

Title: Faith-driven obedience
Text: Zechariah 6.1-15
Theme: The Sovereignty of God
Series: Zechariah #7
Prop Stmtnt: God's omniscience informs his plan and authority.

Read Text:

What causes you to be anxious? I think we can boil it down to basically two things: 1) Lack of knowledge and 2) Lack of control. Let's say for example that you are experiencing some very disconcerting physical symptoms. That is a prime opportunity for anxiety, right? For one, you probably do not know what is going on; and two, you are probably afraid to find out because you fear that whatever it is can't be cured. The same thing is true about your job, your company, your family, the weather, etc. You do not know all that is going on and even if you did, you do not have the power to control it.

So, here in Zechariah 6 we see that God knows and God acts. Therefore, based on that, we are to act. Knowing that he knows and that he acts encourages, sustains, motivates and drives our actions. Our actions are to be done conscientiously by faith and therefore in response and in harmony with his. This text is a reminder to us that God knows, God acts and he calls us to act. The fact that God knows and acts is a kindness to us because our lives are characterized by a fundamental lack of knowledge, right? You do not know everything and therefore you tend to get a bit anxious. Even if you knew more than you did, it would probably not be a good thing, right? If you actually knew how many people were on the road right now driving under the influence of medication, drugs, or alcohol, would you be less anxious or more anxious about your 17-year old kid driving? If you knew how many terror plots were going on right now, would you be more anxious or less anxious? We are tempted to be frustrated with God because he does not tell us more, but I think it is a kindness of God not to tell us more. We couldn't handle it. But what he tells us is ultimately a cause for trust and obedience.

Zechariah was a prophet in Israel who served around 500 B.C. The Jews were back in their land after the 70-year exile in Babylon, but their spiritual condition was weak and their political and military standing was pathetic. They had no Temple, and therefore no means by which they could offer sacrifices for their sins. How could God forgive their sin? How could God live with them? How could they be the people of God? It was very easy to assume that God had abandoned them, when in reality they were basically ignoring God. So, God speaks to his people through a man named Zechariah. This book is a record of the things that God said to him and the things that God showed him. The emphasis of the book is found in the very opening verses. You have returned to your land, but you must return to God. Come home to God. Outline of the first part of the book: Oracle, 8 visions, oracle. Opening Oracle – come home to God, 8 visions to support that, and a concluding oracle. Now, when you just read the book of Zechariah it can initially feel pretty intimidating, doesn't it? But, the more you read it, the more you see a pattern that starts to develop and that pattern points us to things that start to fall into place. For example, the first 6 chapters are one basic unit. They begin and end with an

oracle (a word from the LORD). In between the two oracles are 8 visions. Visions 1 and 8 are similar. So, if there is an opening and closing oracle, and if the opening and closing visions correspond to one another, then that usually means that what Zechariah saw was intended to be a literary device to draw us in to the central focal point which would be visions 4 and 5. Keep that in mind as we review these visions.

The first vision (1.7-17) is a vision of horsemen who have returned from patrolling the earth. The point is that God knows what is going on all over the world and he has not abandoned his people. The fact is, he has a plan for Jerusalem. She will prosper again.

The second vision (1.18-21) is a vision of 4 horns and 4 craftsmen who destroy those 4 horns. The 4 horns are empires that terrorize God's people and the craftsmen represent forces that will destroy those empires. God will deal with the enemies of his people.

The third vision (2.1-13) is a vision of a man who is measuring the city of Jerusalem, like a surveyor for building. The message is that Jerusalem is going to be bigger than ever. God has a plan for this city.

The fourth vision (3.1-10) is a vision of the high priest Joshua standing before God in filthy clothes and therefore guilty of offense and liable for condemnation. However, in a picture of the gospel, Joshua's filthy robe is removed and he is given a clean robe. The priest is now forgiven and seen as righteous and able to serve in the Temple.

The fifth vision (4.1-14) is a vision of a lampstand and 2 olive trees which illustrate the fact that the rebuilding of the Temple and the plan of God is not going to be done because God's people are clever, smart, strategic, connected, powerful and resourceful. Oh no. God's plan is not happening by our might or power, but by God's Spirit. That is why, our hope is not based on our present circumstances.

The sixth vision (5.1-4) is a vision of a flying banner or scroll that is a fearful reminder to those who are in rebellion to God that God's law sees all and is over all.

The seventh vision (5.5-11) is a vision of a woman in a basket being transported away from Israel and to Babylon, where a temple is being constructed for her. Evil cannot stay amongst God's people. God is going to deal with it. This vision is a warning to those in Babylon, to get out of there.

Finally, we come to the eighth and final vision and the final oracle of this first unit. (6.1-8), It, like the first vision, is a vision of 4 horses. In the first vision, the horsemen had returned from patrolling the earth and were giving their reports. In this vision, there are more horses. Instead of just single riders on a horse, there are 4 chariots, each with at least two strong horses that are being sent back out to patrol the earth. They returned with a report and are being sent out on a mission. What would you think if this morning on your way to church you were passed by a convoy of tanks? Chariots then are like tanks today. They mean one thing – war!

Behind all of the wars and terrorist attacks that we see is a battle that is being waged in a world that we cannot see. There is so much more going on than what we realize and God's plan is so much bigger and more complex than we could ever imagine. It really is overwhelming, but not to cause panic, but that we might stand in awe and live with confidence in God.

Some of the things that are revealed have an immediate application and fulfillment. In many cases, those same things also have an ultimate fulfillment. What is obvious is that there are some similarities between Zechariah and Revelation. Zechariah sees a vision of a scroll that is unrolled that has writing on both sides that warns people about the reality of God's law. Revelation focuses on a scroll that is rolled up which also has writing on both sides. The scroll in Revelation is sealed with seven seals and when the first 4 seals are broken, 4 horses with riders are sent into the earth. The horses are white, red, black and pale. In both cases, these horses are awesome, powerful, terrifying agents of judgment that are unstoppable and universal in their impact. Also, in both Zechariah and Revelation, Babylon symbolizes the world that is in rebellion to God.

I. **God knows and acts.** (1-8)

Like Zechariah, we live in the midst of world events. We are in it, not above it. We can only see what we experience. But God sees it all. The four horsemen come out from between the two mountains, which I take to be the Mount of Olives and Mount Zion in which Jerusalem sits. I do not know the significance of the mountains appearing as bronze. It could speak of their permanence, but I am not sure. Zechariah asks again, "What are these, my Lord" and is told that they are going out to the 4 winds of heaven after presenting themselves to the Lord. The word for wind is the same word for Spirit, which leads me to think that this mission they are sent on is a mission that is driven by the power of the Spirit of God. This is one of the ways that God is fulfilling his promise from 4.6. The destruction that ensues is linked to God's judgment. But notice the directions in which they are sent. They go to the north (Babylon) and to the south (Egypt). Babylon is technically not north, but all travel to Babylon went north and all travel from Babylon came from the north. So, the north came to mean Babylon. But, this reveals an interesting dynamic of this prophecy: Everything is from the vantage point of Jerusalem. Which underscores this important point.

A. **God always has his eye on his people.**

The OT people of God were the Jews. The NT people of God are the church. God sees the events of the world not only from the vantage point of heaven (7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 bowls), but also from the perspective of his people. God always has his eye on his people, because this is what his plan is about.

Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. She unleashed a fury against this city and her people that was exceedingly ruthless. Though raised up by God to discipline his people for their rebellion, Babylon used the opportunity to vent evil that is similar in tone to what we witness from ISIS today. Everyone knows that given a chance, ISIS would

unleash her hell upon Israel if it could. Today, Israel has an army, sophisticated weaponry, legendary espionage system, and a relentless devotion to security. But, in Zechariah's day, she had none of this. What was going to stop her enemies from destroying her again? Now Zechariah knows. God has agents and forces that you don't see. The final vision ends with this promise: "those who go toward the north country have set my Spirit at rest in the north country." In other words, the very seat of the enemies against the people of God will itself be destroyed. Israel will enjoy rest. And for a while, she did. The Medes and Persians fought with the Babylonians and eventually subdued them. Then the Greeks fought with the Persians until the Greeks eventually defeated them. Meanwhile, this left Israel alone, for a time. And yet, I believe that all of those events prefigured other events that are yet to take place. Daniel gives a great deal of attention to these matters and I think Zechariah's visions and their connection with John's visions in Revelation all tie together in some way. I do not know exactly how it will all happen, but this much is so fascinating. Here we are 2,500 years later and the focus of the world is still on Israel and her enemies. There is no way that this is coincidental.

God's knowledge of everything that is going on in this world informs and directs his actions. God knows and acts and he does so not only with an eye on his people, but God will ultimately save his people.

B. God will ultimately save his people.

If I asked you, "What is the worst possible thing that could happen to you?" how would you answer that if you were 3 years old? How would you answer it at 7, 10, 17, 25, or 75? The older you get, the more perspective you get, right? God operates from the perspective of eternity. His plan not only has an eye on us, but he does what is going to be the best from the perspective of eternity. Let me give you an example.

Did God save Jesus from death? There are two ways you can answer that, right? He did not save him from dying on the cross, but he did raise him from the dead. God did not save Jesus in the immediate sense, but he did save him in the ultimate sense. That is very important to understand. God never promised to save you or me from all of our immediate dangers and problems, but he did promise to save us ultimately. So, what matters more? Being saved from immediate danger or from eternal judgment? Obviously, the latter. Did you know that God has ordained that some of his children experience immediate danger (and death) as a means to carry out his ultimate plan?

Revelation 6 is the account of the seals on the scroll being broken. The first four, as I mentioned are the sending of the horses of judgment into the earth. Then comes the 5th seal. The breaking of the 5th seal appears to be the response of the people of the earth to God's judgments for their sin. Instead of repenting, they in turn unleash their fury against the followers of Christ. Those saints who had already died are asking God how much longer is this going to last? God tells them to rest "until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been." In other words, God has established a limit. Evil is on a leash and it will not win. But it will be evil. When that number of martyrs is reached, then the 6th seal is

broken and the fury of Christ is poured out on the earth. I believe that Zechariah 6 is a preview of Revelation 6. God does not always save us from immediate danger. He does save us from ultimate danger. But, even what God allows us to experience immediately is leveraged by him in carrying out his plan.

Beloved, the day will come when we will sit with the saints of the ages and will tell the stories of battles fought. We will learn then how our battles and our faithfulness all contributed to the plan of the ages. On that day when we hear of the tales of others faithful unto death, and see the threads of history woven into the incredible tapestry of God's plan, every act of faith, every faithful pursuit, every moment of obedience will be worth it. Live now, in view of that day. Your faithfulness now, by God's grace, will give you stories to tell then that will cause the hearts of others to sing even louder and longer of God's plan. Beloved, we don't know how it all fits together now. But we know that it does. That is why we can be faithful unto death. We can serve, no matter what. In the end, we win. And when we win, it is a victory that we enjoy forever. That is the final vision of Zechariah.

But notice this. All the while Zechariah is having all these visions, he is not doing a whole lot is he? He sure asks a lot of questions, as we would, but he is more of an observer. Now God calls him to get into the action. Notice the verbs of command: "take", "go" (v.10), "take", "make", "set" (v.11), "say" (12). Do you see the point? God calls us to act in ways we can see because God is acting behind the scenes in ways we cannot see. God calls us to obey because he has ordained our obedience as a means to carry out his plan. So, let me recap. The visions are evidence that God is moving empires, kings, armies, and nations by means of his forces that remain unseen to the common person. He is deeply committed to his people and has a plan to rescue them from their sin. But, this same sovereign God calls you to obey. He knows and is acting. So, what God calls you to do is in accordance with his will and plan. This is the faith that drives our obedience.

II. Now you know and must act (9-15)

But, what he asks you to do may not make sense in the moment. Look at what he tells Zechariah. Go to these 3 men who are from the exiles and take gold and silver from them in order to make a crown and then set that crown on the head of Joshua, the high priest, and publicly call him, "The Branch" because he is going to build the Temple of the LORD. Does that make any sense to you? What are the chances that these 3 men are going to willingly hand over their gold and silver so Zechariah can make a crown for a priest? Priests don't wear crowns! Kings wear crowns. Priests do not sit on thrones. In fact, there are no chairs in the Temple, except, the (what?) Mercy Seat. So, what is this unusual command pointing to? It is pointing to Christ!! Zechariah does not know this yet. He is simply commanded to obey. But right here, we see how God is using this immediate event to point to a greater event and to an even further event. This command now helps us understand an aspect of the 4th vision (chapter 3). Do you remember the scene in heaven where Joshua the high priest is clothed with dirty clothes and stands ready to be accused by Satan, only to have God rebuke him and shut him down. Joshua's filthy robe is taken away and a clean one is given to him. Then God tells Joshua that he

and his friends are a sign and that God is going to raise up his servant, the Branch, through whom he will bring salvation and peace. Then it dawned on me. Joshua not only is a picture of a sinner who is justified, but Joshua is at the same time a picture of Christ. When Christ became credited with our sin in the garden, it was like he was robbed with our filth and was open to accusation and condemnation. Satan's accusations were hurled through the words of those who rejected him. But, Christ did not more than just accept our filthy sin, he died. He died as the wages of sin. He died as the perfect sacrifice in our place. His death satisfied the just wrath of God, so when Satan opened his mouth to accuse Christ, the Father shut him down! Not only did Joshua get a new robe, but Joshua, got a new headpiece. He was given a new turban, which, back in chapter 3 anticipated this crown in chapter 6. It all fits together. Joshua, who at this time did not even have an altar to offer sacrifices was a preview of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Zechariah, you don't understand this now, but this guy is pointing to a day when the Branch will reign.

Isaiah 11

Joshua, the high priest is not only going to be instrumental in getting the Temple rebuilt, but Joshua is going to be a priest who rules alongside of Zerubbabel and together these two will be a picture of Christ who perfectly combines the office of priest and king. This is just one of the reasons why we have SO much to look forward to. Our life with Christ is going to be so absolutely exhilarating.

What does a king do? He rules. What does a priest do? He serves. He serves by representing his people before God. Here, these two offices are depicted as being combined into one person. 500 years later, Christ, the son of David, and son of God, came as the King, not only of the Jews, but of the world to rule his people. He was a ruler who loved his people. He fed them, clothed them, healed them, taught them, led them, touched them and lived among them. Then, as a priest, he offered up a perfect sacrifice for them, when he laid down his life on the altar of the cross and died in our place. He was the king, who has a priest, died in our place. The salvation that he offers brings with it a life that fascinating. For every person who trusts in Christ alone, Christ is their king who rules over them and their priest who represents them before the Father, and who makes each believer a temple that is built together with other believers into a holy temple, called the church.

Zechariah had no idea that God was going to do all this. All he knew was that he was to get take some gold and silver, make a crown put it on Joshua's head and call him the Branch who would build the Temple and as a priest sit on throne. Somehow, people from all over the world would help build the temple of God which will only validate that this is the word of the Lord. Beloved, God is acting behind the scenes which puts the wind of the Spirit into our obedience that he ordains for his purposes. Every act of obedience, is used by God to point people to Christ. What is it that God has called you to do?