

Book of Zechariah

Chapter 4:1-14

¹ Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, ~~as~~ a man who is awakened from his sleep.

The Eight Visions of Zechariah			
Vision	Passage	Description	Meaning
1	1:7-17	Man among the Myrtle Trees	God Promises Prosperity to Israel
2	1:18-21	Four Horns and Four Craftsmen	God Judges the Nations that attacked Israel
3	2:1-13	Man with a Measuring Line	God Rebuilds Jerusalem
4	3:1-10	Cleansing of the High Priest	God Purifies both High Priest and People
5	4:1-14	Golden Lampstand and Two Olive Trees	God Rebuilds the Temple
6	5:1-4	Flying Scroll	God Removes Imparted Sin/Idolatry
7	5:5-11	Woman in a Basket	God Removes the System of False Religion
8	6:1-8	Four Chariots	God Brings Peace and Rest to Israel
Appendix	6:9-15	Coronation of the High Priest	Messiah assumes of the office of both King and Priest

The MacArthur Bible Commentary
by John MacArthur

Roused ... Awakened > (Strong's) a primitive root: to wake (literally or figuratively)

² He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; ³ also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side."



A lampstand all of gold > (Constable) The Hebrew text has "seven and seven pipes to the lamps."

Baldwin > Most conservative commentators understood the number of pipes (spouts) connecting the large upper bowl to the individual lamps below to be distributive, indicating seven each for a total of 49 such pipes.

Keil > This presents the picture of a somewhat "spaghetti-like configuration"

Merrill > Nevertheless this interpretation seems to be truest to the text.

Also two olive trees by it ... > (Constable) There were also two olive trees, one standing on either side of the bowl. Human maintenance of the lamps was unnecessary, since the oil flowed from the trees, to the reservoir, to the lamps. This important feature of the vision stresses God's singular provision of the oil (cf. v. 6).

Constable > The two olive trees played an important part in the founders' perception of the new State of Israel in 1948, in which "religion" and "state" and their respective dignitaries (the high priest and the prime minister) stand together to realize the Zionist dream in this official emblem.



The Emblem of Israel

⁴ Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?" ⁵ So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."

Do you not know what these are? > (Henry) If he had considered and compared spiritual things with spiritual, he might have guessed at the meaning of these things: for he knew that there was a golden candlestick in the tabernacle, which it was the priest's constant business to supply with oil, and to keep it burning; when, therefore, he saw in vision such a candlestick, with lamps always burning, and yet no priests to attend it, nor any occasion for them, he might discern the meaning of this to be, that though God had set up the priesthood again, yet he could carry on his own work for and in his people without them.

⁶ Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts. **⁷ 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'**"

Constable > The writer inserted two oracles that Zechariah received from the Lord concerning Zerubbabel, at this point, because they help to clarify the meaning of the vision ... vss. 6, 7; and vss. 8-10.

First Oracle

(vss. 6,7)

Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts > (Wiersbe) When Solomon built the temple that the Babylonians destroyed, he had almost unlimited resources at his disposal. His father, David, had fought many battles and collected spoil to be used in building the temple (1 Chron. 26:20, 27-28), but the remnant didn't have an army. Solomon was monarch of a powerful kingdom that ruled over many Gentile nations and took tribute from them, but the Jews in Zechariah's day had no such authority. That's why God said to them through His prophet, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit" (Zech. 4:6).

'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain > Zerubbabel needed this encouragement. Read the comments from the 16 years previous start of the temple.

Ezra 3:3 > ³ So they set up the altar on its foundation, for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening.

He will bring forth the top stone > (Petterson) The statement that Zerubbabel 'has founded this house' corresponds with the account in Ezra 3:8-13, which has the foundation for the temple being laid by Zerubbabel some twenty years earlier. The attribution of this work to Sheshbazzar in Ezra 5:16 probably means that Zerubbabel was initially working under the authority of Sheshbazzar.

Second Oracle

(vss. 8-10)

⁸ Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁹ **"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it.** Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.

The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house ... (Constable) He promised that as Zerubbabel had "laid the foundation" of the temple (Ezra 3:8-11; 5:16), so he would also complete it (cf. Ezra 6:14-18). Construction began on the foundation of the temple in 536 B.C., and the last stone went in place in 515 B.C. (Only 4 years after this promise was made.)

There is a difficulty with the passage as the letter to Darius found in Ezra 5:16 it states >

¹⁶ Then that Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God ⁱⁿ in Jerusalem; and from then until now it has been under construction and it is not yet completed.'

Got Answers states > Until recently, it was commonly thought that Sheshbazinbar was another name for Zerubbabel, who, like Sheshbazzar, was also called a prince of Judah and governor after the exile (Haggai 1:1). Also, Zerubbabel, like Sheshbazzar, was recognized for restoring the temple's foundation (Ezra 3:8–11). It was common for Babylonian kings to rename their Hebrew captives (see Daniel 1:7), so it's possible that Sheshbazzar and Zerubabel were the same man. Now, however, scholars tend to believe they were different individuals.

¹⁰ **For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel – these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth."**

For who has despised the day of small things? > (Clarke) Who hath despised the day of small things? - The poverty, weakness, and unbefriended state of the Jews. It was said, "What do these feeble Jews?" "Will they build," etc.? (Spoken to Nehemiah some years later.)

Nehemiah 4:2 > ² He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?

But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line > Might this be our answer to the seven eyes found on the stone in the last chapter?

Zechariah 3:9 >⁹ For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

¹¹ **Then I said to him,** "What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?" ¹² **And I answered the second time** and said to him, "What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?"

Then I said to him ... And I answered the second time > (Benson) The Hebrew word being not only used of giving an answer to a question, but likewise of beginning or continuing a discourse.

Benson > The prophet had learned the meaning of the candlestick and its lamps, and now wants to know what the two olive-trees signify; and no answer being given to his question, he immediately proceeds to ask another; and in the answer given to it he acquiesces.

You'll notice that his second question is more specific than his first. He starts with a general question of ... "What are the two trees?" and then moves to "What are the two branches beside the two golden pipes which empty the oil of themselves?"

¹³ ***So he answered me, saying, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."***

Do you not know what these are? > Again, the angel is surprised that he doesn't know the answer to his question. Let's think through this before going to the angel's answer.

What did we learn about the golden candlestick?

- It was the source of light in the original Tabernacle. ***Exodus 21:20, 21*** states >
²⁰ "You shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually. ²¹ In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the LORD; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel
- In this vision it was illustrated as no longer needing to be tended by the priests as there was a constant flow of oil coming from the two trees.
- In addition ... the explanation by the angel was a direct quote from the Lord Himself > *Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit*
- And there were two additional oracles by the Lord ... all by the power of His Spirit.
 - The 'mountain' in front of Zerubbabel would become a plain
 - Zerubbabel would complete the temple

- (As we speak of the candlestick's ability to illuminate ... remember the passage in Revelation where Jesus is walking between the candlesticks ... and they were clearly identified as the churches.)
- (Remember also the illustrations of we being lights that are not to be placed under a bushel ... but to be held high)

Based upon the above – what do we see?

¹⁴ *Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth."*

Ones > (Strong's) a son (as a builder of the family name), in the widest sense (of literal and figurative relationship, including grandson, subject, nation, quality or condition, etc., (like father or brother), etc.):

Constable > "Anointed ones" is literally "sons of oil."

Chisholm > "The phrase 'sons of oil' is typically interpreted to mean that the two individuals mentioned were anointed with oil as the Lord's special servants. However, the word for 'oil' used here (Heb. yitshar) does not refer to anointing oil elsewhere (the Hebrew term for such oil is shemen) but to fresh oil that symbolizes a land's agricultural abundance. These 'sons of oil' were, of course, the high priest Joshua and the governor Zerubbabel (see 3:1-10; 4:7-10; 6:9-15)."

Constable > Zerubbabel and Joshua point ultimately to the Messiah, who combined the royal and priestly offices and functions in one person, the Branch (3:8; 6:12; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; cf. Ps. 110; Heb. 7). Some of the Jews in Jesus' day (e.g., the Qumran community) expected two Messiahs, a princely one and a priestly one.

The point of this vision, and its accompanying oracles, was the Lord's ability to bring a seemingly impossible project to completion—successfully and gloriously—through His anointed servants (Messiah, and Zerubbabel and Joshua) and His supernatural enablement (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9).

Revelation 11:3, 4 > *And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.*