

We have come to Zechariah's fifth vision. The first three were about the rebuilding of the temple. The two that followed addressed the leaders. This one is a message to the governor Zerubbabel regarding the completion of the temple.

*<sup>1</sup> And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep.* Zechariah 4:1 While all the visions were given at night, this is the only one in which Zechariah is said to be wakened out of a sound sleep. This shows us the vision was not a dream. Encounters with angelic beings often seem to take up all the energy of those who encounter them (Daniel 8:18<sup>i</sup>). This vision may have followed the fourth regarding on the same night after giving Zechariah time to rest. Recall that the previous vision was about the high priest Joshua and his sanctification for the work that lay ahead. The same angel that talked with him now awakens Zerubbabel out of his sleep. The fact that he recognized him as the same angel tells us that the angels have unique features and identities.

*<sup>2</sup> And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it.* Zechariah 4:2 The angel asked Zechariah to describe the vision. This lamp, though similar to the temple lampstand, is different in several ways. There is a bowl, probably a bit higher than the lamps, and seven tubes run from it to each lamp. Instead of one wick there are seven in each lamp, as each lip holds a wick, giving 49 flames in all. Perhaps the lamps encircled the bowl. And what is even more unique, the bowl is fed golden oil by the two olive trees, one on either side. In the temple the priest had to refill the oil that fed the flames on a regular basis, presumably each lamp had its own oil basin. Here it all happens without the touch of man. It is so unique that Zechariah asks three different times about the meaning behind this lamp (See verses 4, 11, 12).

The lampstand that God commanded Moses to have built for the Holy Place in the tabernacle was similar in that it was made of solid gold and had seven lamps, one in the middle and three on each side. In the temple Solomon built there were five such lamps on each side of the Holy Place. In this rebuilt temple there would again just be one such lamp. The lamp with its seven flames represents the seven spirits of God, like the seven eyes in the last vision. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5<sup>ii</sup>). Jesus is the light of the world (John 9:5<sup>iii</sup>). The number seven suggests that temple lampstand represents the divine light that illumines our darkness.

John the Beloved wrote, "*This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.*" John 3:19 So once again we see that the light is Jesus. He has sent this angel to give light to Zerubbabel, the word of the Lord. It is the word of the Lord that instructs the priest and governor what to do when they were wondering if they should continue the construction of the temple. It would give them hope and courage as it does with us.

*<sup>3</sup> And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.*” Zechariah 4:3 Here is the great difference with the lampstand in the temple. This one is fed *without* the labor of man. We’ll see that emphasis in the upcoming verses.

*<sup>4</sup> And I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?”<sup>5</sup> Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.”* Zechariah 4:4-5 Zechariah asks what “What are these,” probably referring to the trees and the lamps. The picture in its entirety is what the angel addresses in the next verse. It is what the vision is emphasizing. It sounds like the angel is surprised that Zechariah didn’t understand the symbolism. I think angels are generally surprised that we don’t readily understand the things of the spirit. It is the realm in which they live. Angels know we are God’s chosen, and yet we are so slow to understand things of the Spirit and so in need of help (Hebrews 4:12-13<sup>iv</sup>).

*<sup>6</sup> Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.*” Zechariah 4:6 Before I explain what I learned about each part, we need to get this overall message. The vision is a word from God to Zerubbabel to tell him that it isn’t about his leadership ability, charisma, ability to fire up the people, or about anything he can accomplish in his own power. It is the Spirit of God that will accomplish the work (Hosea 1:7<sup>v</sup>)! That is the declaration of the God of heaven’s armies, the LORD of hosts! In other words, Zerubbabel can’t get the job done but the Spirit of the Lord will see that it is done. That takes a huge burden off his shoulders. He will certainly act at God’s leading and use the skills that God has given him and his position of authority, but it is the Spirit of God that will see the work is done through His servants Joshua and Zerubbabel.

I have to tell you of a “Godincident” that happened just as I came to this verse. I had re-edited my devotional and put together the sermons on Acts for a book and was struggling with putting the numbers on the top outside corners of the page margins. It sounds like a little thing, but I had searched the web in the past and called people that knew MS Word and previously had to have the publisher do it. I just couldn’t find it and I knew it had to be simple. Well, my old nature got frustrated so I walked away from it and just let it alone. That night I woke in the middle of the night and just prayed again for help to figure this out and get the work done. When I came to this very verse the next morning, I decided to put page numbers on the sermon. The path to putting numbers on opposite margin corners came to me like someone was directing each step. Then I had to laugh at how God orchestrated it so that it took place just as I came to this verse, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” Ya think the Lord was trying to tell me something? I’m not as smart as I sometimes think I am. If I won’t just trust God, I can waste a whole lot of time. What an illustration to me of what Zerubbabel needed to hear for an infinitely greater task. The Spirit of God has the answers to practical things. We need God for everything. The golden oil needs to flow through us to illumine our darkness, but we must remember that the oil comes from God. There were even more encouraging words for Zerubbabel in the next verse.

*<sup>7</sup> Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"* Zechariah 4:7

Mountains that need to be moved are metaphors for tasks that seem impossible (Matthew 17:20<sup>vi</sup>). The rubble of the temple and walls, the compromise of God's people, and the demoralized conditions were a mountain of problems before Zerubbabel; but God said that He would take care of it all. Sometimes we need to see the goal in mind to keep us motivated along the way. Runners get a second wind when the finish line comes into view. So God gave Zerubbabel a vision to hold before his eyes (Proverbs 29:18<sup>vii</sup>). It was of Zerubbabel bringing forward the final stone of completion while all the people shouted, "The abundant favor of God be upon it!" The Hebrew word translated as "grace" here is also the word for favor. It is used twice, a typical Hebrew way of emphasizing the word. That's why I translated it "abundant favor."

There is also a very clear picture of God's final plan. We have seen in the previous chapters that we are the temple of God and each of us is a living stone in it (1 Corinthians 6:19<sup>viii</sup>). When that last stone, the last soul, comes to Jesus, the building will be finished (Revelation 7:9<sup>ix</sup>). Jesus, Himself, will put that soul in place as the top stone, and we will all shout, "What great grace God has had upon us! The abundant favor of God is upon us!" (Revelation 7:10-12<sup>x</sup>) We look at the rubble of the church now, the compromise of God's people, and the demoralized condition of the church and wonder how this mountain could ever be moved. I'll tell you how! Say it with me. **It's not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the LORD of hosts!**

The olive oil that flowed from those trees did not come from a manmade press. The volume and flow rate was not measured by man. It was all the supernatural work of God, and that is what we too must depend upon. We come up with all kinds of ideas and programs on our own. If this vision would have come to the modern church, we would start planting olive trees and be building golden lampstands and arguing about the size and design. Then we would look for a man named Zerubbabel and ask him to move a mountain. If people came to look at our weird lampstand, we'd write a book and promote it to the rest of the church as the only way to succeed. I've said many times that what we need is a book entitled *Real Church Growth*, and inside it would have print on only one page that read, "Listen to the Spirit and obey my Word." Signed, God! (Isaiah 66:2<sup>xi</sup>) That is the message of these visions. Numerical success can be meaningless. Cooperating with the Spirit of God brings lasting results (John 15:16<sup>xii</sup>).

*<sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>9</sup> "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.* Zechariah 4:8-9 This was a promise of certainty.

When a prophet was so specific his life was on the line. If it did not come to pass he could be stoned (Deuteronomy 18:20<sup>xiii</sup>). If Zerubbabel died before the temple was finished, Zechariah would be finished. With such a certain promise, Zerubbabel could see the finish line. He knew he would be crossing it. And when he did cross it the people would know Zechariah was God's messenger.

*10 For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. "These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth."* Zechariah 4:10 The people were discouraged with the size of the job before them and lack of resources. Their earnest beginning was stopped short by the lies of their neighbors to the king of Persia (Ezra 4:16<sup>xiv</sup>). There was so much to do and so little had been accomplished. The people had to be discouraged with the slow progress. But these are the very ones who will rejoice when they see Zerubbabel finish the work.

The Hebrew word translated as "plumb line" could mean "finishing stone" which would fit the text better. (Same word *eben* translated as stone in 3:9<sup>xv</sup>.) The plumb line is used during construction to see that things are straight. The finishing stone would refer to the promise that his hands would place that final stone. Either way, Zerubbabel started the work and he would finish it!

Then the angel answered Zechariah's question about the lamps. We saw the seven eyes in the last chapter (3:9<sup>xvi</sup>; Revelation 1:4<sup>xvii</sup>). They represented God's all-seeing omnipresence. God sees all of time and all places at once. It is impossible for His predictions not to come to pass. In Scripture the eye of God is open to the wicked to judge them and the righteous to show them favor (Amos 9:8<sup>xviii</sup>; Genesis 6:8<sup>xix</sup>) But in this case the seven lamps each have seven wicks. The angel hasn't yet explained the rest of the symbolic elements.

*11 Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?"*<sup>12</sup> *And a second time I answered and said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?"*<sup>13</sup> *He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord."*<sup>14</sup> *Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth."* Zechariah 4:11-14 Zechariah asked twice about the olive trees and the branches. The word "oil" is not in the original, only gold, and it is assumed that refers to the color of olive oil. Gold is a symbolic of holiness. The objects within the Holy Place were thus to be made of gold (Exodus 28:34<sup>xx</sup>). What was pouring through those branches was holy, the Holy Spirit. The angel asks if he knows what they represent. It's as if the angel wanted Zechariah to contemplate the symbolism and come up with the answer. It was as if he was saying, "Can't you figure out the answer to this one?"

The previous vision was about Joshua the high priest. This vision was for Zerubbabel the governor. Each of these offices are entered by anointing the person with oil that represents the Holy Spirit. Now can you figure it out? The Spirit of the Lord would pour through Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two anointed ones. Remember that God promised access to the heavenly courts if Joshua would walk in His ways and keep His charge (3:7<sup>xxi</sup>). These two anointed men would inspire the people through the power of the Spirit giving light, clarity and direction, as to how to complete the work. In other words, the 49 lights would represent God's people inspired and led to complete the temple by the Spirit flowing through the priest and governor. Their construction of the temple was

bringing light to the world. That is what we are to be, for Jesus told His followers they are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14<sup>xxii</sup>; possibly foreshadowing Revelation 11:3<sup>xxiii</sup>).

**We should be careful to note that this is not saying the priest and governor are going to get the job done.** That is the opposite of the message of verse 6! That is a dangerous tendency of man, to look to man. It is Israel saying, "We need a king like the other nations." (1 Samuel 8:6<sup>xxiv</sup>) It is how cults function. One person has too much authority and is looked to as the one who makes it all happen. The message here is that it is the Spirit of God that makes it happen. While God works through individuals, those individuals are nothing without Him (Philippians 2:13<sup>xxv</sup>).

Samson is God's illustration of life with and without God. When Samson was empowered by God, he could do superhuman tasks. When God left him, he was bound, blinded, and enslaved. But that does not mean God was done working in his life. Samson finished his life in the supernatural power of God (Judges 16:30<sup>xxvi</sup>).

Jesus gave an illustration that is very much like the message in this chapter. He said, *"I am the vine. You are the branches. If a person remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Without me you can do nothing."* John 15:5 Jesus is the priest king that Joshua and Zerubbabel together foreshadow. The sap must flow from Him through our lives if we are to build the temple, which is to find those who will become living stones.

Jesus spent three years preparing the disciples for His physical departure. After the resurrection, He didn't say, "I taught you; now go do it!" No! He said, "Wait in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high." (Acts 1:4-5<sup>xxvii</sup>) What He was saying was another way to say what God said through Zechariah, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit."

As Wayside goes forward, if we are to produce lasting fruit, we need the oil to flow. We each need God's Spirit to empower us and light our way. There are 49 lights here that can shine in our neighborhoods and places of employment that can direct those who will become living stones to God's spiritual construction site (Matthew 5:14<sup>xxviii</sup>). That is what a church should be. The Word of God is the hammer that shapes us (Jeremiah 23:29<sup>xxix</sup>). And King Jesus will place the last stone in place. He will return and we will meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17<sup>xxx</sup>). When He places that top stone, are you ready to shout, "May abundant favor be upon us!?" May it be so now and forever!

#### Questions

- 1 How is this lampstand different from the one in the temple?
- 2 How does the oil get to the lamps?
- 3 What does the light represent?
- 4 What was God saying to Zerubbabel? What was the promise to him?
- 5 What did the people shout?
- 6 How does keeping the final goal before us help us?
- 7 When will we shout what they shouted?
- 8 How can we relate to and learn from the vision?
- 9 What is the common mistake of man regarding this message?

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<sup>i</sup> **Daniel 8:18 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet.

<sup>ii</sup> **1 John 1:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

<sup>iii</sup> **John 9:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

<sup>iv</sup> **Hebrews 5:12-13 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,

<sup>13</sup> for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.

<sup>v</sup> **Hosea 1:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen."

<sup>vi</sup> **Matthew 17:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

<sup>vii</sup> **Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)**

<sup>18</sup> Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.

<sup>viii</sup> **1 Corinthians 6:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

<sup>ix</sup> **Revelation 7:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

<sup>x</sup> **Revelation 7:10-12 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" <sup>11</sup> And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

<sup>xi</sup> **Isaiah 66:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

<sup>xii</sup> **John 15:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

<sup>xiii</sup> **Deuteronomy 18:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.'

<sup>xiv</sup> **Ezra 4:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> We make known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls finished, you will then have no possession in the province Beyond the River."

<sup>xv</sup> **Zechariah 3:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.

<sup>xvi</sup> **Zechariah 3:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.

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xvii **Revelation 1:4 (ESV)**

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,

xviii **Amos 9:8 (ESV)**

8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," declares the LORD.

xix **Genesis 6:8 (ESV)**

8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

xx **Exodus 38:24 (KJV)**

24 All the gold that was occupied for the work in all the work of the holy *place*, even the gold of the offering, was twenty and nine talents, and seven hundred and thirty shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary.

xxi **Zechariah 3:7 (ESV)**

7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.

xxii **Matthew 5:14 (ESV)**

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

xxiii **Revelation 11:3 (ESV)**

3 And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."

xxiv **1 Samuel 8:6 (ESV)**

6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD.

xxv **Philippians 2:13 (ESV)**

13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

xxvi **Judges 16:30 (ESV)**

30 And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.

xxvii **Acts 1:4-5 (ESV)**

4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

xxviii **Matthew 5:14 (ESV)**

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

xxix **Jeremiah 23:29 (ESV)**

29 Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

xxx **1 Thessalonians 4:17 (ESV)**

17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.