

THE BRANCH

By Paul Penno

May 21, 2008

Sometimes it's not easy to know who's running the show. Pete's telling a friend how he'd lost his job. "Why did the foreman fire you?" the friend asks. "Oh," Pete says, "you know how foremen are. They stand around with their hands in their pockets watching everybody else work." His friend asks "But why did he let you go?" Pete answers, "All the other workers thought I was the foreman."

Usually it's not too hard to know who's running the show at the job or the school; but sometimes it's not so easy figuring out who's running the show called life. Some say it's the people with political clout who run the world, or the people with the most money, or maybe even the people in Hollywood. Others say, "I'm in charge of my destiny; I decide what happens in my life." Still others declare, "Nobody's really running this show; things just happen with no rhyme or reason." But the Bible tells us there really is somebody who runs this show.

Zechariah reminds us that there will come a day when God's victory will be final and complete, and all of His enemies will be destroyed forever. It may look dark and grim, we may sometimes be alarmed or confused, but always remember: God is running this show: He is undefeated and will always remain undefeated.

John Jay Chapman once offered this advice to all of those who belong to the God who runs this show: Have plenty of courage. God is stronger than the devil. We are on the winning side. God is running this show and defeating all His enemies.

Zech. 6:9-11: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 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; then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest."

In this vision the prophet was directed to take three men, Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who had recently come from Babylon, and to go the same day into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. Then he was to take silver and gold and make crowns and set them upon the head of Joshua the high priest. It is probable that these three men

who were thus chosen had come from Babylon for the express purpose of bringing silver and gold as an offering to the Lord for his temple. It is also probable that Josiah, in whose house the crowns were made, was a skillful workman in gold and silver.

The crowns were to be placed upon the head of Joshua that he might represent Christ the Branch. Zechariah was then to address Joshua, explaining the office and the work of Christ. When this solemn service should be finished, the crowns were to be placed in the temple in memory of the three who contributed the silver and the gold, and of him whose skill was shown in making the crowns. Two of these four men had two names each. Verses 10, 14. The vision ends with an assurance that the temple would be successfully rebuilt if the Jews would diligently obey the Lord.

One way to pinpoint who is running the show is to find out who's wearing the crown. Crowns have always been the sign of authority and Kingship. The ancient king Charlemagne wore an octagonal crown. On eight sides was a plaque of gold, and each plaque studded with emeralds, sapphires, and pearls. Richard the Lion Heart had a crown so heavy that two men had to stand on either side to hold his head. The crown that Queen Elizabeth wears is worth over \$20 million. Why spend so much money on a crown? Because it identifies who runs the show.

We have seen in our study of Zech. 3:7, 8 that Joshua and his companions were to be signs, or representatives, of Christ if they would be faithful to God. See verse 8, margin. In the present vision this promise is renewed to Joshua in the most impressive manner. Thus when Joshua stood with the crowns upon his head, he represented the kingly office of Christ, even as he represented the priestly office of the Saviour when he stood with the miter upon his head. Zech. 3:5; 6:11, 12. Zechariah said, when he placed the crowns upon the head of Joshua: "Behold the man whose name is Branch." Joshua was not the Branch, he was his sign, or representative. The Branch is Christ our Lord. Jer. 23:5, 6; 33:15, 16. Joshua was the high priest, and his office was represented by the linen miter; but when crowns were placed upon his head, it was designed to make him a sign of Christ our high priest after the order of Melchisedec, who was both king and priest. Heb. 7:1, 2. Moreover, when Christ comes in his glory, he will have upon his head many crowns (Rev. 19:11, 12), a fact represented by the crowns placed upon the head of Joshua. Joshua as high priest during the building of

the temple, represents Christ as our high priest under whom the temple of the Lord is built, composed of Jews and Gentiles redeemed by his blood. Eph. 2:19-22. The glory of building this spiritual temple belongs alone to Christ the Redeemer. Compare Zech. 6:13; 1 Pet. 2:3-6. Christ as a priest after the order of Melchisedec, was to sit down on the throne of God, indicating by this act that he was to share the dominion of the universe with his Father. Heb. 7:1, 2; 8:3; Ps. 110:1.

Zech. 6:12. "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."

This role belongs to the portrayal of Messiah as king, for temple building was a royal function. In Zechariah 3 the messianic reference of the Branch title is confirmed by the further identification of the Branch with the Isaianic Servant of the Lord: "For, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH." (v. 8). It is Joshua not in himself but as a symbol of Christ who is in view.

The Branch's identity as one who comes forth as the royal scion of David's dynasty is assigned the role of temple builder. Zech. 6:13: "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."

The two royal distinctions attributed to the Branch, his right to the throne and his prerogative of constructing the temple, remind us at once of God's covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:5-16). "He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever." 2 Sam. 7:13. At the typological level these royal promises were fulfilled in David's son Solomon and his successors, but Zechariah's prophecy looks beyond that to their ultimate fulfillment in the messianic Branch, that Son of David to whom it would be given to build an enduring house for God's name and the throne of whose kingdom God would establish forever (2 Sam. 7:13).

The covenantal origins of the royal grant to Christ go back before the making of the covenant with David to the intratrinitarian counsels before the world was, back to a primal divine pact. Though the covenants made between God and man in the course of human history were determined upon in eternity in the all-embracing divine

decrees, the actual covenanting between the parties does not occur until the creature party is on the scene.

It was in that eternal covenant that the cosmic kingdom of glory was granted to the Son as the reward for his faithful execution of the work the Father gave him to do (cf. Luke 22:29; John 17:4, 5). This covenantal commitment to the Son was renewed in the course of the historical administration of the covenant of grace. It came to earthly expression in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants: Christ was the promised seed of Abraham to whom pertained the promise of kingship and kingdom (Gal. 3:16) and Christ was the son of David to whom the dynastic promises of the Davidic covenant were directed. What Zech. 6:9-15 prophesies is the Father's fulfillment of the eternal covenant by bestowing the promised kingdom grant on the Son who came to earth as Jesus, the Christ of God, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1), and obediently carried out the stipulated task.

The true counsel of peace is between God and Christ on the throne of God in heaven. The God of peace has sent Jesus, "the Prince of peace," who is "our peace," preaching peace, "peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." Isa. 57:19.

In Zech. 6:12, 13 we read: "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; 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." As we read this, the mind involuntarily turns to the words of Christ in answer to the Jews who asked him for a sign to show that he had authority to drive the buyers and sellers and moneychangers out of the temple rebuilt by Herod: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 2:19. Blind because of their unbelief, the Jews caviled, and said: "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and will thou rear it up in three days?" "But he spake of the temple of his body," a temple not made with hands.

From those last two texts we see that Jesus—The BRANCH—builds the temple of the Lord by the power of the resurrection. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4); but he was just as much the Son of God before his resurrection as he was afterwards; and hundreds of years before he was manifest in Bethlehem he was sitting and ruling on the throne, "a priest for ever

after the order of Melchisedec.” Ps 110:1, 4. His own body was the true tabernacle; his name is Emmanuel,—“God with us;”—and so in his manifestation in the flesh, just as truly as it will be on the new earth, the tabernacle of God was with men, and God did in very deed dwell on the earth.

But that which was, is now; for Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday and today and for ever.” He says, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Therefore the tabernacle of God is still with men, and He dwells with them; as we read: “What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” 2 Cor. 6:16. Thus not only the body of Christ,—that body which was born of Mary,—but all his people, are the temple of God. “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom the whole building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Eph. 2:19-22.

The church as a whole is the body of Christ, but the same is true of each individual member. It is your body, and mine, as well as that which was born of Mary, that God has prepared for him to dwell in and to offer as a living sacrifice. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?” 1 Cor. 6:19. Christ himself is the temple of God, and “if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Cor. 5:17. Notice that it is when “the former things are passed away,” and he that sits upon the throne says, “Behold, I make all things new,” that the tabernacle of God is with men, and He dwells with them. Rev. 21:1-5. But “now are we the sons of God” by the power of the resurrection, and that which in the world to come will be true of all creation is even now the case with the true believer. God dwells in those who receive Christ, working through them to reconcile the world unto himself, even as he did through Christ.

God had not forgotten his promise. Centuries before, he had said to David that his throne shall be established, and the people of Israel should continue forever; and this promise he could not break. Said He:—

“My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.” Ps. 89:34-38.

Later still Isaiah had made the prophetic statement that:—

“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” Isa. 9:6, 7.

Here, as in the promise made to Abraham, we find that Christ is the seed. It is through Christ that David’s kingdom is to be established forever, and so when the angel Gabriel came to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus, he said:—

“Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Luke 1:31-33.

David understood that the promise concerning the establishment of his kingdom was to be fulfilled in this manner. On the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted the words of David in the sixteenth psalm: “Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad, moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Acts 2:29-31.

It was this assurance that caused David, like the other patriarchs, to die in full faith that the promise would be fulfilled.

Christ knew full well that the house of Jacob and the throne of David should endure forever, even while he was foretelling the utter destruction of the Jewish nation. When he stood before Pilate he acknowledged that he was a king, but indicated that the time had not yet come for him to manifest kingly power, by saying: “My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.” John 18:36.

After his resurrection, as he was about to ascend to the Father, his disciples asked him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Acts 1:6, 7. Immediately afterward he ascended to Heaven, to sit down at the right hand of God. Why he went there, and what he is doing there, will be briefly indicated by a few scriptures. Through the prophet John he said:—

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. 3:21.

So he has not yet received his kingdom, but sits upon his Father's throne, which is a throne of grace (Heb. 4:14-16), procuring pardon and salvation for all who come unto God by him. It was this work that the prophet Zechariah foretold in these words:—

"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; 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." Zech. 6:12, 13. As he sits upon a throne of grace, the kingdom in which he now rules must be a kingdom of grace. This is an entirely different kingdom from the kingdom of glory, and is designed to fit subjects for that kingdom. It is this kingdom of grace that is referred to in the following texts:—

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Col. 1:12-14.

"For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14:17.

It is a kingdom in which the Spirit of God is being used; and Christ said: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." Matt. 12:28.

The Spirit performs its work silently, as Jesus said: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. And so Jesus said of the kingdom of grace, when the Pharisees demanded when the kingdom of God

should come: “The kingdom of God cometh not with outward show; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is among you.” Luke 17:20, 21, marginal reading. By the coming of the kingdom of God, the Pharisees meant the coming of the Messiah, and he was already among them, “full of grace and truth.”

So it was this same kingdom that John was in when he said: “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Rev. 1:9.

Those who are in the kingdom of grace may expect to suffer tribulation, because tribulation works patience, and causes the sufferer to know more of the grace of God. But the kingdom of glory will put an end to all tribulation. So Jesus comforts the despised and sorrowing little band of disciples with the words: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Luke 12:32.

James says: “Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, *and heirs of the kingdom* which he hath promised to them that love him.” James 2:5. Here is the kingdom of which those rich in faith are only heirs; it is *promised* to those that love God, but they do not yet possess it. And to the same intent Peter, after mentioning the Christian graces,—faith, virtue, godliness, patience, brotherly kindness, charity, etc. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:10, 11.

Thus we see that the grace of God, which is freely dispensed while Christ sits upon the throne of grace, and by means of which we are enabled to overcome (Heb. 4:14-16), simply fits us for the kingdom of glory, into which an abundant entrance will be ministered to the faithful at the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And so Christ said:—

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the *throne of his glory* [not the throne of grace]: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand,

but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25:31-34.

While he sits upon his Father's throne, it is as a priest, counseling with his Father for the peace of mankind. David tells until what time he will remain there, saying, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." Acts 2:34, 35; Ps. 110:1.

From all these texts it is evident that Christ did not receive the kingdom at his first advent. Instead of having a kingdom, he had not so much as a place to lay his head. But he has ascended to the right hand of God, there to remain until the kingdom is given to him, and his enemies are made his footstool, when he will return to rid his kingdom of his enemies, and to plant his people Israel in their own land.

The parable of the ten pounds, as recorded by Luke, was given for the purpose of teaching this very thing. "And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading." Luke 19:11-15. Then follows the accounting with the servants, and the commendation of those who had been faithful; and the parable closes with these words: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." This is so plain as to need no comment. It shows that Christ has gone to Heaven to receive the kingdom, and that he will return when he has received it.

This presents a wonderful scene,—the Father and the Son counseling together for the peace of mankind, the great mass of whom choose rebellion rather than peace. Instead of loving peace and happiness, they, after their hardness and impenitent hearts, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance,

treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

“The man whose name is The BRANCH,” is Jesus Christ. He sits upon his Father’s throne (Rev. 3:21) and both together are counseling for the peace of those who are enemies and alienated in their minds by wicked works. Still further, read those most expressive words of Paul, “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” 2 Cor. 5:19. The humble birth, the life of poverty, and want, and temptation, and suffering, the agony in the garden, the reproaches and insults in the judgment-hall, and the cruel death upon the cross, were all manifestations of God’s good-will to men, and desire for peace among them.

Zech. 6:14: “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.”

Zech. 6:15 “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.”

By the ordering of God, the consummation of the kingdom is secured by way of probation, as a reward to be earned. We are confronted by this principle in the closing statement: “This shall come to pass if you [plural] diligently obey the voice of Yahweh, your God” (Zech. 6:15c). The condition in view is the obedient performance of a special probationary assignment. That accomplishment, that one act of righteousness, constitutes the legal, meritorious ground for receiving the heavenly reward. God’s kingdom of glory is the reward for the probationary obedience of the elect corporately. This act of probationary obedience is performed not by them but by Christ their representative—by the one for the many. It is a righteousness of God imputed to the elect by grace through faith. What we have then in Zech. 6:15c is the pre-incarnate Christ directing his people in faith to himself as their vicarious probationer, who secures for them God’s approbation and so puts them beyond probation. The function of probationer that Christ assumed as the true Israel-Servant was more basically his in terms of his identity as second Adam (Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:45-47). Hence, for the Son to covenant with the Father to become a second Adam meant he must win the promised messianic exaltation (which he shares with his own) as the reward for a victory

of obedience in a probationary mission.

Messiah's temple building presupposes his victorious warfare against Satan. That was the specific probationary task whose accomplishment established his right to requisition the materials and build God's temple, and indeed to take his place on the divine throne in the holy of holies.

Christ earns his exaltation as a due reward is the identification of his inheritance possession as something he has purchased. "Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people for his own possession" (Titus 2:13, 14; cf. Eph. 1:14). Giving the redeemed to him as his allotted portion is an act of justice, pure and simple. They belong to him by virtue of his paying the purchase price as stipulated in the supernal covenant of grant.

And the purchase price itself tells us again of the humiliation and suffering that was the appointed way to Christ's ultimate exaltation. "You were redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:18, 19; cf. Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:12). It was "with his own blood" that the Lord acquired the church, his bride (Acts 20:28; cf. Rev. 7:14, 19:7, 8; 21:2, 9). This note sounds forever in the music of heaven acclaiming the exalted Redeemer: "You are worthy to take the book and to open its seal; for you were slain and have purchased to God by your blood (a throng) from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).