

The King and the Priest

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[0 : 00] Well, I thought I'd start this morning with a joke I got from a child. He's an 11-year-old boy who goes to our J Kids program in the middle of the week.

And it goes like this. There were two men, a priest and a king, who walked into a bar. Ouch. Oh, come on.

I liked it. I liked it. I thought it was clever for an 11-year-old. And if you didn't like it, too bad, because that's all you're getting this morning. But the point is, we are thinking about two men from our passage today.

And there is a priest and there is a king. But to understand their significance for our passage today, I need to show you their significance in the overall structure of the visions, which is point one on your outlines.

And to help you do that, help you understand that, I've printed out a bit of a diagram on the back of your outline, which you might like to turn to. So in Zechariah, the first six verses are like an introduction.

[1 : 12] And then from chapter one, verse seven and following, we have this series of visions. And the visions correlate to each other. So on your diagram there, vision one talks about four different colored horses going out throughout the earth.

And it talks about a rest. And vision eight also has four different colored horses that go throughout the earth. And it also talks about a rest. The difference, though, is in vision one, the rest is that of the nations, which is a rest you'd think was a good thing, but it's not because it was a rest of complacency, a rest where the nations continue to sit opposed to God, when where people are God's people continued to suffer.

And so you might remember in vision one, there's the angel of the Lord who asks, how long, O Lord, will things remain like that? And in chapter one, verse 13 and following, God speaks comforting words to Zechariah.

And he says two things in response to how long, O Lord. And the first is that he will come and judge those nations. And the second thing is that he will come and restore his house, the temple, and his city, Jerusalem.

And so that's what we see in visions two and three. God returns to judge the nations and restore Jerusalem plus his house, which is another word for his temple.

[2 : 37] And visions two and three correspond to vision six and seven, because as God returns, sin must depart. Do you remember I've been saying that sin and a holy God do not mix together, like oil and water do not mix.

And I mentioned to you, when summer comes, our winter coats are no longer appropriate. They must be removed. And so also as God comes, sin is no longer appropriate.

It must be removed. And so there's this matching of visions two and three as God returns, and visions six and seven as sin departs. And we saw that last week with the flying scroll and the basket, where God removes sin from the land.

And if people refuse to repent, if people refuse to come back to God, then they will be banished, chapter five, verse three, from the land, because sin and a holy God cannot mix.

And in the middle of this series of eight visions, as you've seen on your diagram, we've got these two characters. We've got Joshua the priest in vision four, and we've got Zerubbabel the king in vision five.

[3 : 47] And you might remember that God enables Joshua to be a priest. You see, Joshua was sinful as well. And so he could not do his job of making a sacrifice of atonement.

And so the people's sins could not be dealt with. And if the people's sins weren't dealt with, then God could not dwell with them. You see, the whole point of this is so that God can dwell with his people, but sin is like a barrier.

And so Joshua is given clean clothes. His filthy clothes, which represent his sin, are taken away. Do you remember? And he's given clean clothes, which represent forgiveness.

And so now he's able to make atonement for the people. Do you remember? Do you remember what the word atonement meant? You know, if you break up the word at-one-ment. And I gave an illustration.

You know, I said, you know, imagine I forgot my wife's wedding anniversary once. It has happened once. Well, actually, okay, it's happened twice, but we're not going to count. All right.

[4 : 48] And I might buy some flowers for her to atone for my sin. And then we'd be at onement.

And of course, I said, when we were looking at this in chapter three, that sin is much more serious than that.

It requires much more than flowers. It requires blood. And it was the blood of a sacrifice that the high priest would give that would bring atonement for the people. And now that Joshua is given clean clothes, he can now do his job of making that sacrifice of atonement for the people so that God can dwell with them.

But there was something interesting about that in chapter three. Joshua the priest, he actually symbolized something. So turn in your Bibles to chapter three, verse eight. Actually, you don't have to turn anywhere. It's on the same page, just the left-hand side.

He says, verse eight. Now, listen, high priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you are men symbolic of things to come.

You see what God has done for Joshua by giving him clean clothes, forgiveness, it's symbolic of something that's going to come. I'm going to bring my servant the branch. See the stone I've set in front of Joshua?

[6 : 00] There are seven eyes on that one stone and I will engrave an inscription on it, says the Lord Almighty, and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day. You see what happened to Joshua and his fellow priests is symbolic of what will happen through this person called the branch.

Through this branch, God will remove the sin of the land, of the people in a single day. You know, filthy clothes gone, clean clothes for everyone. And in today's reading, Joshua will again symbolize this branch.

But the point here is that Joshua was a key part of God's plan to return to the people, to dwell with them. Without a high priest, God could not dwell with his people because there was no sacrifice of atonement for their sin.

And then in vision five, we have that other key figure, a man called Zerubbabel, who was the governor or the king of the day. And God promised that he would rebuild the temple.

So have a look there at chapter four, verse nine. Then the word of the Lord came to me. The hands of Zerubbabel, this king, have laid the foundation of this temple. His hands will also complete it, God promises.

[7 : 14] But if you just skip back a bit to verse six, this is not going to be by Zerubbabel's own strength. You see verse six? Not by might nor by power will Zerubbabel build this temple, but by my spirit, says the Lord.

And then at the end of that chapter of chapter four, you have those two olive trees, if you remember the picture. And those two olive trees stand for these two servants, Joshua the priest, who would make atonement for the people, and Zerubbabel the king, who would build the temple.

But both of them are enabled by God to do their job. Joshua is given clean clothes so he can do his job as high priest. And Zerubbabel is enabled by God's spirit to do his job of building the temple.

But the point is, at the center of all these visions are these two characters. These two people whom God equips and through whom God will work to make all his plans happen.

His plans to build his temple, his plans to dwell with his people by that temple. And the king and the priest are central to those plans. I've heard of some pretty amazing proposals, wedding proposals.

[8 : 35] For one guy, he did this amazing race kind of thing. Have you seen that amazing race television show? They travel from country to country. They get a clue. They have to do something. They have to travel to the next country.

Well, he did the same thing for his future bride. He gave clues and she had to travel to different locations. One place was the Melbourne Zoo. Another place was Federation Square. And in the end, she ended up on a plane at Melbourne Airport and then up to Queensland, where she met her boyfriend, who then proposed. Now, you'll be glad to know she said yes after all that. But for this plan to happen, this guy had to get his friends involved. He had to have two friends who would give these clues to his girlfriend. And so as one was giving the clue to her, the other friend would drive and kind of leapfrog that location, go to the next one and give the clue. Then the other one would kind of leapfrog and they just do this kind of leapfrogging business. You see, at the center of his plan to propose were his two friends through whom he worked to make it all happen.

[9 : 39] That's the same for God here. He would equip and work through his two servants to make all this happen. The priest and the king. And whom Joshua now symbolizes in our passage today.

So that's the overview of the visions. We've galloped through it pretty quickly. But that's okay. Just notice two things. If you've switched off, switch back on now.

Notice two things about these visions before we move on to our passage. The first is that these visions are actually working towards God's rest.

God's rest. Okay. That God's rest was on the seventh day. And on the seventh day, there was no morning or evening. There was no eighth day in Genesis. Did you realize? No eighth day.

The seventh day, the day of God's rest, was meant to continue forever. God is working towards that day of rest where he will dwell perfectly with his people. And that will happen after the nations are judged on that final judgment day.

[10 : 41] So that's the first thing to notice. And the second thing to notice is, as I said, that these two servants are in the middle. They are central to all of God's plans. And we see Joshua symbolize them in chapter 6, verse 9.

So have a look there in your Bibles at chapter 6, verse 9. He says, You see here, Zechariah does not see a vision, but he is given an instruction.

Now, we don't know how much time has passed between his night visions. They all happened on one night, by the way. All eight parts of that vision happened on the one night. So can you imagine Zechariah the next morning?

Would have needed a strong cup of coffee, I'm sure. Did they have coffee back then? I don't know. Anyway, he would have needed it if he had it. And so we don't know how much time passed between that night of visions and this instruction here.

But we're meant to see that it goes together. Now, this instruction is meant to round off the visions. And he is to take silver and gold from these people who've returned from Babylon.

[12 : 09] Now, the silver and gold is probably not their personal silver and gold. It's probably a gift collected from all the Jews still living back in Babylon. Remember, not all the Jews returned to Jerusalem, even though they were supposed to.

They had made a pretty good life for themselves back in Babylon. Anyway, Zechariah is told to go to Josiah's house with this gold. Josiah is presumably a craftsman of some kind. And he's to use these two metals, silver and gold, and make one crown out of it.

And then they are to place that one crown on Joshua's head. Now, this is not normal practice for a high priest to wear a king's crown. But the whole point is, Joshua is symbolizing something again, or rather someone again, just like he did back in chapter 3.

Who is he symbolizing? Well, verse 12 tells us. Verse 12, tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says. Here is the man whose name is the branch. He will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord.

You see here, Joshua represents this man called the branch again, doesn't he? And this branch will branch out or rise up from his place, it says.

[13 : 27] Now, the phrase from his place literally means from underneath. It's meant to indicate obscure and humble beginnings. It reminds us of God's servant of the Lord on the next slide from Isaiah 53.

No, we'll keep going. Yep. Isaiah 53. It says, He grew up before God like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground, he had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him.

Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. And you remember where Jesus was born, don't you? In a humble manger, in a stable, an animal feeding trough.

This branch will rise up from underneath. And we're told that he is the one who will build the temple of the Lord. Now, this would have been odd to Zechariah because who was supposed to build the temple?

Wasn't it Zerubbabel, the governor, the king? In fact, in chapter 4, God assures Zerubbabel will finish the temple. And so, why is this branch building it here?

[14 : 31] And just to make sure Zechariah understands the message, God repeats it in verse 13. He says, Now, many people must have thought that Zerubbabel was this branch because he did finish the temple.

But God is clearly speaking about a future temple, another one. Why? Well, because the people who are far away will come and help, it says in verse 15.

And it's not just talking about the exiles from Babylon. It's talking about those who are further away from the nations will come and help build this temple. What's more, this crown that symbolized the branch who would build the temple, it's placed in Zerubbabel's temple.

So, it can't be the same one, can it? It's talking about a future temple. And did you notice that this branch will not only build a future temple, he will be both the priest and the king.

Do you see verse 13 again? It says, You see, the fact that Joshua the priest is wearing the crown of a king in the same person indicates, symbolizes, that this branch person will be both priest and king, you see.

[16 : 25] And he will rule over God's kingdom and he will build God's future temple with people from the nations who are far away. And he will make a sacrifice of atonement all so that God can dwell amongst his people and the people enjoy God's blessings.

And so, who do you think this branch is? Had one person. Well done, whoever it was. I'll ask it again because you weren't sure. It's not rhetorical. Who do you think this branch is?

Oh, you can do better than that. Who? Thank you. Yeah. I mean, he's pretty important to our faith, isn't he? We shouldn't be ashamed to say his name. Jesus is this branch.

He is our priest. He is our king. In fact, the New Testament is full of references. I mean, Christ means king. The New Testament is full of references that Jesus is the king and the priest.

But what I want to show you, though, is how Jesus is central to God's plans, just like the king and the priest were central to Zechariah's visions. And God's plans of building the temple and dwelling with his people.

[17 : 29] And so, at this point, I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 1. I realize I'm making you work hard this morning, but I'm trying to bring it together for you. So, page 1173.

And you'll need to turn there because you have a job to do. It's not too hard. Don't worry. Page 1173. Now, your job is to count.

As I read verses, chapter 1, verse 3 to 10, I want you to see if you can count how many times Jesus is mentioned. Okay?

Now, it'll either be his name, Jesus, or it'll be in him is a reference to Jesus, or the one he loves is a reference to Jesus. See how you go. So, from verse 3.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

[18 : 31] For God chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, God predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves.

In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that God lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times reached their fulfillment, to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

How many times did you get? Eight. Eight, yeah. Well, that's what I got. Yeah, good. Yeah, eight times in eight verses, verses 3 to 10. Now, that alone ought to indicate how central Jesus is to God's plans, oughtn't it?

But notice verse 10. Verse 10 indicates it even more clearly. You see, this plan, or his will, is to be put into effect when the times will reach their fulfillment, to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

[19 : 56] In other words, Jesus is the focal point of all things in heaven and on earth, of the whole universe. He is the destination to which everyone is moving, whether they realize it or not.

You see, as was prophesied in Zechariah, and as was spoken about by Paul here in Ephesians, Jesus, this priest and king, is at the center of God's plans.

And so, by way of application then, if Jesus is at the center of what God is doing in the world, then he certainly needs to be at the center of what we as a church are doing in the world.

Orkney. And so, ministries that seek to proclaim Jesus and seek to build up people in Christ need to be our focus, because it is God's focus. And if Jesus is at the center of what God is doing in the world, then he not only needs to be at the center of our church, but our lives as well.

What we are doing in the world. I mean, if we are in God's family, then we need to be on about what God is on about. And so, Jesus needs to continue being at the center of our lives.

[21 : 05] And for one family, I know they always make sure they thank God for Jesus when they say grace at mealtimes with their family. Just so that the children constantly are reminded that it's because of Jesus that we can be in God's family.

For another family I know, when their 10-year-old child was being selfish, the father pulled out a Bible and showed his son, Philippians chapter 2, which talked about putting other people's needs before their own.

It wasn't, you know, Bible bashing. He was just saying, look at this, what the Bible says. And look, the next verse, your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. And so, he was teaching the child that our life is to be directed by Jesus.

For another little girl in our church, she gave me an envelope with her pocket money that she'd saved up in it. This was last year. And on the front of the envelope was written this, Dear Andrew, I saved up this money for you to keep the church running so you can teach people about God and Jesus.

She was five years old when she wrote that. See, Jesus needs to be at the center of our lives as it is for these people, five-year-old. And Jesus needs to be at the center not only as our priest who saves us, but also as our king who directs us in life.

[22 : 25] But the reason Jesus is at the center of God's plans is because Jesus is the one through whom God is building his temple. You see, just like Joshua and Zerubbabel at the center of God's visions, that was Zechariah's visions for God to return and dwell with his people by his temple, so Jesus is at the center of God's plans to build his temple, the church.

And so just flick over the page in Ephesians to chapter 2, which was our second reading. And have a look at how Jesus does this.

Verse 13, top of the page there. Verse 13, What does this mean?

Well, verse 19, Consequently, you know, this means then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people, and also members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together and rises, grows to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit.

[23 : 53] You see, just as Zechariah prophesied that those who are far away would come and build the temple, here's the fulfillment. You see, by Christ's blood we are forgiven, and we join God's church, God's temple, and we build it by being added to it.

That's what he says there. It rises to become a holy temple, and you are being built together. We're building God's temple as we become Christians, as people become Christians, as they believe in Jesus.

God joins them to his family, to his temple, and it grows. It's built. But it is built through the blood of Christ, you see. And God can now dwell with us by his spirit, as he always wanted us to.

And we can receive every spiritual blessing in Christ, as we read in chapter one, every spiritual blessing in Christ now, and every physical blessing in Christ later. But if you don't have Christ, then you're not part of God's family.

You're not part of God's temple. And you have no spiritual blessings now, and no physical ones later in heaven. So I need to ask, do you believe in Jesus?

[25 : 08] Because he's at the center of God's plans. He's the way we are brought into God's temple. He's the one who brings us forgiveness and blessing. But for those who have trusted in Jesus, then we are to build the temple in another way.

Not just by joining it, but by diligently obeying the Lord your God. Do you remember the last verse of Zechariah chapter six? That's what it said.

This will happen if you diligently obey the Lord our God. You see, when we obey God, we will speak the truth in love to each other.

If we obey God, we'll encourage each other to grow as Christians. And as we do that, we're actually going to build the church up. We're going to build the temple, you see. And when we obey God, then we will live differently.

We'll stand out as different. And as Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount, people will see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven, said Jesus. When we obey God, we will give an answer to people who say, why do you still go to church?

[26 : 13] Why do you do that? Do you read your Bible still? Why do you do that? You see, if we obey God, we'll give an answer to them about that. We'll seek to point them to Jesus.

And in so doing, God will use our feeble efforts to build his temple, the church. You see, if we diligently obey the Lord our God, then we will do what Jesus said.

We'll make disciples of all nations. And so help build the temple of God in number, as well as maturity. It will look different for each of us. For some, it will mean just praying regularly for non-Christians.

But as we do, we will be fulfilling the words spoken to Zechariah all those years ago, that those who are far away, that's us, have come near through the blood of Christ to build God's temple for God's glory.

let's pray that we would do so. Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly Father, we do thank you for the Lord Jesus, our priest who saves us, and our king who directs us.

[27 : 21] And Father, we thank you that through his blood, our sin can be atoned for. Father, we can be at one with you. And that you have brought us into your family, your church, your temple.

Father, help us to diligently obey you, and so be partners with you in building your church, your temple. As we encourage one another, and build each other up in maturity, and as we speak with others of your love, and build your temple in number.

Father, help us in this, we pray, that your name might be honoured, as you deserve. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.