

## Lesson 7

Last week when we ended we were looking at Zechariah's fifth vision, the vision of the lamp stand, that started in Chapter 4.

In verses 1-3, we saw that it was a very unusual lamp stand - with seven pipes running to each of the seven lamps, and with a bowl on top and an olive tree on each side.

In verses 5-6, we saw that the vision was intended as a message for Zerubbabel, the grandson of King Jehoiachin, who, although not king, was from the royal line of King David.

And in verse 7, we saw the message also involved Jesus, who would come from the royal line to establish his eternal kingdom and to reign forever on the throne of David.

The explanation of the vision continues in verse 8.

### Zechariah 4:8-9

**8 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9 The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.**

I think what we are seeing here is a prophecy with a dual fulfillment. One fulfillment that was near term and another fulfillment that was about 500 years away. Why?

Because the context of verse 7 suggests that verse 8 also has a fulfillment in Christ. The Zerubbabel in verse 7 cannot be the literal Zerubbabel - he was in no position to lay waste to any mountains! And so it seems natural to conclude that verse 8 is also pointing to Christ.

But verse 9 also says that God was giving a sign to the people of Zechariah's day so that they would know that Zechariah had been sent by God. That suggests we would also see a near term fulfillment. One far and one near. What then are the two fulfillments?

The first is simple - the people under the leadership of Zerubbabel had just laid the foundation of the temple. God is telling them here that they will finish the temple, also under the leadership of Zerubbabel. And we know that happened. The temple was completed a few years later in 515 BC.

But verse 7 and (in a moment) verse 10 tell us that this prophecy involves more than just the completion of a physical structure. It involves more than just the earthly man-made temple. It also involves the one who was greater than the temple, and it involves his eternal kingdom not made with human hands.

**|** The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it.

Let's start with the second half of that verse - his hands shall also finish it. If that verse is talking about the church - and we know that it is because the focus of this vision is the lampstand representing the church - then whose hands can it be who finished it?

It can only be the hands of God, the hands of Christ, who finished "this house" in verse 9. What is "this house"? It is the household of God, which is the church (Ephesians 2:19), which we know was not made with human hands (Daniel 2:44-45).

What about the first half of the verse? "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house." Who is that?

It could apply to either the actual Zerubbabel or to Christ. The verse could be saying, Zerubbabel has laid this foundation you are looking at, but the one to come from the line of King David through Zerubbabel, that is Christ, will finish it. Hebrews 12:2 describes Jesus as the finisher.

But the verse could also be saying that Jesus both started the work and would finish the work - that he was behind everything that was being done, from start to finish. Revelation 13:8 tells us that Jesus was "slain from the foundation of the world." Ephesians 1:4 tells us that the church was part of God's plan "before the foundation of the world."

So which is it? It could be either (or both!), but if I had to choose I would lean toward the first option - that earthly Zerubbabel had started the project, but heavenly Zerubbabel would finish the project. That view has a nice parallel with what the New Testament says about Adam and Christ.

**|** **1 Corinthians 15:45** - And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

**|** **Romans 5:17** - For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

There is one other possibility for the phrase "his hands shall also finish it."

The word used here for "finish" is used elsewhere to refer to bringing an end to a life (Isaiah 38:12, Job 6:9, Ezekiel 22:12). Also, while every other time this verb appears in the Old Testament it has an object, here the object is missing.

Most translations assume the object is the house - that is, the house is being finished. But perhaps the omission of the object in the Hebrew is intended to focus our attention on the one who was greater than the temple - the one who would give his life as a sacrifice for his people.

If anyone has any doubts about whether Zerubbabel is a figure for Christ, those doubts should be dispelled by verse 10 - which, by the way, is one of my favorite verses in the entire Bible.

## **Zechariah 4:10**

**10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.**

"Things today are nothing like what they used to be." ... "Remember the beautiful temple we used to have before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it? This new temple will be nothing like our old one." ... "Look at that foundation - look at how small it is. Is that the best we can do?" ... "We are never going to attract any new proselytes if that is all we have." ... "And we are out in the middle of nowhere! Can't we rebuild the temple back in Babylon?" ... "Fifty years ago there was a temple on every corner. Now look at what we have!"

It seems that some in Zechariah's day had that attitude. Some of the older people had seen the old temple prior to its destruction - and some of them must have been making comparisons with the new temple. And it seems that those comparisons had caused some of them to despise the new temple. It was so small and puny - nothing like what they had before! It was not even worth building! And to those people, God had a question: "For who hath despised the day of small things?" I love that question! Who indeed!

Do you wonder if we are still reading about the church? Listen to Jesus:

**Matthew 13:31-32** - The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

We might ask who hath despised the mustard seed? Or, as Paul asked, "Despise ye the church of God?" (1 Corinthians 11:22).

We should never despise the small things because that is how God works in this world today, and that is how God has always worked in this world. God takes the small things of this world and turns them into great and wonderful things! God has always worked through a small faithful remnant - both then and today.

**1 Corinthians 1:28** - And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.

God's eternal plan to bless the entire world came to fruition in the form of a small baby asleep in a manger. "For who hath despised the day of small things?" Let's make sure that question can never be directed to us!

"There is lasting comfort for the church in this thought. Small tasks faithfully performed in the church experience God's watchful care and are a source of joy to the Almighty. Then nothing in the kingdom is small, and the joy of standing in His service grows tremendously."

For those who were despising the small things, God had something else to say in verse 10.

For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

What does that mean? Simple - those who were despising the small things would rejoice when they finally understood the big things that would come from that small thing that some were despising. They would rejoice when they saw Christ holding the plummet.

Two questions - how do we know Zerubbabel here is prefiguring Christ, and what is a plummet?

Look at verse 10 for the first question - they would not just see Zerubbabel, but they would see "Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole

earth. **"Those seven"** are the seven we saw in 3:9.

"For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be **seven eyes**: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."

That verse followed a verse talking about the Branch, and that stone was the church. These seven in 4:10 are the seven eyes on the church in 3:9. That Zerubbabel has "these seven" means that he has that stone, which means that he has the church. This Zerubbabel is a figure for Christ.

Second question - what is a plummet? It is a plumb or a plumb line. Literally, it means a tin stone. It would have been used during the construction of the temple to make sure everything was straight and true. Jesus carries just such a plumb line!

**Amos 7:7** - Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

And that Jesus is carrying a plumb line means that he is our plumb line. Jesus is our perfect example, which is the function of a plumb line. Everything is measured against the plumb line.

**1 John 2:6** - He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Jesus is our standard in all things. He is our plumb line.

Remember how this vision started? With a lampstand having a bowl, having 49 pipes, and having two olive trees. What did that mean?

Verses 11-14 finally give us the answer to that question. But before we look at the answer, let's look at another question. Are these verses out of order?

Wouldn't we expect verses 11-14 to come right after verse 5? Many commentators think so, and they proceed to shift sections of the book all around to match how they would have written it. But they did not write it. Zechariah wrote it by inspiration, which means that God wrote it. And what that means is that the order of these verses is perfect.

Perhaps the most important thing that Zechariah and Zerubbabel needed to hear was verse 6 - which is why it came first.

## Zechariah 4:11-14

**11 Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? 12 And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? 13 And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. 14 Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.**

Zechariah asks what the two olive trees mean. And, apparently remembering another detail, he asks the question again, but adds in a question about "the two golden pipes" that empty oil out of themselves.

Zechariah might have thought the angel was going to explain this back in verse 6, but, as we discussed, the angel's answer jumped past the individual meanings of the items that made up the lampstand and instead focused on what the overall vision meant. Zechariah also wants a lower level explanation, and so he has asks these additional questions.

The two golden pipes apparently connect the olive trees or olive branches to the golden bowl so that the bowl can collect olive oil. These pipes are different from the 49 pipes mentioned in verses 1-3, which did not mention these two pipes at all. But Zechariah remembers them, and he asks about them here.

Interestingly, what Zechariah does *not* ask about are the 49 pipes from verses 1-3, but I think we can answer that question ourselves based on what we see here.

So let's begin with an easy one - what are the two olive trees? Why is that easy? Because verse 14 gives us the inspired answer: "These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

But what does the answer mean? That question is a little harder! Before we answer that, let's look at the other clues. The two olive trees provide oil that flows to the lamps first through two pipes and then through 49 pipes, with each of the seven lamps receiving oil from seven pipes.

That's a lot of sevens! Seven means divine perfection. When symbolic numbers are multiplied by

themselves it denotes emphasis. For example, twelve depicts God's people and ten depicts completeness, so later in Revelation, the number 144000 (twelve times twelve times ten times ten time ten) will depict ALL of God's people - no one is left out.

What all of these sevens tell us is that we need to start looking for Christ in these verses, or perhaps the body of Christ, his church.

We often start seeing lots of sevens when God tells us about the kingdom of Christ. The book of Revelation, for example, is focused on the victory of Christ and his church, and that book is entirely structured around the number 7. It begins with seven letters to the churches, and then the vision consists of 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls.

What about the lamps? Well, what does a lamp do? A lamp provides light. Does it provide light in and of itself? No, it needs fuel. In this case, the fuel is the oil. The seven lamps are not operating by their own power but by power supplied through the seven pipes running to each of the seven lamps - that is, by power supplied by God.

In the old covenant, olive oil was associated with the lampstands in two ways. It was used to anoint the items in the tabernacle (Exodus 30:25), and it was used as fuel for the lights on the lampstand (Exodus 27:20).

So far so good with what we said earlier - the lampstand is the church, and it shines the light of Christ into the world. We are not the source of that light. That light comes from Christ. We are to reflect that light from Christ.

**John 8:12** - Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world:** he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

**John 12:35-36** - Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. **While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.**

**2 Corinthians 4:6** - For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, **hath shined in our hearts, to give the light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So what then are the two olive trees? What do we know about them?

- They "stand by the Lord of the whole earth."
- They provide the oil that creates the light.
- There are two of them.

What would we expect the two olive trees to be? Well, Jesus stands by the Lord of the whole earth by reigning at his right hand (Hebrews 8:1, 10:12, 12:2). And Jesus provides the oil, the power, that provides the light that shines from the church. (See the verses we just read.) And what does the word "Christ" mean? It means "anointed one."

**Luke 4:17-21** - The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, **because he hath anointed me** to preach the gospel to the poor. (quoting Isaiah 61:1)

But if these olive trees represent Christ, then why are there *two* of them? One possibility is that the two olive trees represent Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Another possibility (and a much better view in my opinion) is that the combination of these two olive trees together represent Jesus.

Why two? What have we seen in this vision and the one before it? We saw two people - Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, a descendant of King David. That is we saw priest and king - two offices that are perfectly combined in Christ - our perfect King and perfect High Priest.

These two olive trees are a vital link to all that Zechariah has seen, and what Zechariah is about to see with the crowning of Joshua in Chapter 6. In representing Christ, these two olive trees also represent the body of Christ, which is his eternal kingdom.

**Revelation 1:5-6** - And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, **And hath made us kings and priests** unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

**1 Peter 2:9** - But ye are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

We will see a very similar figure in Revelation.

**Revelation 11:3-4** - And I will give power unto my **two witnesses**, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the **two olive trees**, and the **two candlesticks** standing before the God of the earth.

I think that the two witnesses in Revelation 11 (also called the two olive trees) represent the church of Christ - the royal priesthood of 1 Peter 2:9.

You mean here they represent Christ and later they represent the church of Christ? Yes - and does that surprise us? Can Christ be separated from the body of Christ?

The focus in Revelation is on persecution against the church of Christ. What did Jesus say to Saul about his persecution of Christians? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest **thou me?**" (Acts 9:4). Those who persecute the church are persecuting Christ! We should not be surprised when the same symbol represents both Christ and the body of Christ.

So in the fifth vision we saw a lampstand that was both beautiful and distinctive - and we saw that it represents the church, which would be finished by the perfect King who would come from the line of David through Zerubbabel.

The people may have thought that what they were doing was just a small thing that didn't really matter - but God is telling them here that just the opposite was true. What they were doing was a vital part of God's plan to bless the entire world.

## Chapter 5

Chapter 5 begins with Zechariah's sixth vision: the vision of the flying scroll.

This vision deals with a problem that Israel had faced throughout its entire history - a problem that was described by Paul in the book of Romans.

**Romans 9:6** - For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.

**Romans 2:28-29** - For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

In short, calling yourself a Jew did not make you a Jew anymore than calling yourself a Christian makes you a Christian.

God makes that determination. God knows who his faithful, obedient, trusting children are - both today and in the day of Zechariah.

**2 Timothy 2:19** - The Lord knoweth them that are his.

Some of the exiles who had returned were prospering in their sin. They cared more about the things of man than about the things of God. They were heaping up treasures for themselves, and they were oppressing the poor. They were robbing others, and they were robbing God.

Would people like that be Israel's undoing, or would the work of God continue despite their efforts to corrupt the people? The next vision addresses that question.

Before we start with the sixth vision, let's pause and ask another question - are there two visions in Chapter 5 or only one vision?

I agree with most commentaries on this point - there are two visions in Chapter 5 - one that starts in verse 1 and another that starts in verse 5.

But some commentaries argue that there is only one vision in Chapter 5. Why?

Because they want the total number of visions to be seven rather than eight because of the importance and prevalence of the figurative number seven in the book.

I think they have missed the boat. Why? Because the number eight also has an important figurative significance, and it is a meaning that fits perfectly with the context of this book.

The number eight is a symbol for renewal. The number eight in the Bible depicts a new beginning. The eighth day denotes the start of a new week. Male children were circumcised on the eighth day to depict their new relationship with God. The eighth year following seven sabbatical years was the year of Jubilee when all things were renewed (Leviticus 25). In Revelation we see the number eight used to denote the renewal of persecution directed at God's people under the emperor Domitian.

What is being renewed in Zechariah? Everything! The city and the temple are being renewed. The people are being renewed. And these visions are pointing toward a renewal of the throne of David, a

renewal of the priesthood, and a renewal of the household of God.

In short, the number eight is the perfect number of visions to have in this book! One might even say that this eight is a seven! Let's look now at the sixth vision.

## **Zechariah 5:1-2**

**Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. 2 And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.**

What Zechariah sees in verse 1 is a gigantic flying scroll. (The KJV calls it a flying roll.)

Typically, scrolls at this time measured eight to ten inches in height and up to twenty feet in length. Even the great Isaiah scroll discovered at Qumran, although produced a few centuries later, measured just twenty four feet in length.

At twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide, this flying scroll is approximately thirty feet by fifteen feet. It is closer in size to a modern billboard than to an actual ancient scroll.

These first two verses raise some immediate questions:

- What is written on the scroll?
- Why is the scroll flying?
- Why is the scroll so large?

We're about to see in the verses that follow that this scroll contains a divine curse. What can we discern about that curse from the fact that the scroll was flying and the fact that the scroll was large?

Perhaps the answer is simple: this curse was already in progress (the scroll was flying) and it was a prominent curse (the scroll was large). But let's look a little more closely.

The description suggests that this scroll has been unrolled. That means that the message it contains has been laid open for all to read; it has not been concealed or disclosed to only a select few. God

wants everyone to hear and to heed the message in this giant flying billboard of a scroll.

That this scroll is flying may emphasize that it is a message from God. As with other things we have seen in this book, it seems that this scroll is not the work of man. This flying scroll reminds me of Isaiah 55:11.

**Isaiah 55:11** - So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

But why these large dimensions? We can't say for sure. Some commentaries say that the dimensions are derived from the porch that Solomon built in 1 Kings 6:3 or from the altar of brass he built in 2 Chronicles 4:1. The numbers are the same, but there is no clear connection between those items and this scroll. Perhaps Solomon's porch is in view because it was the place where justice was administered.

Some commentaries make a point of the fact that this scroll is about forty times bigger than an actual scroll, and they argue that there is symbolic significance in the number forty. Perhaps, but that approach violates one of our interpretive guidelines - we should not introduce symbols into the vision that are not in the text.

Perhaps these dimensions are chosen only to show that this scroll was unusually large. Perhaps the scroll is unusual just to show that the threat was unusually large and dangerous.

As for what was written on the scroll, we need to keep reading.

#Zechariah