A Message from Zechariah 4

The Lampstand, the Two Olive Trees, and the Day of Small Things

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We are reading in Zechariah chapter 4.

> *"And the angel that talked with me came again and waked me as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and he said unto me, What seest thou? I said, I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with a bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps which are upon the top thereof. And two olive trees beside it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on the left of it."*
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> *"And I answered and spoke to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? And the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my lord."*
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> *"And he answered and spoke unto me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. And he shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it."*
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> *"And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands shall finish it. And thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? Yea, they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. These are the eyes of Jehovah which run to and fro in the whole earth."*
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> *"And I answered and said unto him, What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left? And I answered the second time and said unto him, What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes that empty the gold out of themselves? And he spoke unto me, saying, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my lord. And he said, These are the two sons of oil that stand before the Lord of the whole earth."*

The Day of Small Things

This chapter is set in a time like the present — a day of small things. It is not right to despise the day of small things, because we have to do with a very great God. The prophet Zechariah was a companion of the prophet Haggai, and these two prophesied partly together. The first prophecy in this book is dated

just before the last prophecy of Haggai, so that Zechariah was fully identifying himself with Haggai's corrective ministry, even though his own gift was more that of a prophet of coming glory.

It is worth noting that when Scripture speaks of the remnant prospering under the prophesying of these two, it says under Haggai the prophet and Zechariah — dropping the title prophet from Zechariah's name. The nature of Haggai's ministry was corrective, and the word prophet is stamped on his name precisely because corrective ministry tends to be unwelcome. There are many who are glad to hear of coming glories but have little appetite for correction. So God has been careful to mark Haggai plainly as His prophet.

The first six verses of Zechariah chapter 1 overlap in spirit with Haggai's ministry, confirming it — in the mouth of two or three witnesses everything is established. Then come the great visions which are the distinctive gift of Zechariah, and this chapter contains one of the most important of them.

The Vision: Gold, Oil, and Wood

The vision itself can be summarized simply. There is a lampstand of gold, with a bowl of gold on top. From the bowl run pipes — seven pipes to each of the seven lamps, making forty-nine pipes in total. The emphasis on seven is everywhere: seven lamps, seven times seven pipes. Seven is the number of completeness and fullness in Scripture. The supply of oil is inexhaustible and always at the ready to feed this great light.

Two olive trees stand beside the lampstand, one on each side. From particular branches of these trees, through two golden pipes, oil flows into the bowl above. The bowl is always full. It is possible that the golden bowl speaks particularly of the Lord's person, and the oil, of course, is a type of the Holy Spirit — which is the whole point of verse 6: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts.

There are really only two materials in this vision: gold and wood — just as in the ark of the covenant. The candlestick in the tabernacle was all pure gold, speaking of divine glory. But here there are also two trees, rooted in the earth. This is not a heavenly scene enclosed within a tabernacle. The olive trees are connected with the earth, as the olive is throughout Scripture — Romans 11 speaks of the olive tree in connection with Israel and with earthly blessing. And the olive is abundantly fruitful, speaking of an inexhaustible supply. As the Lord said of Himself, God gives the Spirit not by measure — there is no metering out of the Spirit to any portion less than fullness.

It is also worth noting in verse 12 that Darby's translation renders the two golden pipes as emptying the gold out of themselves. The word oil is in italics in the received text, meaning it was added by the translators. What is actually said is that they empty gold out of themselves. The Holy Spirit is God — and this way of speaking points to that divinity. It is like the pouring of gold itself into the bowl, so that

the bowl is always full and the great light is always fed.

Not by Might nor by Power — But by My Spirit

When the angel asks Zechariah, knowest thou not what these are?, we might expect the answer to explain the symbols in detail. But the answer given is: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts. That is the essence of the whole vision. The Spirit of God gives effect to the glories of Christ. The Lord Jesus never did anything apart from the action of the Spirit — from His conception, to His anointing at baptism, to every word He spoke and every work He did, to His very resurrection from the dead. Romans 1:4 speaks of His being designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead. There is not a moment from His conception to His rising that did not involve the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

And so it is that nothing in these visions — nothing in the purpose of God for His people — is effected by any human agency, but by the sovereign power of the Spirit of God alone. Not by numbers, not by wealth, not by some great concentrated human power. By my Spirit. The word my Spirit deserves a capital S. This is not a general principle about spiritual things. It is the person of the Spirit of God.

This principle is just as true today as it will be in the millennial kingdom. What is needed for a Christian testimony in this world is not some new method, not an innovation, not a searchlight or a bonfire that someone has devised. What is needed is the lampstand — the person of Christ — and the power of the Holy Spirit alone. How foolish it would be to read this passage and then turn to human expedients to do the work of the Lord. The source of light is Christ Himself, and it is maintained by the Spirit of God without any human addition.

The Two Olive Trees: Kingship and Priesthood in Christ

The two sons of oil — the two olive trees — speak of the two great offices of kingship and priesthood, which are to be united in one person. In Zechariah's own day, these offices were represented separately in two men: Zerubbabel, who was of the line of David and occupied the kingly position (though not as king, since Israel was under Gentile dominion), and Joshua the high priest. In chapters 3 and 4 of Zechariah, these two men stand together as types of the Lord Jesus — chapter 3 dealing with the restoration of the priesthood (represented by Joshua and the exchange of his filthy garments for clean ones), and chapter 4 dealing with the restoration of the kingship (represented by Zerubbabel and the completing of the temple).

But chapter 6 makes plain what these two chapters point toward. Verse 13: 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. This is the Lord Jesus, combining both offices in His own person — King and Priest, upon His throne. In the types, the two offices are separated because the king came from Judah and the priest came from the line of Aaron. They could not be combined in any one man under the old order. But the Lord, having passed through death and risen in a new order on the other side, becomes a priest after the order of Melchizedek — an order that knows no succession of father to son, but is maintained in the power of an endless life.

He holds both titles now — King and Priest — but He is not yet exercising either office. He will take them up together when He takes His throne, and He will display them simultaneously in the millennium for the glory of God. Because in those things, formerly, in the hands of man, there was always failure. Christ will take them up where man left off, and will never fail.

The Breakdown of the Priesthood and the Kingship

It is worth tracing briefly how both offices came to ruin before Christ restored them. As to the priesthood: in 1 Samuel 2, God pronounced judgment on the house of Eli, promising to raise up a faithful priest who would walk before His anointed forever. Eli's line came from Ithamar, not Eleazar — meaning the priesthood had crossed to the wrong side of Aaron's family at some point. The rightful line ran through Eleazar, then Phinehas, to whom God had given an everlasting covenant of the priesthood because of his zeal in Numbers 25. When Solomon — a type of the Lord Jesus in His millennial reign as Prince of Peace — came to the throne, one of his first acts was to thrust Abiathar from the priesthood. Abiathar came from Eli's line, from Ithamar. So Solomon set the order right. And the sons of Zadok, who came from Phinehas through Eleazar, took their place. When we look at the last chapters of Ezekiel and the millennial order described there, it says plainly: the sons of Zadok shall minister before me. The line is clear from the gracious covenant given to Phinehas all the way to the millennium.

As to the kingship: Jeremiah 22 pronounces judgment on Coniah (also called Jeconiah), a descendant of David through Solomon. God says: Write this man childless — no man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David. The royal line through Solomon is cut off in the flesh. And yet God always has a way. The genealogy in Luke traces the Lord's lineage not through Solomon but through Nathan, another son of David, and that is the line from which Mary descended. Joseph's line came through Solomon, but it was through the virgin's womb — not through Joseph — that the rightful King was born. So the Lord comes, as Ezekiel 21:27 declares: I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is, and I will give it Him.

Four gracious covenants — the Abrahamic, the covenant with Phinehas, the Davidic covenant, and the new covenant — all unconditional, all converging on the millennium, all to be fulfilled in Christ. The

Davidic covenant will find its fulfillment in the King who reigns. The covenant with Phinehas will find its fulfillment in the sons of Zadok who minister before the Lord. And over all of it, the Lord Himself, priest upon His throne after the order of Melchizedek, combining both offices and executing both in perfection.

Melchizedek: A Priesthood of a Different Order

Melchizedek is introduced in Genesis 14, at the end of a little section which might be called the more public life of Abraham. Abraham arms his servants, pursues the kings who have taken Lot captive, destroys them, delivers the righteous, and returns. He takes nothing from the world for himself. And out comes Melchizedek — king of Salem, priest of the Most High God — with bread and wine. No intercession. No sacrifice. Bread and wine, ministering strength and joy. Those are going to be the features of millennial glory.

Scripture says, see how great this man is. It is the first mention of Salem — which Psalm 76 identifies as Jerusalem. He is king of Jerusalem before Israel has the city. Abraham pays him tithes, so that Levi, while yet in the loins of his father, pays tithes to Melchizedek — showing the superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood over the Aaronic, as the book of Hebrews elaborates at length. He is made like unto the Son of God — no genealogy of priests recorded, no father-to-son succession, because his priesthood is maintained in the power of an endless life. He simply appears and ministers. The Lord Jesus is a priest after that order, and when He takes His throne as Priest-King, the Melchizedek priesthood will come into its full display, just as it was foreshadowed in Genesis 14 when Abraham had destroyed the enemies and the priestly ministry of blessing came forward.

Who Art Thou, O Great Mountain? Grace, Grace Unto It

Verse 7 addresses the great mountain: Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. The opposition to the building of the temple — whether it was the Persian court being provoked to halt the work, or a picture of the antichrist in a coming day — shall be made a plain. Every obstacle before the Lord's purposes is addressed not with human force, but by the Spirit of God.

And the headstone — the topstone, the finishing stone — shall be brought forth with shoutings. But notice what is shouted: Grace, grace unto it. Not down with the mountain, not triumph over the enemy, not the kind of shout that comes naturally to men in times of upheaval and change. Grace. God for us, all that He is, in spite of all that we are. That is the shout of someone who has awakened to see the glory of the Lord. Every true work of God begins and ends with grace, and when the Lord brings it to completion, it will be grace — and grace alone — that is celebrated.

God Rejoices in the Day of Small Things

The most remarkable thing in verse 10 is this: For who hath despised the day of small things? Yea, they shall rejoice. If we were writing that verse, we would never put the word rejoice that close to the words small things. But God did. The day of small things — and yet, God rejoices. When Ezra laid the foundation of the temple that was rebuilt after the captivity, we read that the noise of the weeping of those who remembered Solomon's temple could not be discerned from the noise of the shout of joy of those who were glad. Some wept; but God rejoiced.

And the seven eyes of the Lord — His divine omniscience — run to and fro through the whole earth and see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. A plummet measures the true vertical. Ours are never quite perfect. But this one will be — because the eyes of the Lord are upon it, and under His personal administration in the millennium, everything toward God will be absolutely perfect.

Not by might, nor by power. We have nothing to boast of — no numbers, no strength, nothing of our own. But we have Christ to glorify, and the Spirit of God is with us. That is all we need. And it is enough.

May the Lord keep us faithful to Himself in the day of small things, and fill us with the Spirit that we may shine for His glory.