

God Remembered
Zechariah 4
Chapter 6
“The Lampstand And The Olive Trees”

Fifth Vision: Gold Lampstand

The angel who was speaking with me then returned and roused me as one awakened out of sleep. He asked me, “What do you see?”

I replied, “I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top. The lampstand also has seven lamps at the top with seven spouts for each of the lamps. There are also two olive trees beside it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.”

Then I asked the angel who was speaking with me, “What are these, my lord?”

“Don’t you know what they are?” replied the angel who was speaking with me.

I said, “No, my lord.”

So he answered me, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by strength or by might, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord of Armies. ‘What are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain. And he will bring out the capstone accompanied by shouts of: Grace, grace to it!’” Then the word of the Lord came to me: “Zerubbabel’s hands have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will complete it. Then you will know that the Lord of Armies has sent me to you. For who despises the day of small things? These seven eyes of the Lord, which scan throughout the whole earth, will rejoice when they see the ceremonial stone in Zerubbabel’s hand.”

I asked him, “What are the two olive trees on the right and left of the lampstand?” And I questioned him further, “What are the two streams of the olive trees, from which the golden oil is pouring through the two golden conduits?”

Then he inquired of me, “Don’t you know what these are?” “No, my lord,” I replied.

“These are the two anointed ones,” he said, “who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

Life was not easy for the Jewish exiles who returned to Jerusalem after their seventy year long captivity in Babylon. Perhaps they had expected to find their homeland unoccupied, waiting, as it were, for their return. If that were the case, then they would have been sadly disappointed, for many people had rushed in to claim the land that was once exclusively the inheritance of God’s chosen people. The Assyrians had conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and had brought many foreigners to settle there and assimilate with the few Jews who were left behind. And the Babylonians, who had conquered the Southern Kingdom of Judah, had left only the poorest Israelites to live in the region, taking the rest along with the ruling class into captivity. The result of this upheaval and subsequent assimilation was a mixed race of people who felt no real loyalty whatsoever to those who returned from exile.

For us to completely understand the vision in the **Fourth Chapter of Zechariah**, we must understand how God had established the government of Israel. First there was God, Who was the ultimate King over the nation. Make no mistake. His chosen people were to be a theocracy, a nation whose sovereign leader is God Himself. Next in line was the royal branch of government. These men were from the tribe of Judah and were the natural born descendants of David. From ages past, God had sovereignly chosen the line of kings to come from Judah.

The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until He, whose right it is, comes and the obedience of the peoples belong to Him.

Genesis 49:10

And in His covenant with David, God promised that all kings that came after him would be from his own lineage.

Your house and kingdom will endure before Me, and your throne will be established forever. **2 Samuel 7:16**

The third branch of Israel's government was that of the priests. These men were to be chosen from the tribe of Levi as directed by God Himself.

Although Levi has no inheritance among his brothers, The LORD is his inheritance, as He promised him. This is the priests' share from the people who offer a sacrifice, whether it is an ox, a sheep, or a goat; the priests are to be given the shoulder, jaws, and stomach. You are to give him the firstfruits of your grain, new wine, and fresh oil, and the first sheared wool of your flock. For The LORD your God has chosen him and his sons from all your tribes to stand and minister in His Name from now on. **Deuteronomy 18:2-5**

After the Medo-Persian empire overthrew Babylon, Cyrus The Great, king of Persia allowed the captives from Israel to return to their homeland and rebuild. The first order of business was the reconstruction of God's temple in Jerusalem. But due to the fact that many pagans had settled there, this construction was met with fierce opposition. So much so, that the Jews became discouraged and began to shift their focus away from the things of God, and to their own personal wealth and property (**Haggai 1**).

God not only raised up prophets such as Haggai and Zechariah to redirect the nation's attention Godward, but He also anointed two men, a high priest and a ruler from the line of David to lead the people into obedience with His directives. We are introduced to God's chosen High Priest, Joshua (Yeshua) in the **Third Chapter of Zechariah**. And in the fourth chapter we meet the one whom God chose from the princely lineage of David, namely Zerubbabel.

Although Zerubbabel, whose name means "sown in Babylon" was a rightful heir to David's throne, because of the Persian domination over Israel, he could only be considered as a governor of the Judaeen province. But God had established him as a leader of the people. It was Zerubbabel the prince and Joshua the priest, who took charge of the Temple restoration (**Ezra 3**).

Shortly after construction began, many of the local inhabitants came to Zerubbabel and inquired if they could join in with the repatriated Jews in the building of God's temple. They even claimed to worship the same God as the Israelites.

When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple for The LORD, The God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the family heads and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we also worship your God and have been sacrificing to Him since the time King Esar-haddon of Assyria brought us here."

But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other heads of Israel's families answered them, "You may have no part with us in building a house for our God, since we alone will build it for The LORD, The God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us." Then the people who were already in the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build. They also bribed officials to act against them to frustrate their plans throughout the reign of King Cyrus of Persia and until the reign of King Darius of Persia. **Ezra 4:1-5**

For you see, even though these foreigners claimed to worship the One True God, they had no idea who He was. For they had chosen to ignore His statutes concerning the Levites as His chosen priests. It would have been impossible for these pagans to make sacrifices to The LORD without having consecrated priests to do it according to God's prescribed method of worship. Zerubbabel was correct in turning them away.

I am reminded here of how many in our world today, claim the Name of Christ Jesus, and yet, they ignore His commands. As Believers, we must be very cautious in our associations with those who say they know God, but have no regard for His statutes. To know God is to obey God. Hear now the words of our LORD:

The one who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father. I will also love him and reveal Myself to him. **John 14:21**

Once these pagans saw that they could not corrupt God's chosen people, they became violent and did everything that they could, even writing letters to the various Persian rulers, falsely accusing the Jews of sedition (**Ezra 4-5**). But God would see to it that His plans for Jerusalem would come to fruition. And He sent His prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people.

But when the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the Name of The God of Israel Who was over them, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak began to rebuild God's house in Jerusalem. The prophets of God were helping them. **Ezra 5:1-2**

Now, with this as our backdrop, let us look at Zechariah's vision of The Lampstand and The Two Olive Trees.

The Lampstand

What Zechariah saw in his vision was a lampstand with a single center branch and six branches coming out of this main shaft, three on each side. At the top of each branch there was a wick or lamp that burned brightly. Most of us would recognize this lampstand as a Menorah, the type of lamp that was used to light the temple of The LORD. In this particular case, the lamp is a representation of the nation of Israel. God had chosen this nation to be a light for the world to see. Israel had the privilege of revealing God's divine nature to this world in order to draw the Gentile nations to worship Him.

Sadly, Israel failed in this royal calling, and as a result, the privilege was given to others, namely The Church of The LORD Jesus Christ. We have been chosen to be salt and light, lifting up Christ as The Light of The World. We must never forsake our great commission to bear His light, lifting up His cross so that the world may be drawn to Him.

In Zechariah's vision, the great lampstand with all its brightly burning wicks was being fed by an endless supply of golden oil. There can be no clearer reference as to the significance of oil in The Scriptures as that which is given here. Oil is a representation of The Holy Spirit. It is The Spirit, Who empowers God's people to be a light in the world.

Zerubbabel had faced many an obstacle in his endeavors to re-establish God's temple in Jerusalem. At times the odds had even seemed insurmountable, much like a mountain that could not be moved. But it is in this vision of Zechariah that God reminded Zerubbabel that he was not required to overcome his obstacles by human effort, for God Himself would see to it that the task was accomplished. When Zechariah asked the angel what was the meaning of the vision, his response was clear:

So he answered me, "This is the word of The LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by strength or by might, but by My Spirit,' says The LORD of Armies. **Zechariah 4:6**

For you see, when God calls someone to do a work, He sees to it that there is a never ending supply of “oil” to finish the job. The odds may have been stacked against this young prince of Israel, but Israel’s God would see the job completed. Not only would Zerubbabel lay the first stone for the temple’s foundation, but he would place the final capstone as well (**vs.7-9**). God had chosen this man to do this work and God Himself would see to it that the work was done. We would be well reminded that God never calls us to do the easy thing, but rather, to overcome great adversity by the power of His Holy Spirit!

The Olive Trees

As previously discussed, beside God Himself there were two other branches of government in Israel; namely the royal and the priestly. The two olive trees in Zechariah’s vision represent these two entities. And the branches from these trees that were supplying oil to the lampstand were none other than God’s two anointed servants, Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the prince of Israel. God was pouring His Spirit into them so that Israel could once more become the shining light that it was meant to be.

When some of the older Jews, who had seen Solomon’s temple, saw the foundation of Zerubbabel’s temple, they wept aloud for it was much smaller and insignificant by comparison. (**Ezra 3:12**). But The LORD warned them not to despise the things of God, even when they seem small, for The LORD Himself would rejoice, when the new temple was completed (**vs. 10**). As the old saying goes, “*Little is much when God is in it.*” Zerubbabel had not been given the vast amount of resources, nor manpower, that were at Solomon’s disposal so many years prior, but he had followed the directives of The LORD, and the works of his hands were a pleasing sacrifice to God. When we are called to perform a task, it matters not what others have done before us, or even thereafter. What matters is that we were faithful and obedient to God’s commands.

I find it striking that just as Zerubbabel and Joshua were described as olive branches pouring fourth golden oil into the lamp of Israel. For there are two others who have been ordained of God and will ultimately usher in a final and lasting revival to Israel during the Great Tribulation. They are the two witnesses that will preach with an anointing from on high and cause the light of truth to burn brightly once again among God’s chosen people. And they are described as follows:

I will grant my two witnesses authority to prophesy for 1,260 days, dressed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before The LORD of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and consumes their enemies; if anyone want to harm them, he must be killed in this way. They have authority to close up the sky so that it does not rain during the days of the prophecy. They also have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every plague whenever they want.

Revelation 11:3-6

But until that day comes, we must always remember that Jesus is The True Vine, and we are His branches (**John 15**). And just as Joshua and Zerubbabel stood for the cause of Almighty God when there was fierce opposition, we too must be a source of the Holy Spirit’s life-giving oil for any who would have ears to hear. We, like these faithful men of God, have been chosen to bring The Light of the World to a world that is in darkness. And so, let us always remember to go in the power of The Spirit, for it is only by that power that we can accomplish that which God has chosen us to do. Lest we forget: **“Not by strength or by might, but by My Spirit,” says The LORD of Armies.**