

Zechariah 4:1-7 – When the church struggles to do its job

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Handfuls, Phillips, Geneva, Delitzsch, Poole, Clarke, Trapp, Henry, INT, Expositor, Gill, Young, Ps 76

Beloved in Jesus Christ: After 70 years in Babylonian captivity, God gave the Jews a great task: To **rebuild** the temple, **restore** worship, and **ready** themselves for the worldwide expansion of the kingdom. **But the Jews faced opposition from neighbors – half-breed Jews called Samaritans and their cousins, the Edomites.** And then they became busy with rebuilding their lives. So the future didn't look so good.

Because of the people's indifference to serving God and expanding his kingdom, Zerubbabel, the governor, became discouraged and needed encouragement. So **God sent Zechariah the prophet with a message to encourage Zerubbabel.** You will hear about this today.

Our headings are:

God encouraged Zerubbabel with Symbols from the Past

God encouraged Zerubbabel with Strength for the Present

God encouraged Zerubbabel with Success in the Future

Our goals are: **That you will see that God always encourages you for your kingdom tasks and that you will receive his encouragements.**

God encouraged Zerubbabel with Symbols from the Past

1 Now **the angel** who talked with me came back and wakened me, **as a man who is wakened out** of his sleep. 2 And he said to me, "**What do you see?**" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of **solid gold with a bowl** on top of it, and on the **stand seven lamps** with **seven pipes** to the seven lamps. 3 "**Two olive trees are by it**, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left." 4 So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, "**What are these, my lord?**" 5 Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "**Do you not know what these are?**" And I said, "No, my lord." 6 So he answered and 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.

1 Then **the angel** who talked with me returned and woke me up, **like someone awakened from sleep.** 2 He asked me, "**What do you see?**" I answered, "I see a **solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it**, with seven channels to the lamps. 3 Also there are **two olive trees** by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left."

1. Zechariah was awakened by the Angel in a calm way and then shown this vision.

The Angel (which simply means messenger) who woke up Zechariah was likely Jesus.

These were **called Theophanies...or pre-incarnate appearances** of Jesus.

2. Jesus woke Zechariah up in the normal showing Jesus was not in a state of panic.

He was calm and in control. (Isn't it easy to panic if you see someone else panicking? But calmness begets calmness.)

3. The Lord then asked Zechariah to say what he saw and Zechariah said what he saw.

He saw the golden lampstand from the tabernacle. Exodus 25:31-40. It was called the **menorah** -a lamp that looked like a tree, with **three arms on either side of a main stem.** **The lampstand's 7 lamps were fed by 7 pipes.**

4. But why was God giving Zechariah a vision of the past?

This was an encouragement without words. It was an assurance to the Jews that **God was present with his people** and **worship would be restored.** Zerubbabel need not worry or be discouraged. The church need not struggle!

Consider how **soldiers might keep symbols of home** because it motivates them to keep fighting on the battle field. God was showing comforting symbols to his soldiers.

5. Lessons:

a. The menorah is a symbol of God's presence to give you also to give you hope. It says, "God is with you." You are not fighting alone.

While there is **danger in darkness**... spiritual snakes, spiders, and scorpions, **God gave his light to expose the dangers** and keep his people safe. **(2Peter and Jude)**

Not surprisingly, **Jesus called himself the "Light of the World."** John 8:12. Isaiah spoke of Jesus as the light.

Isaiah 60:1 Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.

Through Jesus you know **what to do...how to live...what to believe.**

b. So how should you respond to this beautiful reflection on the menorah?

Daniel 12:3 Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament , And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

So **"Let your light so shine before men** that they may see your good works and glorify the Father in heaven." Don't be afraid. God is with you.

c. Today you have 2 more symbols so you will have confidence and know how to walk: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Let them speak to you. Let them encourage you to persevere under pressure and do your job of building the kingdom.

God encouraged Zerubbabel with Strength for the Present

⁴ I asked the angel who talked with me, **"What are these, my lord?"** ⁵ He answered, **"Do you not know what these are?"** "No, my lord," I replied. ⁶ So 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 Almighty.**

1. Zechariah then questioned God the Son about 2 unique things he (Zechariah) saw.

2. These 2 unique things were not part of the original menorah?

There was 1 bowl on top of the gold lampstand. This was a “gullah.”

There were 2 olive trees on either side of the bowl.

3. What were the purposes of these 2 things?

a. The bowl was God’s people! (Christians are called vessels – containers.)

Romans 9:23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

b. The olive trees on either side of the menorah signified the continuous supply of oil that was stored in the bowl so that the lamp would ever keep burning. This symbolized God giving the Jews continuous confidence and courage to continue to live for him. And how does God do that? He does that through his Holy Spirit. And isn’t he the One the Lord prayed would come to his people to help them do the work of the kingdom?

This was the present help that they needed! God would be with them always!

John 14:16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — 17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 "I will not leave you orphans...

The work of the Spirit was to give them strength and courage to face their deadliest enemies.

Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

What an encouragement this must have been to Zerubbabel the Governor– ruler of the land: Worship would be restored worship and the kingdom expanded but it would not be done by the people – not by their might nor by their power.

“Might” symbolized a large number. “Power” symbolized physical strength.

The bowl on top of the menorah simply received!

The kingdom would be built by the Spirit of God!

So Zerubbabel was not to be discouraged that there were only a few people who returned to Jerusalem. He was not to be discouraged that Jews became too busy with their own lives. God’s kingdom is never held prisoner by a lack of servants! God’s kingdom is not at the mercy of people. He can save by many or by few. He can accomplish much

because his Holy Spirit works through the human agents. **The Holy Spirit would enter God's people and strengthen them to** build the church.

3. Mohamed and his forces went with force to conquer Africa, the Spanish went with force to conquer the West Indies to spread Roman Catholicism but with limited success. Christians go with the Spirit of God. We will win.

Psalms 45:5 Your **arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies;**
The peoples fall under You.

2 Corinthians 10:4 For the **weapons of our warfare are not carnal but**
mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

4. Lessons:

a. There are too many people who think their articulate speech would build the kingdom of God. But human speech is not enough!

Others use their resources, as some missionaries have done, to bribe their way into the hearts of the people. So the missionaries then have to keep giving stuff. (**How you catch them is how you will keep them!**)

Some use organizational skills and activities to keep people. So they have to have a steady supply of activities to keep people interested. What happens when you run out of activities?

b. If you want to build up Christ's kingdom, you will have to be more and more filled with the Holy Spirit and ask him for help. Only he has the power to truly change the sinner and make him willing to serve the Lord. Only he has the power to breathe life into dead people.

Ezekiel 37:9 Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and **say to the breath,** 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "**Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain,** that they may live.'" 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, **and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.**

The word "breath" is the same word for "Spirit."

God assured Zerubbabel with Success in the Future

7 "Who are you, **O great mountain?** Before Zerubbabel **you shall become a plain!** And he shall bring forth the **capstone** With shouts of "**Grace, grace to it!**" 7 "What are you, **mighty mountain?** Before Zerubbabel **you will become level ground.** Then he will **bring out the capstone** to shouts of '**God bless it! God bless it!**'"

1. God would remove the greatest obstacles to bring glory to himself and good to his people.

No mountain is too high for him to overcome. In fact, God is described as making the mountain into a plain. (**Great nations were often called great mountains.**) Obadiah

accounts for Edom's arrogance in his mountain, but God said he would destroy them so that they could never rebuild. Look at what God promised the Jews:

Isaiah 40:4 Every valley shall be exalted And **every mountain and hill brought low...**

2. What an encouragement this must have been to Zerubbabel who was inhibited, intimidated, and discouraged for the great task!

But he did not need to fear the enemies around, the Medo-Persian king, or the indifference of the Jews. **God would overcome all obstacles for them.**

The temple would be rebuilt, worship restored, and the people readied to work!

Matthew 21:21 So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also **if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done.**

3. The capstones of the 2nd temple would be built and God would bless it!

4. Lessons:

a. Surely you too will have troubles in working to expand the kingdom. Nations will join and persecute you. Philosophies will work against you. False religions will come against you. Sometimes it is sickness and depression that become obstacles. Sometimes it will be wicked Ontario and Federal government laws. But God will help you and Christ's kingdom will come! Yes, it will be a beautiful temple!

b. When you consider God's power, let it spur you to action. Yes, God is "Tried 'N' True." Corny? Yes. True? Yes.

Conclusion:

The menorah was a beautiful message of encouragement for Zerubbabel. **God would guide his people – a light to their path!** The **Holy Spirit would supply everything they needed.** Yes, Jerusalem would become a city on the hill...**a city of lights to all the nations around.** God would remove their enemies. The temple would be rebuilt, worship restored, and the people readied to expand the kingdom to the ends of the earth.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Are you overwhelmed like Zerubbabel, disappointed, or fearful about the future with your lives and your children's lives...about Covenant Reformed...about the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Don't be.

2. Based on what the Lord has promised in the past in the menorah and what he continues to symbolize in baptism and the Lord's Supper, work for the spreading of the kingdom. He is with you to the end of the world!

Based on what the Lord has **promised you today** **use his strength, courage and wisdom that come to you from his Holy Spirit, work for the spreading of the kingdom.** Raise godly children, be a loving wife, be a faithful husband, shepherd the flock with care, be a caring sibling, be a persistent evangelist, and oversee the spreading of the kingdom!

Based on the Lord's promise to **remove those who hinder the kingdom's work in the future,** **press on.** Christ will have dominion! It used to be believed and even put on our parliament building! Christ's church, whom he purchased with his own blood, will never be defeated. He will rule until his enemies become his footstool!

Finally: If you are outside of God's kingdom, you will be with those who would be conquered, leveled, and sent to hell...that is, unless you surrender to him...and plead the life and death of Jesus as your life and death. If you do this, God will accept you as his own child and adopt you.