worst accident I've been in.

[ 15 : 43 ] And yet, other than a couple little scrapes, everyone was fine. I was fine, the kids were fine, the other driver was fine. But the thing is, to me and my untrained eye, I looked at our vehicle and the front end is just, I mean, it's sandwiched, it's like an accordion and I look at that and I'm like, okay, there's no way that we can fix this.

But one of the police officers who responded to the scene, he was like, well, I don't know, to me it looks borderline, maybe it's fixable, maybe it's not. So we spent the next couple weeks just waiting to hear from the insurance companies whether we could fix our car or whether it was going to be a complete loss.

That kind of state of limbo is what the people of Israel were experiencing. They're here back in Jerusalem wondering, is Jerusalem fixable?

Will things go back to the way they used to be? Or is everything just done for? Is this a total loss? Has God's plan for us been thwarted by the Babylonians and the Persians?

Will God restore us? who among us hasn't thought back to your childhood and longed for those days when life was simpler?

[ 17 : 16 ] You know, back before cell phones, before the internet, before dating apps and social media, back when people worked hard, right?

when people had family values, where the majority of people actually went to church on Sundays. Who hasn't longed for the good old days?

It's natural to feel that way. You are going to be greatly disappointed and frustrated by the reality that those days are gone.

there is no going back. Maybe that makes you feel deflated, depressed. It's no surprise that there's so much pessimism and nihilism in our culture.

We can't reclaim what once was. But if you are looking back to the good old days of a generation ago, you are longing for those days.

[ 18 : 26 ] Let me tell you something. You are aiming too low. Set your sights higher than that.

Set your sights on Eden. set your sights not on the nostalgia of your childhood, but on the reality of the restoration that Christ will bring to his people.

The good old days are not 20, 30, 40 years ago. No. The good old days are Adam and Eve walking in perfect communion with the God of the universe before they sinned.

God. And that is the restoration that Christ will bring to his church. See, Joshua is no longer our high priest.

Jesus is the great high priest who continues to intercede on our behalf. And he has made a way for us to have that restored relationship with God that will be made perfect again when he comes to bring Eden back to earth.

[ 19 : 38 ] that is the restoration that we have to look forward to, where we will be restored, not just back to Eden, but we will be glorified as perfected saints who get to spend eternity with our Savior.

God's plan to restore his people is secure. secure. It will not change, and no one can take it away. Not only is his plan secure, but his provision is secure.

After placing the crown on Joshua's head, Zechariah is then to say to him, starting in verse 12, it says, 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. Now what's important to remember about these verses is that this is a symbolic action. Everything in this passage that has to do with a crown is what's called a sign act from God. A sign act is a way in which God communicates something to his people through one of his prophets, in this case, Zechariah, by performing an action rather than through spoken word.

[ 21 : 18 ] And this is nothing new. God has done this throughout the Old Testament. He's spoken to his people through these sign acts, so it might seem kind of strange to us, but to the Jews this was a totally normal way for God to communicate to them.

And what he is communicating to them is that not only is the priesthood restored, but that God has a kingly leader for his people who will rebuild the temple.

He calls this leader the branch. Zechariah uses this term earlier in the book. Isaiah and Jeremiah also talk about this branch.

And in every case, they are referring to the Messiah. Now, like many of the prophecies in the Old Testament, there is a message for both their present audience back then and for a future audience. Their present leader would be in charge of building that physical temple in Jerusalem. But their future leader, the Messiah, he would build a spiritual temple, the church.

[ 22 : 27 ] Not a building, but a people. God's people. Who would be redeemed by that very branch who founded them. after everything the Jews had been through, they are reminded and reassured that the Messiah is still coming.

He's coming to build his church. And the Babylonians, the Persians, the very gates of hell will not prevail against it.

God restored them out of exile, back to their homes in Jerusalem. But even that grand event was just a mere glimpse of the restoration to come through salvation in the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

He has conquered not just their enemies here on earth, but he has conquered sin, death, the devil in his death and resurrection. salvation. And he will bring complete restoration to all those who believe in him.

One of my guilty pleasure TV shows that I like to watch from time to time is the reality TV show Undercover Boss. Listen, it's cheesy, it's stupid.

[ 23 : 56 ] But the premise of the show is that an owner of some high-ranking company, some high-ranking official in a company, he goes undercover within his own company to observe how the company is doing from the ground level.

He'll put on some ridiculous disguise and they'll pretend like they're applying for an entry-level job in the company. And what they'll do is they'll usually shadow an employee in their company for the day, being trained by them, working alongside them.

And the final segment of every episode is the big reveal. The boss invites this employee that they spent the day with into their office.

No more disguise. And they reveal to this employee that they are actually the owner or the CEO of the company. And they're always met with surprise and shock and sometimes dread.

Some of these employees are like, oh no, am I about to get fired? But in most cases, rather than getting fired, they get rewarded.

[ 25 : 08 ] They get raises, promotions, vacations, new cars, tuition, assistance. See, they expect the worst. But instead, they are lavished with gifts beyond anything they ever would have imagined.

These Jews in Jerusalem, they had been in exile for decades. And here they are, back in Jerusalem.

But they're still under Persian rule. And you've got to think that many of them were expecting the worst. That this was just their new reality. That God had forsaken them.

And that this was as good as it was ever going to get. But God promised that this low point for his people would only be for a time.

And that he would restore them. And that the Messiah would still come and build his church in bring salvation to many. Let me ask you.

[ 26 : 21 ] What is it in your life that makes you think that God will not provide his salvation? Are you stuck in a season of habitual sin?

Is there a lie that's been hanging over you? Do you have a guilty conscience over something that you've kept secret?

Do you look in the mirror and think, I'm a lost cause. No one could ever love me. If that's you this morning, I want to challenge you.

Do you really think that anything within you is more powerful than God? Do you really think that anything you can do can stop him from doing anything?

Then why do you think that you can stop him from loving you? Maybe, just maybe, you're too focused on yourself and looking inward.

[ 27 : 41 ] And you need to look to him and see his love and his forgiveness. Maybe for the first time in your life, it is there for you.

Maybe it's not you. Maybe you think that way about someone else. That, you know, God's salvation can't possibly reach that person, right? That person will never care about God.

That person doesn't care about anyone other than themselves. That person is too far gone.

Christian, don't you see that you're doing the same thing?

You are doubting the power of God's salvation. He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. So don't give up praying for that person.

Don't give up on proclaiming the gospel to that person. God's salvation cannot be thwarted by anything in them or anything in you.

[ 28 : 58 ] You want proof? Look at verse 15. It says, 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. Those who are far off. Zechariah is talking about the surrounding nations and the exiles who have yet to return home from Babylon to help rebuild the physical temple in Jerusalem.

And again, again, with this prophecy, there's a future aspect. It's talking about the Gentiles who would one day be grafted in to the family of God.

Now that concept of the Gentiles being a part of God's family, that is mind blowing to the Jewish people. That's why so much of the New Testament is about that very idea.

It has to be explained to the Jews and to the early church over and over again that God's salvation is available to all types of people. And how much, how much do we need to remember that today?

[ 30 : 11 ] when our culture, even many within our Christian circles, are telling us to fight, to attack, to give our enemies a taste of their own medicine.

That's what Jesus said to do, right? No. Jesus says in Matthew 5, to love your enemy, to pray for those who persecute you, to pray for their salvation.

They may be that one who is far off, who will come and join in building the temple of the Lord. God will see his church through to the end, and he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy.

You know, before I started going to seminary, I had kind of a unique job. I used to be a potter, making pottery all day. I would spend eight hours every day on a pottery wheel, making mostly coffee mugs, by hand, out of clay.

And you know, when I tell that to people, a lot of times what they say is something like, you know, wow, that sounds so peaceful. It wasn't. It was a production facility.

[ 31 : 46 ] I worked for a company, and if, if I made fewer than 200 coffee mugs in a day, I was disappointed with myself. Speed was the name of the game.

And when you're moving that fast with clay, inevitably, you end up making mistakes. And in our business, rather than spending time trying to fix your mistake, a lot of times it was just more efficient to just start over with a new lump of clay.

And my boss, he was easily the most talented potter that I've ever known. He has his own studio out in Sherwood. And he could take my pile of ruined mugs, and he could take that pile and mash it up into a giant lump of clay, put that lump of clay on the pottery wheel, and make something beautiful out of it.

A vase, a bowl, something that I did not have the talent to do. And he made it look so easy, too, which was infuriating. But it was beautiful.

He could take all my mistakes and turn them into something beautiful. Church, there is someone far greater than you, far greater than all your mistakes.

[ 33 : 12 ] And he is restoring all things into something beautiful. And that person is Jesus Christ. You will not find security in your 401k.

You will not find security in a political party. You won't find it in your health, your loved ones, your possessions.

And there's a reason for that. It's because true security is found only in Jesus Christ. So cling to him. Repent and believe in him and know that he is God and he will restore his people finally and fully.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that it is not up to us to fix this world. That you have already declared victory and you will restore your people so that we can enjoy eternity in perfect relationship with you.

God, we look forward to that day. But until then, help us to rest in the security of your perfect plan and provision in Christ. We pray that you would transform us knowing that the battle is already won and that Christ, the King, is coming again.

[ 34 : 46 ] It's in his name that we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.