

Zechariah 6:9-15

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/zech/zech-6/zechariah-69-15/>

The LORD commands the prophet Zechariah to take a gift from certain exiles and crown Joshua, the high priest, for he is a picture of the High Priest and King who will build the temple of the LORD.

After Zechariah finished describing his eight visions, he now spells out a command he received from the LORD regarding the coronation of Joshua, the high priest of the returning Judean exiles. He began by saying, *The word of the LORD also came to me* (vs 9). The Hebrew term for *word* is “dābhār.” It is the same word used for “thing, event, or matter” (Proverbs 11:13; 17:9; 1 Kings 14:19). That is why the biblical prophets could say they “saw words” when referring to objects or events (Amos 1:1; Isaiah 2:1). Thus, the *word* is a message that requires actions from its recipient (s) because it deals with a situation or an event.

The Hebrew term for *LORD* is “Yahweh,” the covenant name of God. That name speaks of God’s character or essence (Exodus 34:6) and His relationship with His covenant people (Exodus 3:14). Thus, the prophet told his audience that the message came from God. He gave it to Zechariah for the benefit of His covenant people.

In prophetic literature, the *word of the LORD* is a technical expression referring to God’s revelation (Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1). This formula gives credibility to the prophet’s message. It tells us that the prophet received a message directly from *the LORD* either by hearing His voice (Isaiah 6:8) or by seeing a vision (Amos 7:1).

The *word of the LORD* to His prophets was more than a mere speech. It was a medium of God’s activity as promises, threats, exhortation, and creative power. It came from *the LORD* to the prophets, who would relay the message to the chosen people. When hearing the *word of the LORD* from the mouth of the prophets, the people were to obey the stipulations therein to receive God’s blessings and approval. In this case, the *word* reveals God’s will and power. That divine *word came to Zechariah*, asking him to *take an offering from the exiles* (vs 10).

The word *offering* is not in the Hebrew text, but the NASB translators added it to smooth out the translation. This addition fits the context because the next verse mentions the gift Zechariah was to *take from the exiles* (silver and gold; verse 11). The *offering* was to come from three individuals, namely, *Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah* (vs 10).

The name *Heldai* occurs here and in one other place in the Old Testament (1 Chronicles 27:15). But the person so named in 1 Chronicles was not the same as the one listed in Zechariah since he lived centuries earlier, during the time of David and was among his warriors (1 Chronicles 27:15). The name *Tobijah* occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament and probably refers to a different person also (see Ezra 2:60; Nehemiah 2:10, 19). The name *Jedaiah* appears in Ezra 2:36.

The prophet Zechariah was to *go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon* (vs 10). That Zechariah would depart *the same day* to receive the gift indicates the importance and urgency of the message. He was to go without delay to *the house of Josiah*. There he would receive the gift from the men who had recently *arrived from Babylon*.

The man *Josiah* was *the son of Zephaniah*. *Josiah's* father (or grandfather) was probably the “priest” mentioned in Jeremiah 29:29, who read a letter of encouragement to “Jeremiah the prophet” and was executed later during the Babylonian invasion (2 Kings 25:18–21). If so, *Josiah* came from a priestly family. Since the three newly returned exiles—*Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah*—were lodging at *Josiah's* home and had some resources, God instructed Zechariah to *take an offering* from them to help rebuild the temple.

The *LORD* then repeated the command and specified the items Zechariah was to receive from the three individuals. He declared, *Take silver and gold* (vs 11). The verb *take* often means to seize or grab hold of something. Sometimes, it conveys the idea of taking something by force. In our context, however, it evokes the idea of initiative concerning someone's actions. That is, Zechariah was to make his request known to the men to receive the gift. The purpose of receiving the *silver and gold* was to *make an ornate crown and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest* (vs 11).

The noun translated as *crown* (“*āṭārôt*” in Hebrew) comes from a verb meaning to surround or encircle. It refers to a circlet usually made of precious metals and worn by royalty (2 Samuel 12:30; 1 Chronicles 20:2; Esther 8:15; Revelation 4:4). Sometimes, however, ancient people used it to adorn a person worthy of honor in a celebration. In Zechariah, the person of honor was *Joshua, the high priest* who represented the head of Judah's religious leadership in Zechariah's day (Haggai 1:1). At that time, Zerubbabel represented the head of Judah's civil leadership (Haggai 1:1).

The English name *Joshua* is the transliteration of the Hebrew word “*Yeshua,*” a name meaning “Yahweh saves” or “Yahweh is salvation.” It is the Hebrew term transliterated into English as “Jesus” in the New Testament (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31). *Joshua, not Zerubbabel,* was to receive the *crown*.

The reason is twofold. First, *the LORD* chose *Joshua* to ensure His people did not mistakenly think Zerubbabel was the *Branch*—the promised Messiah, Son of David. Since Zerubbabel was from the line of David, he would fit the people's expectation for the Messiah promised in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 7:12-13; Psalm 110:2, 4).

Instead, *the LORD* used *Joshua* as a picture of a future high priest who would also be a ruler. This pictures the future Messiah as being both a priest as well as a king. Further, since *Joshua's* name means “Yahweh saves” or “Yahweh is salvation,” it indicates that the Messiah would save His people. This is the meaning of “Jesus,” the name of the promised Messiah (Matthew 1:21).

However, *Joshua the high priest* could not become a king at that time because it was against the Old Testament law for someone to fill more than one role. An example of the application of this

law is in 2 Chronicles, where the LORD struck King Uzziah with leprosy for performing priestly duties in “the temple of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 26:16–21). Therefore, the coronation of *Joshua* foreshadowed a future High Priest who could fill the two roles. Jesus is both a king, the Son of David, as well as our High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:10).

Then, *the LORD* instructed Zechariah to speak to *Joshua*; He used the prophetic formula, *Thus says the LORD of hosts* (vs 12) before telling the prophet what to say. The term translated as *host* is “Sabaoth” in the Hebrew language. It means “armies” and often refers to the angelic armies of heaven (1 Samuel 1:3). It occurs in at least two places in the New Testament as a Hebrew term in a Greek passage (Romans 9:29 and James 5:4).

The phrase *the LORD of hosts* often describes God’s power as a warrior leading His angelic army to defeat evil and the enemy (Amos 5:16; 9:5; Habakkuk 2:17). Here and elsewhere in Zechariah, the phrase demonstrates God’s power as the supreme warrior who has complete control over all human affairs. Yes, *the LORD* is all-powerful. That is why He commanded Zechariah to speak to *Joshua* in these terms: *Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is* (vs 12).

The particle translated *behold* means “see.” The prophet used it to call attention to the words he was about to say to prepare his audience to focus and listen carefully. As Zechariah’s listeners gave undivided attention to his message, they discovered that *Joshua’s crown* was symbolic because it represented another *man whose name was Branch*.

The term *Branch* (“*šemach*” in Hebrew) comes from a verb meaning “to sprout.” It refers either to trees or vines (Genesis 2:5; Exodus 10:5). In the Bible, branches often picture healthy and productive trees or vines (Genesis 40:10). Ezekiel captures this idea well when he refers to a vineyard “fruitful and full of branches because of abundant waters” (Ezekiel 19:10).

In the prophetic books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the *branch* is a technical term referring to a rightful heir of an established Davidic family. It portrays the Messiah coming from the line of David, as God had promised (2 Samuel 7:12-13). The Messiah will shoot out from the line of David, *for He will branch out from where He is*. As Isaiah declared, “A shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit” (Isaiah 11:1).

The expression *for He will branch out from where He is* is a wordplay of the term “*šemach*” meaning *branch*. It speaks of the place where the Messiah would emerge (*from where He is*) to *build the temple of the LORD*. The *temple* is the place where God’s people can experience His presence. It is where His covenant people meet with Him to receive the forgiveness of their sins, thereby allowing them to fellowship with Him. The language here is figurative. The *temple* in view does not refer to the one repaired under *Joshua* and Zerubbabel, the leaders who returned to Jerusalem with the exiles. Instead, it refers to the *temple* the Messiah will build when he comes to reign with full authority and power (Ezekiel 40-47).

The prophet Zechariah repeated the same thought for emphasis and said, *Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD* (vs 13). At this point, the reader or listener is clear about the mission of the *Branch*. It is *He who will build the temple*, not *Joshua* or Zerubbabel. This *temple*

that the future Messiah will build is likely spoken of in Ezekiel chapters 40-47. This best seems to fit as a temple built during the thousand-year reign of Jesus on the current earth (Revelation 20:1-4).

Not only will the future Messiah, the *Branch*, build God's temple, but also, *He will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne* (vs 13). When Jesus returns, He will defeat the nations who gathered against Him (Revelation 19:11-21). Then He will set up His kingdom on this earth, which will last for a thousand years. After the thousand-year period is completed, Satan will be released from the abyss (his prison during the thousand-year kingdom) and he will stir the nations to rebel one last time. Then the current earth will be destroyed, and a new heaven and earth raised in its place (Revelation 21:1).

The term *honor* ("hodh" in Hebrew) often serves as a royal attribute of a ruler (Jeremiah 22:18). It is often translated as "splendor" and is used for both God and man. When used for God, it describes His lordship in creation and history. He is the all-powerful King who created everything. The response to His "honor" is the exaltation of His name (Psalm 148:11-13). As the psalmist David declares in his prayer:

"Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and strengthen everyone. Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name."
(1 Chronicles 29:11-13)

When used for an earthly king, the term *honor* speaks of his privileged position among the covenant community as the vice-regent of God. For example, "The LORD highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal majesty which had not been on any king before him in Israel" (1 Chronicles 29:25). In Zechariah, the person worthy of royal *honor* is the future Messiah, who is the *Branch*. He will be both God as well as human.

Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices (vs 13). That means there will be perfect harmony between the *two offices*. The perfect harmony will exist because it is joined in one being—Jesus.

The New Testament identifies Jesus Christ as that *Branch*. He is God's future leader, who will be both king and priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1, 15; Psalm 110:4). He will fill the two roles of king and priest in perfect harmony because He is fully God and fully man. He will rule with full power and majesty (Daniel 2:44).

Zechariah now explained the immediate significance of the coronation ceremony to his readers. He told them the *crown* was not to stay on the head of *Joshua the high priest* forever. Instead, it would remain in *the temple of the LORD*. The purpose was to serve as *a reminder in the temple of the LORD to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah* (vs 14).

This list of Jewish returnees from Babylon has some minor changes from the previous list. The name *Helem* occurs in place of *Heldai*, but it is probably a nickname for the same person (verse 10). Also, the name *Hen* is likely a nickname for *Josiah*. Thus, the *crown* placed in the rebuilt *temple* would commemorate the generosity of *Heldai*, *Tobijah*, and *Jedaiah*, who gave the *silver and gold* to make it, and the hospitality of *Josiah*, who opened his home for the Jewish returnees to lodge.

Zachariah then predicts that *those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD* (vs 15). The immediate fulfillment of this assertion could refer to the gift of the three men who had just come from Babylon and who had donated to rebuild the temple.

Those *who were far off* could also refer to those Jews still living in the diaspora in Zechariah's day. They would come from afar and support the rebuilding of *the LORD's temple*. Their contribution toward the *temple's* success would give them a sense of belonging as they anticipated the day when they would return and worship their Suzerain (or Ruler) God in the *temple*.

This prophecy could also apply to Ezekiel's temple that will be built by the Messiah, likely during the thousand-year reign (Revelation 20:4-5). This coming of people from *far off* could also apply to Ezekiel's temple, as it will be built after God returns His people who were scattered among the nations to the land of Israel/Judah (Ezekiel 36:24).

Then, Zechariah declared, *You will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you* (vs 15). The fulfillment of this prophecy would authenticate the prophet's commission as the LORD's emissary. But obedience was a condition for the accomplishment of the promise. As the prophet stated, *It will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God* (vs 15). A term of God's covenant/contract with His people is that He would restore them once they repented and returned to Him (Deuteronomy 30:1-4).

The clause *if you completely obey the LORD your God* is a verbatim quote from Deuteronomy 28, the chapter in which the LORD spelled out the blessings and curses awaiting His covenant people depending on their chosen behavior in the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 28:1). This clause reminded the Judeans of their privileged position before God. It reminded them that there were consequences for their choices.

Indeed, the LORD had a covenant relationship with Israel and Judah, taking them as His "own possession among all the peoples" and graciously granted them the privilege of being "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). To fulfill the role God assigned them required faithfulness. God would always keep His part of the covenant agreement because He is "a God of faithfulness" (Deuteronomy 32:4). But Israel and Judah failed to do so, causing God to discipline them by sending them into captivity, consistent with the terms of the covenant agreement (Deuteronomy 28:49-50; 2 Kings 17:23, 25:11). In the book of Zechariah, the prophet challenged the people of Judah to act faithfully by obeying God, and promised that they would in turn see the fulfillment of God's covenant promise.

Biblical Text

⁹ The word of the LORD also came to me, saying, ¹⁰ “Take *an offering* from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah; and you go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon. ¹¹ Take silver and gold, make an *ornate* crown and set *it* on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹² Then say to him, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD. ¹³ Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”” ¹⁴ Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the LORD to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Hen the son of Zephaniah. ¹⁵ Those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD.” Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And it will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God.