The Priestly King

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[0:00] Growing up, whenever I made to go out on family walks, either on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon,! One of my favorite things to do was skimming stones.

! I used to watch and wonder as my dad and brother sent these flat little stones skipping across the cam loch. And so all I wanted to do was to be able to do the same. So I'd start looking for stones, foraging across the banks, looking for ones just like they had. And when eventually my chosen champion was found, I'd rile back and launch this little stone with all the might my little arms could muster. In my mind, picturing my little stone dancing across the cam loch, but in reality, I only ever heard one big splash. Thankfully, my dad and brother were patient teachers.
And after some trial and error, I finally managed to crack it. And from that point on, I took great enjoyment from just watching a little stone jump on water. There really are few things more beautiful than skimming a stone out towards the setting sun across a quiet, glassy loch.
Now, the reason I say all that is because the word you'll find halfway through verse 12 is a word that's like a smooth skimming stone. You see, it skipped its way across the Old Testament, hop by hop, only touching down in certain places in the key times. The word I'm referring to is branch, a messianic title that refers to the promised rescuer of God's people.
A title that really does skim across the pages of the Old Testament out towards the setting sun of Jesus Christ. We see its first skims in Isaiah 4, jumping over and then touching down again in Jeremiah 33 and 23. And a few weeks ago, we saw its latest ripples when looking at Zechariah 3 with Joe.
[2:33] And here tonight, we see it touched down again, this time with JT in Zechariah 6, verses 9 to 15.

And like every previous skim, its ripples are going to leave us with a bigger impression of who this branch is and what it is he's going to do.
But you see, before we get there, before we look to the branch, we first need to base ourselves back into the context of Zechariah and see where this phrase reappears in. And for those of you who were here last week, you'll know that chapter 6, verse 8, marks the end of Zechariah's great visions.
We've had eight of them back to back. And here in verses 9 to 15, to round it all off, Zechariah is told to carry out a sign act. Now, if you're like me, you're probably asking, what on earth is a sign act? And thankfully, it's not as complicated as it sounds.
You see, a sign act is a visual sign. It visually demonstrates God's message. And they're quite common in the prophets. For example, Jeremiah was told to wear a yoke around his neck to visually symbolize submission to the Babylonians. Ezekiel, amongst other things, was told to build a model of the siege against Jerusalem. And in a couple chapters' time, we're going to see Zechariah go out into the fields to become a shepherd. But before that, he first must go and craft a crown. A crown really like no other. A crown that is truly unusual.
[4:37] Which takes us into our first point this evening. Because, you see, the first thing that makes it unusual is the time it's made. I mean, there's no king of Israel on the throne. No line of David ruling and reigning. Israel don't have a king, so why make a crown when there's no king to give it to?

The second thing that makes it unusual is how it's to be made. Where is Zechariah to get the resources for it? Well, look down with me to verse 9. And the word of the Lord came to me. Take from the exiles, Hildiah, Tobijah, and Jediah, who 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. It's from three exiles who've arrived back from Babylon. Three seemingly random men who just returned

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back to the land, and Zechariah is to go to them and collect silver and gold. A gold and silver crown. That seems a bit strange, does it not? I mean, I'm no goldsmith. That doesn't sound like the easiest crown to make, combining metals like that. Why not just a gold crown? Or just a silver crown? Why a mix of both? What's this silver and gold crown Zechariah is commanded to make all four? Well, the unusual crown is made for the most unusual coronation. Because look back down with me to verse 11.

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. Now, this is a point that should leave us all scratching our heads. What on earth is a high priest doing wearing a crown? Crowns are for kings, not priests, right? The way my mind works, I can't help picturing the look of Joshua's face when Zechariah started putting a crown on his head.

Zechariah, what are you doing? I'm no king. I'm a priest. Kings are kings, and priests are priests. They're distinct and separate. I mean, do you not remember what happened to King Uzziah, who started thinking he could act like a priest? He tried to burn incense on the altar to the Lord, something only a priest can do. And Zechariah, you know how that ended, right? He became a leper to the day of his death. He tried to burn incense while I'm here wearing a crown.

[7:38] Zechariah, are you trying to get me killed? I mean, you have to put up with my imagination. But that's how shocking this is. The high priest being crowned. What is this a sign of?

And that only starts to make sense when we take our eyes away from Joshua and down to verses 12 to 13.

Look down with me. 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.

What is this a visual sign of? Well, the high priest wearing a crown is a visual picture of the promised coming branch.

He will be the one who will, verse 13, bear royal honor and shall sit and rule on his throne. He will be the king God's people are longing for, someone who will rule and defend them.

[9:13] Rule and defend. That's what a biblical king does. And that's what God's people at this time in their history were longing for.

Someone to rule over them, to govern them, and to defend them. They were longing for a righteous leader to once again take his seat on the throne.

Because you see, the whole reason they'd ended up in exile in the first place was because that office had become filled with men who didn't rule righteously, and who didn't defend the people and protect them, but instead took advantage of them and oppressed them.

You see, God's people need a king. They need a lion from Judah, a righteous ruler and a fiercely strong defender on the throne.

And that's what's being promised him to them here. But not only that, look again with me to halfway through verse 13.

[10:26] What else does it say? And there, notice a little footnote. There can be read as he, so therefore, and he shall be a priest on his throne, and the council of peace shall be between them both.

The branch will be both king and priest. But what does it mean that he'll be a priest? Because, for most people, when they hear that word, what do they think of?

An old man who can't marry and wears a dog collar around his neck. Take that image, crumple it up, and throw it in the bin.

That's not what a priest is in the Bible. That's something invented by men, not God. When you hear the word priest, think more along the lines, of a holy butcher.

Because, in Hebrews 5, verse 1, it tells us very simply what the office of the high priest was all about in the Old Testament. It reads this, for every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

[11:48] The high priest was to represent the people before God, making atonement for their sins through sacrifice. A priest's job was a bloody one, continually offering animal sacrifices because the people sinned.

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So, the high priest was to make the payment for the people's sin. But not only that, Hebrews goes on to say that the high priest was someone who could deal gently with the ignorant and wayward. He was to make payment for sin and deal gently with the people. That's what a high priest did. He was to make atonement and he was to be gentle.
So, now, can we better see the beauty of these two offices coming together? I mean, really? One person being able to do all that? one person being able to be both king and priest? Someone who will rule in royal righteousness all for the good of his people, while at the same time stooping so low to serve them in paying the penalty for all their sins and failings?
[13:22] Someone so mighty and strong that he makes his enemies tremble, while at the same time being so gentle with his people in their sin and ignorance.

Can one man's hands really be so strong and yet so gentle? Can one man really be so royal and yet so humble?
can one man really be both lion and lamb? And the answer is yes.
The promised branch can. The Lord Jesus Christ is. He's the great priestly king.
Okay. So we've seen the unusual coronation. But now it's time to move on to our second point.
[14:31] Temple restoration. Because did you notice what we're told this priestly king will do? Look again with me to verse 13. Verse 13.

It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord. The priestly king is going to be an architect. You see that?
He's going to have a crown on his head and blueprints in his hands titled the temple of the Lord. I wonder if you ever thought of Jesus as an architect.
A royal and holy architect. He came as a king to rule his people. He came as a priest to redeem them.
But he also came as an architect to build them into something truly spectacular. If you're a Christian here tonight you're one of the living stones that Christ has taken and is using to build into the glorious temple of God.
[15:41] He's joining us together chiseling us down smoothing our hard edges so that we'd better join together. You see Christ is building his church his temple not in one place but across the world made up of believers from every tribe tongue and nation as he joins them to himself and to each other.

Brothers and sisters mine and yours mundane little lives are a part of something truly spectacular. We are a part of the universe's greatest ever building project and Christ has a blueprint in hand so we can trust he knows what he's doing because it looks messy doesn't it?
You look at the church and you look at other Christians and what a sorry looking bunch we are. We aren't much to look at are we? In the world's building projects we'd be amongst the last building blocks to be picked.
Too small too rigid too fragile too many hard edges too many soft ones but Christ has chosen you. If you're a Christian here today he's chosen you to be used in his great masterpiece that will one day shine in all its beauty.
[17:17] He's taken you and cemented you safely and securely in the final temple of God and nothing nothing can change that.

No enemies are going to be able to rip you out of place. No vandals are going to be able to chisel you out because the lion of Judah stands on guard.
The lion of Judah prowls around his walls. But what about my sin? You might be asking.
What about my dark thoughts, my selfish deeds, and my most repeated offenses? Can they wiggle me out of place and make me fall to the floor?
No, because the architect is also our high priest. He's dealt with it all. He's paid our debt in full and now meets us in our moments of sin.
[18:31] meets us in our particular moments of lust, doubt, fear, selfishness. I mean, you fill in the blank.

How have you failed him this week? And says, Father, forgive them for the sake of my blood. He ever lives to intercede for his people.
He ever lives to clean each stone. So, brothers and sisters, be encouraged. His blueprints have your name included in them.

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Weak, frail, inconsistent, you and me have a part to play in his great masterpiece. peace. But now as we come to our final point this evening, we go from temple restoration to some great motivation. As now it's time for the crown to come off. Look down with me to verse 14. And the crown shall be in the temple of the Lord.
[19:49] As a reminder to Helen, Tobijah, Jediah, and Han, the son of Zephaniah. The crown isn't to stay on Joshua's heads, because as we've seen already, it didn't belong to him.

It's to be placed in safe keeping in the temple. The temple that Zerubbabel and the people are building, the present temple that's under construction in Zechariah's day.
And look what encouragement is given to the people in verse 15. 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 will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God. To a people in the middle of rebuilding the present temple under Zerubbabel's leadership, which was no easy task, full of challenges and discouragements, to a people who'd already been convinced once before to put a halt to the whole thing, to a people like this, Zechariah closes with these words, those who are far off shall come help to build the temple of the Lord.
And you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. Notice the two things he assures the people of. People who are far off will come help them, and when they do, Zechariah will be proved true.
[21:26] Or in other words, you're going to be helped by people you don't even know yet. People far off are going to come help you shoulder the burden of temple building.

And when they do, you're going to look at Zechariah and think, man, he must be legit. But notice the end of verse 15. That's only going to come about if what?
If you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God. In other words, if you will keep listening to God's word, listening to him when he calls you to return to him, if you're not like your fathers who persisted in unrepentant sin, thinking God was trying to kill their joy rather than give them reason for it, and if you'll keep going with the work God's called you to do and not pack it all in, then guess what?
Those that are far off will come join you too. The work might be lonely, the work might be hard, the work might be tiring, but if you stay faithful, stay faithful in the seemingly mundane, it will be worthwhile.
I mean, what encouragement, right? What motivation given to this band of exiles to keep being faithful in the work God had given them to do and to keep listening to his word?
[23:02] To a people who likely felt isolated, small, insignificant, God says, keep building my house, even though it doesn't look like much right now, keep listening to my voice, stay close and dependent on me, and others will come and help you carry the burden.

And guess what? You look at Ezra chapter 6, and what do you find? The temple being completed and the work being finished, and God's word being proven true.
If the second temple was brought to completion as God promised, not by might, but by his spirit, using the ordinary faithfulness of his exiled people, bringing in and using those that were far off, how much more confident can we be?
Because for us, the Lord Jesus Christ has come, the promised priestly king has arrived, and he started construction of his final temple made up of men and women from all nations and tribes. others. And who's he using to build it? Well, those who were once outsiders, like you and me, people who were once far off from God in sin and rebellion, but have now been brought near.
[24:39] We are those who have been forgiven and commissioned. You see, not only are we stones in the final temple of God, we are also builders on the construction site.

So, brothers and sisters, let's stay faithful. Let's keep listening to God's word and returning to him. Let's keep going with the work he has given us to do.
And if that sounds like a lot of pressure, remember that Christ has obeyed perfectly in our place. And we have been united to him by his spirit.
We are covered by his perfection and have his spirit at work in our lives to empower us forward. He'll keep us faithful.
He'll keep drawing us back each time we wander, and it's in his strength we keep going with the work he's given us to do. Others are still to be brought in.

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[25:49] Other stones are to be joined, and other builders are to be employed. They may come in drips and drabs.

It might be double digit years of faithfulness for single digit fruit. But brothers and sisters, what other building project is worth being part of?
But to those of you here this evening that are not a part of God's building project, but instead are far off, that are cut off from God and need to return, come to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great priestly king, because he's the hero you so desperately need.
if you're looking for a righteous ruler, a king worth following, a man who will use his strength to defend you and not oppress you, look to Jesus.
If you're looking for somewhere to take your sin, looking for someone who can deal with the messiness of your past, and the dirtiness of your present, he's the one, the one who paid it all by dying on the cross.
[27:26] If you're looking for someone who will deal gently with you, whose strength is pure and good, come to Jesus.

He's strong to defend and he's gentle to serve. He's never domineering. Sinful, weak men are, but he's truly gentle.
He bears with his people and gently leads them and guides them. His arms are like bronze, but oh, how safe for those who follow.
Because maybe you're sitting here tonight aware of how far you've wandered. You've come here tonight off the back of a week, a weekend, giving in to sin and you're scared to return to him. Thinking what awaits you is a harsh response. Dear friends, take great comfort. He's gentle with the wayward.
[28:41] He's gentle with the ignorant. And as we start to bring things to an end, one of my favorite scenes in all of Narnia, I think illustrates this point so powerfully, is where scrawny little Edmund is rescued from the witch and returned back to Aslan.

Now, Edmund ended up imprisoned by the witch because he had betrayed Aslan, choosing to side with her, thinking she would give him power and pleasure, but all he became was a slave.
So, here you have the unfaithful, scrawny, little Edmund being brought back to Aslan, the mighty Lion King. you can see the vast armies behind him that he commands, you can see the sheer size of his paws, and what does he do?
He takes Edmund aside, walks with him at a slow pace away from everyone else, and has a gentle one-to-one.
I mean, in a couple chapters' time, you see Aslan ride out in battle, against his enemies. There you see him charging at a pace no war horse can match, roaring so fiercely that it sounds like thunder.
[30:16] But here, when one of his wayward sons comes home, he walks slowly at a pace that a child can match, and speaks gentle words that a wounded heart can hear.

If you're far off this evening, no matter how dirty or weak you may feel, come into the gentle and strong arms of Jesus Christ, the great priestly king.
come, take your place in his great masterpiece, alongside me and every other Christian in this room, and look forward to being a part of something that will last into eternity.
those he forgives, he commissions. So if you belong to Christ this evening, welcome to the team.
Let's keep going, and let's keep building, because he's not done with us yet. Let's pray in closing.
[31:37] Amen. Amen. Lord Jesus, we thank you for who you are, our great priestly king, with hands that are both fiercely strong and wonderfully gentle, hands callous from clutching your sword in battle, hands bloody for paying the price for our sins, and hands stained with concrete from joining us, your people, into the great temple of God.

Lord, thank you that you've chosen people like us to have a place in your great masterpiece, in your church, your temple.
Thank you that you used people like us to also build it. Those that were once far off in sin and rebellion, you've brought near and commissioned us in your service.
Lord, keep us faithful, keep us going, keep us confident in you to bring others in. Lord, I pray for any that are far off this evening.
Would they come to you tonight? Would they come into your strong and gentle arms and find rest for their souls? Lord, be with us now as we come to sing your praises once again.

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[33:10] encourage and strengthen us through the truths we are about to sing, all for your glory and our good.

In Jesus' name, amen. as

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