

The Priest who rules His people with peace*Zechariah 6:9–15*

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ¹⁰ Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; ¹¹ Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest; ¹² And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: ¹³ Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. ¹⁴ And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD. ¹⁵ And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.

Dear Christian Friends,

Since the days of Moses, God has sent many prophets out into the world to deal with the various conditions of His people. Yet because it is the same God who sent them, and He does not change, neither does the Word. From Moses, to Isaiah, Zechariah, and John the Baptist, their preaching has been the same: “God will send a Prophet unlike any other, who will be a Priest and a King. He shall save His people from their sins. Therefore repent of your sins, and prepare to receive Him.” Though there were others before him, such as Adam, Seth, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses was the first of the prophets as we come to know them, bearing the Word of God not only for the people to whom he was sent, but for all future generations. Through Moses, God brought to men the history of Creation and the first Gospel promises of Christ, made to Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But as Moses was preparing for his own death, he declared to Israel, “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deut. 18:15).

When the Scribes and Pharisees sent representatives to John the Baptist, they asked him, “Art thou that prophet?” John answered, “No. ... I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord.” My friends, all the prophets, from Moses, to John, were sent unto us so that we might know that God keeps His promises, though time for us stretches on and the world is full of reasons to doubt Him. By the preaching of His prophets, God would remind us continually that He has always been faithful. Therefore we should firmly believe that God will deliver His people through His Son, Jesus Christ, by finishing in us the work that He has begun through the birth, death, and resurrection of His Son.

What should be our manner of living in this world, since God has assured us of His promises? The history of Israel teaches us about our own inclination to set aside the Word of the Lord, to forget His promises, or to doubt them, even though the Lord has never broken them even once. That prophet of whom Moses wrote has come, and has become our Salvation. Nevertheless we are living in a faithless world where even the people who bear the name of Christ hardly believe a Word which God has said. Israel was no more hard of heart than any other people, and we should not in any way think of ourselves as better or brighter than they. If Israel needed the constant warnings of the prophets to continue to faithfully hold to the covenant which God had made with them in Christ, then you can be certain that we do also. To Israel, God gave both prophets, and types. The prophets spoke His Word, and the types were vivid pictures which represented Christ to the people, and kept Him constantly on their minds. Therefore let us take heed of them also, that we may be reminded of the promises of our Lord, and confirmed in our faith that God, in Jesus Christ has reconciled the whole world.

Here, in Zechariah, you have a most excellent type of Christ. The setting is in Jerusalem, during the building of the second temple. At this time, Israel was still under captivity. The Babylonians had given way to the Persians, who were far more benevolent to the Jews than were their predecessors, yet Israel still had no king of their own. The bulk of the people were still in Babylon. Nevertheless, some were sent back to Judea by Cyrus (2 Chr. 36), to rebuild the temple, and reestablish the Jewish capital in Jerusalem. In many ways, this period in time historically mirrored that at the time of Christ, when Israel was under the dominion of a foreign power, Rome. The root of Jesse, the line of kings descended from David, was cut off. Now, during the days of Zachariah, God was preparing to bring Judah out of captivity, and bring them back into their land. However, in preparation for this time, the Lord wanted a lasting sign to be before their eyes, so that they would remember why it is that they were His people, and where their salvation lay. At that time, the High Priest was a man named Joshua. The Hebrew name “Joshua” is the same name as “Jesus” in Greek. The Greek Old Testament, used by Christ and the Apostles (called the Septuagint), even calls this man Jesus. He is the second man in the Old Testament to have that name and the second Joshua to be a type of Christ. The first Joshua conquered the enemies of God in the land of Canaan, and brought Israel into the promise land, even as our Lord Jesus conquered sin and death, and leads His Church into eternal life in heaven.

Now the sign which God commanded here is unique in all the history of Israel. He commanded that gold and silver, sent by the Jews who were in Babylon, be fashioned into crowns, joined into one, and that Joshua the High Priest be

crowned as a king. Then the witnesses who saw this ceremony were to go back to Babylon to show all of Israel what God had done, and tell them its meaning. The meaning of this sign forms the remaining verses in our lesson.

First Joshua, the High Priest, was crowned as a king. He was so crowned at a time when the line of David had dried up. Even so, Christ the Lord would come as a branch from a stump. He would rise up as a true King, to take the throne of Israel and of the whole world. From this you should learn not to trust your reason, nor the evidence which the enemies of God offer to prove that God is a liar. When God fulfills His promises it is *usually* the case that there is no evidence that He will do so, other than His Word. The kingdoms of the world rage against God, and the devil drives them to do everything in their power to impede God's promises. Why else do you suppose that every institution of education and learning proclaims that God's Word is foolishness, that there was no Creation, and that Christ did not rise? Using only your senses and your reason, you would have to agree with them. But God's Wisdom is greater than ours. He rules, as Psalm 110 says, right in the midst of His enemies. Therefore let God be true, and every man a liar (Rom. 3:4), for thus they shall always be proven to be.

Joshua, like Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness, was at the same time a priest and a king. He was crowned in such a manner that the earthly powers, in this case the Persians, continued to rule. So also when Christ was born, men from afar came and proclaimed the birth of the King of the Jews. Thirty-three years later the people paved the way for Him with palm branches and hosannas as He entered Jerusalem to win His throne. There the Roman governor asked Jesus plainly if He were a king, and Jesus answered plainly, that He was indeed a king, but His kingdom was not of this world. The nature of his kingdom is unlike anything that men know. Even though He was the Lord of all, the kings of the earth continue to rule at His bequest. From this you should learn that we should indeed honor the governments which God has established over us, but no one, no matter how much power he may have, can usurp the throne of Christ. He rules in the hearts of his people. Indeed, the witnesses who beheld the crowning of Joshua were to bring the word back to the Jews, so that they might know that Joshua the Priest was crowned as a king, not of a worldly kingdom, but of God's spiritual kingdom of grace. Joshua was not that king, but a type. Therefore God put words into the mouths of the witnesses, that they might explain to the people that even in this manner, One would come who would be both a Priest and King, and He would build a kingdom to which all men would come, both near and far.

The chief work of Joshua the High Priest was to oversee the building of the second temple. So also this was the chief work of Christ the Lord: "But Christ being come an high

priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. 9:11,12). This temple would be unlike the first, second, and third which were destroyed. The temple which Christ would build would be established with His own body and blood as the foundation, and all the members of His Church as its stones. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pe. 2:5). In Joshua's day, the Jews were mostly still in Babylon. Yet they came from afar to build up again the temple of the Lord. Even so, under the kingdom of Christ, men would come from far, the Gentiles from every nation, and would build up the temple, that is, the Holy Christian Church, which would abide forever.

And what is the special meaning that Christ is Prophet, Priest and King? It is not like a man who has three different jobs which he fills at different times. In Christ, his office as priest and king come together for one purpose: To bring peace. "Peace shall be between them both." Why does Jesus need to be both our King and our Priest? Because the peace He brings to us in an eternal peace. As our Priest He offers His own body and blood to atone for the sins of the world. As King he has the power and authority to accomplish that sacrifice. As Prophet, He has the power to preach this peace into our hearts. Only if Christ was both Priest and King could He bring eternal peace to all men. Without His priestly sacrifice, He could not atone for sin. Without His power and Godhead, His life would not have had the value necessary to do it. Without His preaching, no man would know that God, in Christ Jesus, has reconciled the world unto Himself. Only in one who is at the same time Prophet, Priest, and King, could we be redeemed.

My friends, by faith you have learned that God has kept this promise. You are one of those who have come from afar, and are even now building up His temple. You are built up in it when you believe His Word, and you engage in the work of building it up when you declare His Word to men. The Word of our Lord is fruitful. Do not doubt it. Do not fear men, nor their scoffing. Though Christians, because of their faith, are the laughing stock of this world, it is not us they laugh at, but God. But as it is His Word, so also He alone can take vengeance upon those who scoff. As for us, the vengeance we take upon them is to love them, and to hold Christ before their eyes. God's Word of prophecy has saved our hearts from the darkness of this world, and it shall save others also, perhaps even the very men who laugh at you. May God grant that you persevere until the day that all those from afar are brought into the temple of the Lord, His Holy Christian Church. Amen.