

Lesson 6

Fifth Vision, Continued

4:6 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 problem is not with our TV set — the problem is with us!

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. 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 king’s household.

The crucial fact we need to know about Zerubbabel was that he was of the line of King David.

Why was that important?

Because God has promised 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, 4 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 the 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 — he was not a king. There was no earthly Jewish king — their current king was a Persian! 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 Zerobabel.*

Luke 3:27 — *Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zerobabel, 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. How is that explained?

Also, Jehoiachin 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?

Both are excellent questions, and both are questions that we answered in Lesson 6 of our study of Ezra! (Those lessons are linked from our class home page at www.revelation.study.)

So back now 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 seen.

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.

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 also a good message for our current politicians or for any other 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 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.

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?

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. He is the mountain destroyer!

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 reign as King of kings over his eternal unshakable kingdom!

But what does verse 7 mean? What is this great mountain? How will it become a plain?

Daniel 2:44 (again!) — *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 a plain by Jesus. All broken into pieces and consumed by the church.

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. He knew that Rome had been judged and sentenced. He knew their 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 slaves. Who would have bet on the church in that contest?

Daniel would have. Anyone who had read Daniel would have. Anyone who had read Zechariah would have. Anyone who wanted a sure bet would have.

Rome never stood a chance! Its 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 you 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.

That's talking about Rome. Jeremiah described **Babylon** in 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 mountain today? What should we do? That answer has never changed.

"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 one to be fitted into place.

It marks the completion of some great work — which here is the completion of the church when it was established in Acts 2.

That fits perfectly with the time frame in Daniel 2:44 for 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 also fits perfectly with our context.

***Psalms 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.

8 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9 The hands of Zerubabel 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 one fulfillment that was about 500 years away.

Why? 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.

What 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 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 it.

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 “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 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.

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, for 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 how he 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!

“To the unenlightened mind the greatest achievement both in the making and in its completion seems trivial.”

“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. He 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.*

He 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.

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.

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.

He 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 lamp stand and instead focused on what the overall vision meant.

Zechariah also wants a lower level explanation, and so he 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 he 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 2 pipes and then through 49 pipes, with each of the 7 lamps receiving oil from 7 pipes.

That’s a lot of sevens! Seven means divine perfection. When symbolic numbers are multiplied by themselves it denotes emphasis. For example, 12 depicts God’s people and 10 depicts completeness, so later in Revelation, 144,000 (12 times 12 times 10 times 10) 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.

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 7 pipes running to each of the 7 lamps — that is, power supplied by God.

In the old covenant, olive oil was associated with the lamp stands 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 lamp stand (Exodus 27:20).

So far so good with what we said earlier — the lamp stand 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.
- And there are two of them.

What would we expect them to be?

Well, Jesus stands by the Lord of the whole earth. He now reigns 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, 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 high priest.

The two olive trees are a vital link to all that Zechariah has seen, and what he is about to see with the crowning of Joshua in Chapter 6.

In representing Christ, they 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 when we get to 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 when we get to Revelation 11 we will see that the two witnesses (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.

Questions about the fifth vision?