

CHAPTER 6

The two kingdoms of providence and grace are what we are all very nearly interested in, and therefore are concerned to acquaint ourselves with, all our temporal affairs being in a necessary subjection to divine Providence, and all our spiritual and eternal concerns in a necessary dependence upon divine grace; and these two are represented to us in this chapter — the former by a vision, the latter by a type. Here is,

- I. God, as King of nations, ruling the world by the ministry of angels, in the vision of the four chariots (v. 1-8).
- II. God, as King of saints, ruling the church by the mediation of Christ, in the figure of Joshua the high priest crowned, the ceremony performed, and then explained concerning Christ (v. 9-15).

~~301~~ ZECHARIAH 6:1-8

THE VISION OF THE FOUR CHARIOTS

The prophet is forward to receive this vision, and, as if he expected it, he *turned and lifted up his eyes and looked*. Though this was the seventh vision he had had, yet he did not think he had had enough; for the more we know of God and his will, if we know it aright, the more desirous we shall be to get a further acquaintance with God. Now observe here the sight that the prophet had of *four chariots* drawn by horses of divers colours, together with the explication of the sight, v. 1-5. He did not look long before he discovered that which was worth seeing, and which would serve very much for the encouraging of himself and his friends in this dark day. We are very much in the dark concerning the meaning of this vision. Some by the *four chariots* understand the four monarchies; and then they read (v. 5), *These are the four winds of the heavens*, and suppose that therein reference is had to ~~200~~ Daniel 7:2, where Daniel saw, in vision, the *four winds of the heavens striving upon the great sea*, representing the four monarchies. The Babylonian monarchy, they think, is here represented by the *red horses*, which are not afterwards mentioned, because that

monarchy was now extinct. The second chariot with the *black horses* is the Persian monarchy, which went forth northward against the Babylonians, and *quieted God's Spirit in the north country*, by executing his judgments on Babylon and freeing the Jews from their captivity. The *white*, the Grecians, *go forth after them* in the north, for they overthrow the Persians. The *grizzled*, the Romans, who conquered the Grecian empire, are said to *go forth towards the south country*, because Egypt, which lay southward, was the last branch of the Grecian empire that was subdued by the Romans. The *bay horses* had been with the *grizzled*, but afterwards went forth by themselves; and by these they understand the Goths and Vandals, who with their victorious arms walked to and fro through the earth, or the Seleucidae and Lagidae, the two branches of the Grecian empire. Thus Grotius and others.

But I incline rather to understand this vision more generally, as designing to represent the administration of the kingdom of Providence in the government of this lower world. The *angels* are often called the *chariots of God*, as ⁴¹⁸⁷Psalm 68:17; 18:10. The various providences of God concerning nations and churches are represented by the different colours of horses, ⁴¹⁸²Revelation 6:2, 4, 5, 8. And so we may observe here,

1. That the counsels and decrees of God are the spring and original of all events, and they are immovable, as *mountains of brass*. The *chariots* came *from between the two mountains*; for *God performs the thing that is appointed for us*: his appointments are the originals, and his performances are but copies from them; he does all *according to the counsel of his will*. We could as soon grasp the mountains in our arms as comprehend the divine counsels in our finite understandings, and as soon remove *mountains of brass* as alter any of God's purposes; for *he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* Whatever the providences of God are concerning us, as to public or private affairs, we should see them all coming from *between the mountains of brass*, and therefore see it as much our folly to quarrel with them as it is our duty to acquiesce in them. Who may say to God, *What doest thou, or why doest thou so?* ⁴¹²³Acts 2:23; 4:28.

2. That God executes his decrees in the works of Providence, which are as chariots, in which he rides as a prince in an open chariot, to show his glory to the world, in which, as in chariots of war, he rides forth *conquering and to conquer*, and triumphing over all the enemies of his glory and government. God is great and terrible in his doings (⁴¹⁶³Psalm 66:3), and in

them we see the goings of our God, our King, ^{<8924>}Psalm 68:24. His providences move swiftly and strongly as chariots, but all directed and governed by his infinite wisdom and sovereign will, as chariots by their drivers.

3. That the holy angels are the ministers of God's providence, and are employed by him, as *the armies of heaven*, for the executing of his counsels among *the inhabitants of the earth*; they are the *chariots*, or, which comes all to one, they are the horses that draw the chariots, great in power and might, and who, like the horse that God himself describes (^{<8909>}Job 39:19, etc.), are clothed with thunder, are terrible, but cannot be terrified nor made afraid; they are *chariots of fire, and horses of fire*, to carry one prophet to heaven and guard another on earth. They are as observant of and obsequious to the will of God as well-managed horses are to their rider or driver. Not that God needs them or their services, but he is pleased to make use of them, that he may put honour upon them, and encourage our trust in his providence.

4. That the events of Providence have different aspects and the face of the times often changes. The *horses in the first chariot* were *red*, signifying war and bloodshed, *blood to the horse-bridles*, ^{<8910>}Revelation 14:20. Those in the *second chariot* were *black*, signifying the dismal melancholy consequences of war; it puts all into mourning, lays all waste, introduces famines, and pestilences, and desolations, and makes whole lands to languish. Those in the *third chariot* were *white*, signifying the return of comfort, and peace, and prosperity, after these dark and dismal times: though God cause grief to the children of men, yet will he have compassion. Those in the *fourth chariot* were of a mixed colour, *grizzled* and *bay*; some *speckled* and *spotted*, and *ash-coloured*, signifying events of different complexions interwoven and counter-changed, a day of prosperity and a day of adversity set *the one over-against the other*. The cup of Providence in the hand of the Lord is *full of mixture*, ^{<8918>}Psalm 75:8.

5. That all the instruments of Providence, and all the events of it, come from God, and from him they receive their commissions and instructions (v. 5): *These are the four spirits of heaven, the four winds* (so some), which seem to blow as they list, from the various points of the compass; but God has them *in his fists* and brings them out of *his treasuries*. Or, rather, These are *the angels that go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth*, to attend upon him and minister to him, to behold his glory

in the upper world, which is their blessedness, and to serve his glory in their blessedness, and to serve his glory in this lower world, which is their business. They *stand before him* as the *Lord of the whole earth*, to receive orders from him and give up their accounts to him concerning their services on this earth, for it is all within his jurisdiction. But, when he appoints, they *go forth* as messengers of his counsels and ministers of his justice and mercy. Those secret motions and impulses upon the spirits of men by which the designs of Providence are carried on, some think, are these *four spirits of the heavens*, which *go forth from God* and fulfil what he appoints, who is *the God of the spirits of all flesh*.

6. That there is an admirable beauty in Providence, and one event serves for a balance to another (v. 6): *The black horses went forth*, carrying with them very dark and melancholy events, such as made every person and every thing look black; but presently *the white went forth after them*, carrying joy to those that mourned, and, by a new turn given to affairs, making them to look pleasant again. Such are God's dealings with his church and people: if the black horses go forth, the white ones presently go after them; for *as affliction abounds consolation much more abounds*.

7. That the common general aspect of providence is mixed and compounded. The *grizzled* and *bay horses* were both in the *fourth chariot* (v. 3), and though they went forth, at first, towards the *south country*, yet afterwards they *sought to walk to and fro through the earth* and were directed to do so, v. 7. If we go to and fro through the earth, we shall find the events of Providence neither all black nor all white, but ash-coloured, or gray, mixed of black and white. Such is the world we live in; that before us is unmixed. Here we are singing, at the same time, of *mercy and judgment*, and we must *sing unto God* of both (^{Psalm} Psalm 101:1) and labour to accommodate ourselves to God's will and design in the mixtures of Providence, rejoicing in our comforts as though we rejoiced not, because they have their allays, and weeping for our afflictions as though we wept not, because there is so much mercy mixed with them.

8. That God is well-pleased with all the operations of his own providence (v. 8): *These have quieted my spirit*, these *black horses* which denote extraordinary judgments, and the *white* ones which denote extraordinary deliverances, both which *went towards the north country*, while the common mixed providences went all the world over. These have *quieted my spirit in the north-country*, which had of late been the most remarkable

scene of action with reference to the church; that is, by these uncommon appearances and actings of providence God's wrath is executed upon the enemies of the church, and his favours are conferred upon the church, both which had long been deferred, and in both God had fulfilled his will, accomplished his word, and so *quieted his Spirit. The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake*; and, as he speaks, ^{<312>}Isaiah 1:24, made himself easy.

^{<310>}ZECHARIAH 6:9-15

THE CORONATION OF JOSHUA

God did not only at *sundry times*, but *in divers manners*, speak in time past by the prophets to his church. In the former part of this chapter he spoke by a vision, which only the prophet himself saw; here, in this latter part, he speaks by a sign, or type, which many saw, and which, as it was explained, was an illustrious prediction of the Messiah as the priest and king of his church. Here is,

I. The significant ceremony which God appointed, and that was the *coronation of Joshua* the high priest, v. 10, 11. It is observable that there should be two eminent types of Christ in the Old Testament that were both named *Joshua* (the same name with *Jesus*, and by the Septuagint, and in the New Testament, rendered *Jesus*, ^{<415>}Acts 7:45) — Joshua the chief captain, a type of Christ the captain of our salvation, and Joshua the chief priest, a type of Christ the high priest of our profession, and both in their day saviours and leaders into Canaan. And this is peculiar to Joshua the high priest, that here was something done to him by the divine appointment on purpose that he might be a type of Christ, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was both a king and a priest. Joshua was far from being ambitious of a crown, and the people of having a crowned head over them; but the prophet, to the great surprise of both, is ordered to crown Joshua as if he had been a king. And, as Zerubbabel's prudence and piety kept this from being any affront to him (as the setting up of a rival with him), so God's providence kept the kings of Persia from taking umbrage at it, as raising a rebellion against them. In doing what we are sure is God's pleasure, as this was, we may well venture men's displeasure.

1. Here were some Jews come from Babylon that brought an offering to the house of God, *some of the captivity*, here named to their honour, that *came from Babylon* on a visit to Jerusalem. They ought to have bidden a final farewell to Babylon, and to have come and settled with their brethren in their own land, and for their remissness and indifference in not doing so they thought to atone by this visit. Perhaps they came as ambassadors from the body of the Jews that were in Babylon, who lived there in ease and fulness; and, hearing that the building of the temple went on slowly for want of money, they sent them with an offering of gold and silver for the service of the house of God. Note, Those that by reason of distance, or otherwise, cannot forward a good work by their persons, must, as they are able, forward it by their purses; if some find hands, let others fill them.

2. Time and place are appointed for the prophet to meet them. They thought to bring their present to the priest, God's ordinary minister; but God has a prophet, an extraordinary one, ready to receive them and it, which would be an encouragement to them, who, in their captivity, had so often complained, *We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet*, and would invite them and others to re-settle in their own land, which then began to look like itself, like a holy land, when the Spirit of prophecy was revived in it. Zechariah was ordered to give them the meeting *the same day* they came (for when they had arrived they would *lose no time*, but present their offering immediately), and to bid them welcome, assuring them that God now accepted their gifts. He was to meet them in the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, who probably was receiver-general for the temple, and kept the treasures of it. They brought their gold and silver, to be employed about the temple, but God ordered it to be used in honour of One *greater than the temple*, ⁴¹⁶ Matthew 12:6.

3. Crowns are to be *made*, and *put upon the head of Joshua*, v. 11. It is supposed that there were two crowns provided, one of silver and the other of gold; the former (as some think) denoting his priestly dignity, the latter his kingly dignity. Or, rather, he being a priest already, and having a crown of gold, of pure gold, already, to signify his honour and power as a priest, these crowns of silver and gold both signify the *royal dignity*, the crown of silver being perhaps designed to typify the kingdom of the Messiah when he was here on earth, for then he was the *King of Israel* (⁴¹⁷ John 1:49), but the crown of gold his kingdom in his exalted state, the glory of which as far exceeded that of the former as gold does silver. The sun shines as gold, when he *goes forth in his strength*; and the beams of the moon, when she

walks in brightness, we call *silver beams*. Those that had worshipped the sun and moon shall now fall down before the golden and silver crowns of the exalted Redeemer, before whom the sun shall be ashamed and the moon confounded, being both out-shone.

II. The signification which God gave of this ceremony. Every one would be ready to ask, “What is the meaning of Joshua's being crowned thus?” And the prophet is as ready to tell them the meaning of it. Upon this speaking sign is grafted a prediction, and the sign was used to make it the more taken notice of and the better remembered. Now the promise is,

1. That God will, in the fulness of time, raise up a great high priest, like Joshua. Tell Joshua that he is but the figure of one that is to come, a faint shadow of him (v. 12): *Speak unto him in the name of the Lord of hosts, that the man whose name is The BRANCH shall grow up out of his place, out of Bethlehem the city of David, the place appointed for his birth; though the family be a root in a dry ground, yet this branch shall spring out of it, as in the spring, when the sun returns, the flowers spring out of the roots, in which they lay buried out of sight and out of mind. He shall grow up for himself (so some read it) propria virtute — by his own vital energy, shall be exalted in his own strength.*

2. That, as Joshua was an active useful instrument in building the temple, so *the man, the branch*, shall be the master-builder, the sole builder of the spiritual temple, the gospel-church. He *shall build the temple of the Lord*; and it is repeated (v. 13), *Even he shall build the temple of the Lord*. He shall grow up to do good, to be an instrument of God's glory and a great blessing to mankind. Note, The gospel-church is the *temple of the Lord*, a *spiritual house* (⁴⁰¹⁵1 Peter 2:5), a *holy temple*, (⁴⁰²¹Ephesians 2:21. In the temple God made discoveries of himself to his people, and there he received the service and homage of his people; so, in the gospel-church, the light of divine revelation shines by the word, and the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered. Now Christ is not only the foundation, but the founder, of this temple, by his Spirit and grace.

3. That Christ shall bear the glory. Glory is a burden, but not too heavy for him to bear who upholds all things. The cross was his glory, and he bore that; so was the crown *an exceeding weight of glory*, and he bears that. The *government is upon his shoulders*, and in it *he bears the glory*, (⁴⁰⁰⁶Isaiah 9:6. *They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's*

house, ^{<3024>}Isaiah 22:24. It becomes him, and he is *par negotio* — *well able to bear it*. The glory of the priesthood and royalty had been divided between the house of Aaron and that of David; but now he alone shall bear all the glory of both. That which he shall bear, which he shall undertake, shall be indeed the *glory of Israel*; and they must wait for that, and, in prospect of it, must be content in the want of that external glory which they formerly had. He shall bear such a glory as shall make the glory of this latter house greater than that of the former. He shall *lift up the glory* (so it may be read); the glory of Israel had been thrown down and depressed, but he shall raise it out of the dust.

4. That he shall have a throne, and be both priest and king upon his throne. A throne denotes both dignity and dominion, an exalted honour with an extensive power.

(1.) This priest shall be a king, and his office as a priest shall be no diminution to his dignity as a king: *He shall sit and rule upon his throne*. Christ, as a priest, ever lives to make intercession for us; but he does it sitting at his Father's right hand, as one having authority, ^{<3081>}Hebrews 8:1. We have *such a high priest* as Israel never had, for he is *set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*, which puts a prevailing virtue into his mediation; he that appears for us within the veil is one that sits and rules there. Christ, who is ordained to offer sacrifices for us, is authorized to give law to us. He will not save us unless we be willing that he should govern us. God has prepared him a throne *in the heavens*; and, if we would have any benefit by that, we must prepare him a throne in our hearts, and be willing and glad that he should *sit and rule upon that throne*; and to him every thought within us must be brought into obedience.

(2.) This king shall be a priest, a *priest upon his throne*. With the majesty and power of a king, he shall have the tenderness and simplicity of a priest, who, being *taken from among men*, is *ordained for men*, and *can have compassion on the ignorant*, ^{<3081>}Hebrews 5:1, 2. In all the acts of his government as a king he prosecutes the intentions of his grace as a priest. Let not therefore those that are his look upon his throne, though a throne of glory and a throne of judgment, with terror and amazement; for, as there is a *rainbow about the throne*, so he is a *priest upon the throne*.

5. That *the counsel of peace shall be between them both*. That is,

(1.) Between *Jehovah* and the *man the branch*, between the Father and the Son; the counsels concerning the peace to be made between God and man, by the mediation of Christ, shall be concerted (that is, shall *appear to have been* concerted) by Infinite Wisdom in the covenant of redemption; the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter. Or, rather,

(2.) Between the priest and the throne, between the priestly and kingly office of Jesus Christ. *The man the branch* must grow up to carry on a *counsel of peace*, peace on earth, and, in order to that, peace with heaven. God's thoughts towards us were *thoughts of peace*, and, in prosecution of them, he exalted his Son Christ Jesus to be *both a prince* and a *Saviour*; he gave him a throne, but with this proviso, that he should be a priest upon his throne, and by executing the two offices of a priest and king should bring about that great undertaking of man's reconciliation to God and happiness in God. Some think it alludes to the former government of the Jews' state, wherein the king and priest, separate officers, did take counsel one with another, for the maintenance of peace and prosperity in church and state, as did Zerubbabel and Joshua now. I may add, the *prophets of God helping them*. So shall the peace and welfare of the gospel-church, and of all believers, be wrought, though not by two separate persons, yet by virtue of two separate offices meeting in one — Christ purchasing all peace by his priesthood and maintaining and defending it by his kingdom; so Mr. Pemble. And his prophetic office is serviceable to both in this great design.

6. That there shall be a happy coalition between Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, and they shall both meet in Christ, the priest upon his throne, as the centre of their unity (v. 15): *Those that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord*. Some understand it of the Jews that were now afar off in Babylon, that staid behind in captivity, to the great discouragement of their brethren that had returned, who wanted their help in building the temple. Now God promises that many of them, and some of other nations too, proselyted to the Jewish religion, should come in, and lend a helping hand to the building of the temple, and many hands would make light work. The kings of Persia contributed to the building of the temple (^{<1168>}Ezra 6:8) and the furnishing of it, ^{<1079>}Ezra 7:19, 20. And, in after-times, Herod the Great, and others that were strangers, helped to beautify and enrich the temple. But it has a further reference to that *temple of the Lord* which *the man the branch* was to build. The Gentiles,

strangers afar off, shall help to build it, for from among them God will raise up ministers that shall be workers together with Christ about that building; and all the Gentile converts shall be stones added to this building, so that it shall *grow up to a holy temple*, ^{<402>}Ephesians 2:20-22. When God's temple is to be built he can fetch in those that are afar off and employ them in the building of it.

7. That the accomplishment of this will be a strong confirmation of the truth of God's word: *You shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me unto you*. That promise, that those that were afar off should come and assist them in *building the temple of the Lord*, was as it were the *giving of them a sign*; by this they might be assured that the other promises should be fulfilled in due time. This should be fulfilled now very speedily; it was so, for those that had been their enemies and accusers, in obedience to the king's edict, became their helpers and did speedily what they were ordered to do for the furtherance of the work, and by that means the work went on and was finished; see ^{<413>}Ezra 6:13, 14. Now, by this surprising assistance which they had from afar off in building the temple, they might know that Zechariah, who told them of it before, was sent of God, and that therefore his word concerning the man the branch should be fulfilled.

8. That these promises were strong obligations to obedience: "*For this shall come to pass* (you shall have help in building the temple) *if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God*. You shall have the help of foreigners in building the temple, if you will but set about it in good earnest yourselves." The assistance of others, instead of being an excuse for our slothfulness, should be a spur to our industry. "You shall have the benefit and comfort of all those promises if you make conscience of your duty." They must know that they are upon their good behaviour; and, though their God is coming towards them in a way of mercy, they cannot expect him to proceed in it unless they conform to his laws. Note, That which God requires of us, to qualify us for his favour, is obedience to his revealed will; and it must be a diligent obedience. We cannot *obey the voice of God* without a great deal of care and pains, nor will our obedience be accepted of God unless it be laboured by us.

III. The provision that was made to preserve the remembrance of this. *The crowns* that were used in this solemnity were not given to Joshua, but must be *kept for a memorial in the temple of the Lord*, v. 14. Either they were laid up in the temple treasury or (as the Jews' tradition is) they were

hung up in the windows of the temple, in the view of all, *in perpetuum rei memoriam* — *for a perpetual memorial*, for a traditional evidence of the promise of the Messiah and this typical transaction used for the confirmation of that promise. The crowns were delivered to those who found the materials (and some think their names were engraven on the crowns), to be preserved as a public testimony of their pious liberality and an encouragement to others in like manner to bring presents to the house of God. Note, Various means were used for the support of the faith of the Old-Testament saints, who waited for the consolation of Israel, till the time, the set time, for it came.