

Lesson 6

Last week we looked at the incredible and beautiful third chapter of Zechariah, and we were almost finished with that discussion when class ended.

We met Joshua, the high priest, and we saw how Joshua was used as a figure to represent the people of God. And we saw Satan standing next to Joshua, accusing him before God. How could a people that sinful and that disobedient ever be used by God to bring about the wonderful blessings promised to Abraham?

The glories of the priesthood and the glories of the house of David were just a thing of the past and would never be seen again. Right? Wrong! A wonderful Branch was coming who would restore everything and who would change everything.

When we ended, we were just about to look at the second half of verse 9: "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." What does it mean that the iniquity is removed in one day?

That one day must be the one day of the cross, when the new covenant came into effect.

Hebrews 9:16 - For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

Hebrews 9:26 - But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

And we have the all-important time frame from verse 8: "I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH," which is the same first century time frame in which the kingdom was established in Acts 2.

I think this "one day" is a rare example where we should take a number literally - why? Because there is no apparent figurative significance, and because the context is pointing to the literal one day in which iniquity was removed at the cross.

So now that we have looked at all of the evidence (this week and last week), what is the stone of verse 9? I think it is the church of Christ.

This stone in Zechariah 3 is the stone in Daniel 2, which Daniel tells us is the kingdom made without

hands that would sweep away all of the kingdoms of this earth!

God is telling these priests that they are more important than they could possibly imagine. Why? Because they are part of God's plan to bless the entire world through the Messiah and to establish an eternal kingdom that would sweep away all of the kingdoms of this world.

And history tells us that the priesthood served as a backstop against the Greek culture that would soon threaten to consume Judaism. The Maccabeans behind the Maccabean Revolt from 167 to 160 BC were priests. We will study that history when we get to Chapter 9.

What does verse 10 mean?

In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.

Verse 10 confirms that we are correct in concluding that verse 9 is pointing to the church. Why? Because verse 10 is painting a beautiful picture of peace, and that is what God brought to the world when he established his church.

Isaiah 2:4 - And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Ephesians 2:14-17 - For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

So what is the message of the fourth vision? The removal of the filthy clothes from Joshua was a message of comfort and encouragement to the people - God had not forgotten them. Instead, God had restored them to their former position, and God was prepared to bless them and protect them if they would walk in his ways.

The vision also includes a message of comfort and encouragement to Joshua and the other priests. They would play a vital role in the time between the testaments when Greek culture threatened to dilute and destroy Judaism. Their work was vital to the plan of God, and they were a sign of the

perfect high priest who would soon come to bless the entire world.

Chapter 4

Zechariah 4:1-3

And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, 2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: 3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.

This is Zechariah's fifth vision: the vision of the lamp stand.

Zechariah is awakened by the angel in verse 1, but he is not being awakened from sleep. Instead, we are told he was awakened "as a man that is wakened out of his sleep." It was like he had been asleep, but we are not told he was actually asleep.

Leupold: "Actual sleep would not be described thus. The prophet remained awake throughout this memorable night. What the words do convey is that the state of mind essential to appropriating divine visions is so much above the ordinary waking state in a man's life as the waking state is above the state of sleep."

After Zechariah was spiritually awakened to the vision, the angel asks him in verse 2 what he is seeing. What Zechariah sees is a lampstand, or in Hebrew, a menorah. We are reminded at once of a similar lampstand in the Tabernacle.

Exodus 25:31 - And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.

Ten lampstands had been created for the first temple (1 Kings 7:49), and they had been carried off to Babylon (Jeremiah 52:19).

But this lampstand includes some features that were not present in the Tabernacle lampstand.

- First, there is above it (literally, "over its head") a rounded bowl.
- Second, there are seven pipes running from this bowl to each of the seven lamps.
- Third, there are two olive trees, one on either side of the bowl.

Before we look at each of those features, let's look more closely at the seven pipes running to the seven lamps.

The KJV has the phrase "seven pipes to the seven lamps," which sounds like one pipe to one lamp. But the Hebrew better supports the view that there were seven pipes running to *each* of the seven lamps, meaning that there were a total of 49 pipes.

A literal translation would be "seven and seven pipes to the lamps." "Seven and seven pipes" is the Hebrew way of expressing the distributive idea of seven to each. We see that same usage elsewhere:

1 Chronicles 20:6 - And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of great stature, whose fingers and toes were four and twenty, six on each hand, and six on each foot: and he also was the son of the giant.

Just as the Hebrew in our verse here uses "seven and seven," the description of that giant in Hebrew uses "six and six" to denote six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot.

So the better view is that each lamp had seven pipes running to it. Yes, that makes for an unusual looking lamp, but perhaps that unusual description is intended to convey an unusual thought.

What we should not do is rewrite the text to make it more like what we would expect to see, which is what most translations (including the KJV) do here.

The ASV correctly translates the verse:

And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have seen, and, behold, a candlestick all of gold, with its bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon; there are seven pipes to **each** of the lamps, which are upon the top thereof.

So what is being conveyed by these distinctive features? The bowl, the pipes, and the olive trees? To understand what those features of the lampstand denote, we first need to understand what the

lampstand itself denotes.

Have you ever found the perfect gift for someone far ahead of the event for which the gift will be given? You can't wait for them to open the gift and enjoy the gift, but wait you must. It's a Christmas gift, and you bought it in July! You give them a few hints - you found the perfect gift, they will love it, and the anticipation builds.

That is how God felt about the church in the Old Testament. God was longing for his people to see the wonderful kingdom that he was preparing for them. It was (so to speak) a present under our tree, but all we could see at the time were the outlines of the package. God showed us the package from different directions, but we could not open it yet. That great day did not come until Acts 2.

This lampstand is the church. What else could it be?

Even though it was modeled after the lampstand in the temple, we know the object of this figure was not something that existed under the old system. Why? Because it is deliberately shown as having features that are different from what would have been seen under the old system. Plus we have the many New Testament descriptions of God's people to compare with this figure.

Matthew 5:14-15 - Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Luke 12:35 - Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.

Philippians 2:15 - That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Revelation 1:20 - The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

This lampstand is the church.

We haven't said too much about the false doctrine of premillennialism in our study of Zechariah, and I don't plan to say much. But we can say one thing now: premillennialism is an insult to God.

The premillennialist denies that the eternal kingdom of Daniel 2 is the church, and denies that any of these wonderful images in Zechariah are showing us the church. Why? Because they say that the church is not wonderful enough to match these images. They say that these wonderful images must instead be pointing to something better than the church.

Remember my "gift in July" story? How would you feel when the great day finally came, the gift was opened at last, and the recipient said, "What a let down! I was expecting something much better than that! Did you keep the receipt?"

That is exactly what the premillennialist is saying to God! "Did you keep the receipt?" Of all the ungodly features of premillennialism - and there are many - that one may be the worst.

Romans 1:21 - Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.

If you're starting to think the answer to every question in this book is the church, you're not far from right!

God wanted his people to know that something wonderful was coming - and, of course, that something wonderful cannot be separated from the *someone* wonderful who was coming to establish it, to redeem it, to shed his blood for it, and to be the head of it. The church of Christ is the body of Christ - you cannot separate the church from Christ. Those who belittle the church are belittling Christ.

Back to the lampstand. How do the three distinctive features (the bowl, the pipes, and the olive trees) depict the church? Let's keep reading for answers to those questions.

Zechariah 4:4-5

4 So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? 5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

Zechariah has the same question that we have - what are these?

We know from verse 1, that this angel (or messenger) is the same angel who had been speaking to Zechariah before, which suggests we are once again hearing from the Angel of the Lord. As we have

now said many times, this may be (and perhaps we can say now, most likely is) a preincarnate appearance of Jesus.

In verse 5, Zechariah is asked, "Knowest thou not what these be?" And Zechariah gives an honest and understandable response - No!

But that the question in verse 5 was asked tells us that Zechariah *could* have known, and perhaps even *should* have known, what these things were. Else, I don't think that question would have been asked.

But how could Zechariah have known? Because although the Old Testament was not yet complete, it was almost complete - and every page of the Old Testament was pointing to Christ and his coming kingdom. And if Zechariah was expected to understand it based only on a *partial* revelation, what must be expected of us?

Zechariah 4:6

6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

I suspect that around this time Zechariah was thinking to himself, "How in the world could I have been expected to know that!"

And I suspect that most of us, after reading these verses, are left with the feeling that the answer in verse 6 does not really seem to fit with the question in verse 5. But, of course, that just means we need to look a little more closely!

The first thing we discern from the answer in verse 6 is that apparently this vision was intended to convey a message of some sort to someone named Zerubbabel. So let's start there: who was Zerubbabel?

Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin, who had been carried away as a captive by Nebuchadnezzar, imprisoned for 37 years, and later released to occupy a place in the Babylonian king's household. The crucial fact we need to know about Zerubbabel was that he was of the royal line of King David.

Why was that important? Because God has promised King David that one of his descendants would occupy the throne of David forever - and for that promise to come to pass, there had to be a line of David from which the Messiah could come into this world.

Psalm 89:3-4 - I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.

It was vital that a lineal descendant of King David return to Jerusalem so that one day the King of kings could occupy the throne of David - which Luke 1:32 and Acts 2:30 tell us is what Jesus did in the first century when he established his eternal kingdom. Zerubbabel, the godly grandson of the wicked King Jehoiachin, was a vital link in God's plan of redemption.

But even Zerubbabel's name was a reminder of how far God's people had fallen - it means *seed of Babylon!*

And although Zerubbabel was from the royal line - Zerubbabel was **not** a king. There was no earthly Jewish king - their current king was a Persian monarch! One day a king from the line of David would again occupy the throne of David, but that day was about 500 years away.

Do we find Zerubbabel anywhere in the genealogy of Christ? Yes. Luke traces the genealogy from King David through his son Nathan, while Matthew traces the genealogy through Solomon. But the two lines cross in Zerubbabel and his father, Shealtiel.

Matthew 1:12 - And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel.

Luke 3:27 - Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri.

To say that those two verses raise some interesting questions is quite an understatement!

We find Shealtiel and his son Zerubbabel in both Matthew's genealogy of Jesus and Luke's genealogy of Jesus, and yet Shealtiel's father is different in each, as is Zerubbabel's son in each. How is that all explained?

One possible explanation is that the Zerubbabel and Shealtiel in Matthew and the Zerubbabel and Shealtiel in Luke are different father and son pairs. Yes, the names are the same between Matthew

and Luke, but that is about where the similarity ends. As we just mentioned, they have different fathers and different sons. Also, they are descended from different sons of David, with Matthew going back to Solomon and Luke going back to Nathan. Also, if you count back from Jesus to Zerubbabel, you get eleven generations in Matthew and twenty generations in Luke (although there may be some gaps in Matthew's genealogy).

But what if Zerubbabel and Shealtiel are the same people in both genealogies? Then how do we explain the different fathers of Shealtiel - Neri in Luke and Jechonias in Matthew? In that case, the most likely explanation is that Shealtiel was the product of a *levirate* marriage. (The word "levirate" does not come from the name Levi, but rather from the Latin word "*levir*" for a husband's brother.)

A levirate marriage occurred when a man died childless. Rather than have that man's line come to an end, his brother would father a child with his widow, and that child would then legally be the heir of the man who had died childless (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). In this case, Neri would have died childless, and his brother, Jechonias (who was King Jehoiachin) would have fathered a child with Neri's widow. In that case, either Neri or Jechonias could be referred to as the father of Shealtiel.

But that does not entirely solve the problem for us. If Neri and Jehoiachin were brothers, then why don't they have the same father? Matthew 1:11 tells us that Josiah was the father of Jehoiachin, and Luke 3:28 tells us that Melchi was the father of Neri.

The answer is simple - if this theory is correct, then they must have been half-brothers with the same mother but different fathers. That would also explain how Zerubbabel could appear in both genealogies of Christ even though one traces down through Nathan and the other traces down through Solomon.

Do we see a levirate marriage anywhere else in the Bible other than with Shealtiel? Yes - we see it with Zerubbabel!

In 1 Chronicles 3:19 we read that Zerubbabel's father was Pedaiah, and in Ezra 3:2 we read that Zerubbabel's father was Shealtiel (as say Matthew and Luke). Again, the most likely explanation was a levirate marriage.

Should it surprise us to see so many levirate marriages in the royal line? Not really, for two reasons.

In a royal line, you would expect siblings to have a higher death rate than normal, and, in a royal line, you would expect an increased concern with maintaining family lines. Putting those two things

together suggests that one might expect to see *more* levirate marriages in a royal line than elsewhere.

Another possible explanation for having two fathers is adoption, which is likewise something that one might expect to see more of than usual in royal families.

A king whose brother had died (perhaps with a little help from the king!) might be interested in keeping a close eye on his royal nephews. We see an example of adoption in the book of Esther.

Esther 2:7 - And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

We need to pause and consider one more question about this before we move on. Jehoiachin/Jeconiah was such an evil king that Jeremiah 22:30 said:

"thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."

And yet right there in Matthew 1:12 we find King Jehoiachin listed among the ancestors of Jesus. How is that explained?

First, I think the phrase "in his days" in Jeremiah 22:30 is important - the focus of that verse was on the lifetime of Jehoiachin. He would not live to see any of his seed ruling from the throne of David - and we know that he did not.

Second, we should compare Jeremiah 22:30 with Jeremiah 36:30 -

"Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost."

That verse was written about Jehoiachin's father even though Jehoiachin did sit on David's throne for about three months! Yes, he sat on the throne, but he was a powerless puppet king. Again, the point of Jeremiah 36:30 is that Jehoiakim would not have a son who would "sit enthroned" where the Hebrew word used there denotes permanence and security. We see a similar pronouncement about Jehoiachin in Jeremiah 22:30.

Third, even if Jeremiah 22:30 was a curse on Jehoiachin and all his future descendants (as some suggest), that curse seems to have been lifted. Jeremiah 22:24 says,

"As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence."

And yet in Haggai 2:23 we read,

"In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts."

The ring came off, but the ring was put back on.

So now back to Zerubbabel in verse 6. He was of the Davidic line, and Ezra 3:2 tells us that he was the leader of the people after their return from exile along with Joshua the high priest, whom we have already met.

This vision was intended as a message for Zerubbabel - what was that message? It came in several parts. Here is the first part from verse 6:

Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

This statement looks almost like a motto - and it would be a good motto for God's people at any time in history. If you ever spot a verse from Zechariah hanging on someone's wall, it will most likely be this verse - and it was a message for Zerubbabel!

Zerubbabel was the local political leader of the people, and he needed to know that if the people of God were going to be successful in what they needed to do, it would not be because of Zerubbabel, it would be because of God.

That's a good message for our current politicians or for any leader! There is always a temptation to say, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17). Previous kings had forgotten this lesson, and, although Zerubbabel was not a king, he was a leader, and he needed to hear this reminder.

But let's not forget our context. Verse 6 does not appear here all by itself; it is surrounded by a lot of

other verses. And the verses surrounding it here are describing a lampstand that we have already determined is showing us the church. How is that statement in verse 6 an explanation of the vision of the lampstand? How is it related to the church? *Not by the might of man. Not by the power of man.* Once again we turn to Daniel for the answer.

Daniel 2:44-45 - And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone **was cut out of the mountain without hands**, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

The coming eternal kingdom would not come because of the might of man or the power of man. Instead, it would come from God.

Oh, but "our church" (as they tellingly refer to it) is a mega-church! We have buildings and campuses all over town. We have thousands of members. We have universities. We have hospitals. Our pastor flies around in a helicopter and sells his book on Oprah. Our TV show is seen by millions. *Look at what we have have built!*

Not by the might of man. Not by the power of man. *If you have built it, then it is not the Lord's church.* If you have built it, it is not the eternal kingdom made without hands. The church is not man-made! That is the message here to Zechariah, and 2500 years later it is still a message that the world desperately needs to hear and understand.

Acts 17:24-25 - God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

That was the first part of the message to Zerubbabel. The second part of the message to Zerubbabel is in verse 7.

Zechariah 4:7

7 Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

Verse 6 told us that the power of man would not accomplish what needed to be done - and yet here in the very next verse we see Zerubbabel leveling a mountain! How do we explain that?

Simple. Just as Joshua was used earlier to depict someone else (the people of God), Zerubbabel is also being used here as a figure for someone else. Who?

Well, how many people do we know who can level mountains? How many people do we know who, although man, are also God - so that what they do is not by the power of man, but instead is by the power of God? I can think of only one because there is only one - Jesus. Jesus is the mountain leveler!

Zerubbabel, the descendant of King David, is being used here as a figure for the descendant of King David who was yet to come, but who would once again occupy the throne of David and who would reign as King of kings and Lord of lords!

But what does verse 7 mean? What is this great mountain? How will it become a plain? Turn to Daniel again:

Daniel 2:44 - And the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.

This great mountain represents any world power that would try to prevent God from establishing his eternal kingdom. Babylon? Persia? Greece? Rome? All great mountains, but all turned into plains by Jesus. All broken into pieces and consumed by the church of Christ.

Do we believe it? If we don't, then that means we think Daniel was a false prophet! Daniel 2:44 said it would happen in the first century, and that is when it happened.

When did Babylon finally get what it deserved? When did Rome get what it deserved? "It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms." You mean that happened to Rome in the first century? Rome didn't fall for centuries after that time. True - but God does not see things the way we do. We might have thought Rome looked pretty powerful, but God knew they were not. God knew that Rome had been judged and sentenced. God knew that Rome's fate was certain.

Need more evidence? We see a mountain here in Zechariah 4, and we see another great mountain in Revelation 8.

Revelation 8:8 - And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea.

That great burning mountain was Rome. Rome thought it could obliterate Christianity and destroy the church. And who would have thought otherwise? Rome was the greatest power the world had ever known - and the church was just a ragtag bunch of outcasts, many of whom were Roman slaves. Who would have bet on the church in that contest?

Daniel would have! Anyone who believed Daniel would have. Anyone who believed Zechariah would have. Anyone who wanted a sure bet would have. Rome never stood a chance! Rome's fate was sealed 500 years earlier!

Matthew 17:20 - And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Do we think that verse is an exaggeration? Just hyperbole? No. The casting of the mountain of Rome into the sea in Revelation 8:8 came about because of the prayers of the saints in Revelation 5:8 and 6:10.

Revelation is talking about Rome, but Jeremiah described **Babylon** the same way:

Jeremiah 51:25 - Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.

And what if we are confronted by some great destroying mountain today? What should we do? That answer has never changed.

Matthew 17:20 - If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

Back to verse 7 - what is the headstone in verse 7?

The word modifying stone appears only here in the Old Testament, so we can't be certain of the meaning, but this "headstone" is *not* a tombstone. One possible translation is "top stone." If so, it signifies the stone that marks the completion of a structure. It is the last stone to be fitted into place.

This top stone marks the completion of some great work - which here is the completion of the church when it was established in Acts 2. That view fits perfectly with the time frame in Daniel 2:44 as to when these mountains would be leveled - in the days of those (first century) kings!

But another possible translation is "beginning stone." The beginning stone was the corner stone, and, of course, that view also fits perfectly with our context.

■ **Psalm 118:22** - The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

■ **1 Peter 2:6** - Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

■ **Ephesians 2:20** - And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

So whether it is the top stone or the beginning stone, both are descriptions of Christ and his church.

#Zechariah