

Zechariah 4:1-14

Israel, a Spirit Empowered Nation

Do you struggle to understand the scriptures? Are the spiritual truths of God's word just very difficult for you to make any sense of? God is able to change that for you.

Do you remember reading, often all through the gospels, about how difficult it was for Jesus' disciples to understand His teaching and His parables?

When did that spiritual dullness disappear and they could begin understanding the spiritual things of God?

Luke 24:45-49, *"And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."*

What we are going to look at today in Zechariah chapter four, is part of that Promise of our Father that Jesus spoke about.

And just as the promise of Pentecost was preceded by an opening of the disciples' understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures, so the prophetic promises in Zechariah begin with an opening of Zechariah's understanding to comprehend spiritual things.

Zechariah 4:1-2, *"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?"*

Notice carefully the wording. Zechariah wasn't actually asleep, but he was wakened, as if he had been wakened out of his sleep.

He was spiritually wakened to be able to perceive spiritual things that before he could not see.

2Corinthians 2:14, *"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

Like Zechariah, we all need the Lord to waken us so that we can see what the Lord has to show us from the scriptures.

And what did Zechariah see?



Zechariah 4:2-3, *"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. ³Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left."*

Do you see the similarity between what Zechariah described and the image on the screen?

This is the official seal for the State of Israel, unveiled on February 10, 1949, consists of a seven-branched menorah (lampstand/candelabra) with an olive branch on either side.



Opposite the entrance to the Israeli Knesset (parliament) stands a great menorah that reaches 16 feet high and 13 feet wide. This particular menorah is engraved with the Scripture “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

“The menorah, olive branches, and inscription are symbols of the rebirth of the State of Israel—a graphic reminder and witness of God’s power and promise to preserve the Jewish people.

“The inspiration for both Israel’s seal and the inscription on the giant menorah was taken from Zechariah’s fifth vision in chapter 4.” (*David Levy, p. 41*)

The visions of Zechariah reveal a progressive unfolding of God’s plan and purpose for the nation of Israel, and for the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom. The visions are in sequential order.

Chapter one; The first three visions gave assurance that God had neither rejected Israel nor was He done with the Jewish people; that though they were oppressed by the Gentile world powers, God was working to supernaturally preserve them from being destroyed by their enemies.

The Gentile world-powers, who opposed Israel, would be broken and cast out by the Lord, but Israel would be restored to greatness.

In chapter two, it was foretold that the city of Jerusalem would be rebuilt much larger and more glorious than ever before, and that God Himself would be Jerusalem’s Defense.

And the entire land of Israel would experience the blessings of the Messiah’s return to live among His chosen people.

Also, God’s original purpose for Israel, to bring God’s blessing to the rest of the world, will be fulfilled.

Chapter three picked up on that theme. These promises to make Israel a great nation, will one day be fulfilled by God, even though Israel is one of the most unworthy and unfaithful people. God knew Israel’s unfaithfulness, and yet He chose to bless that nation, and to demonstrate the greatness of His own mercy and grace.

However, Israel would need to be changed from their stubborn, wicked and rebellious nature.

In chapter three, we saw God’s plan for getting rid of the sinful nature and cleansing the stubborn heart of the Jewish people.

The symbols of Jesus Christ crucified for the removal of the sin and guilt of the Jews in one day through the ministry of the Servant, or the BRANCH, also known as the Messiah.

Now, in continuing sequential order we have the fifth vision in chapter four, which foretells the Holy Spirit being poured out on the people of Israel to empower them for the completion of the building of the spiritual house of God.

This could only come after their hearts had been cleansed of their sin, and their rebellious nature replaced with a new righteous nature.

What we read in chapter four began on the day of Pentecost, and will conclude at the second coming of Christ.

Zechariah 4:2-3, "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. ³Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left."

Zechariah describes the seven branched lampstand, known as the menorah, that used to stand in the Temple (In Zechariah's day the Temple was in ruins and the new Temple had not yet been re-built).

There is no mention in this prophecy of the flame that would be burning in each of the lamps on the lampstand, like the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the wilderness, the flames were symbolic of the presence and glory of God, revealing Himself to mankind.

But the lamp stand was symbolic of the nation of Israel who was to serve as the Lord's chosen witness to bring spiritual light to a world living in pagan darkness—a world that was separated by sin from God.

The flame (the presence of God) burning on the lampstand (the people of Israel) symbolized that God making Himself known to the world through the nation of Israel.

We saw in our last study that Israel's purpose was to be a missionary people spreading the knowledge of the true God around the world?

God had placed Israel, like a lamp, at the center of the world, surrounded by nations living in darkness, in need of God's light to give purpose to their lives.

But Israel perpetually failed to make the goodness of God known to the surrounding nations.

In this vision, which is revealing something of the future, we are shown that one day, Israel will fulfill her purpose of bringing the light of God, and His blessing, to the nations of the world.

The prophet Isaiah had already foretold this before Zechariah's day.

Isaiah 60:1-3, "Arise [Israel], shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. ²For behold, the darkness [meaning spiritual darkness, and ignorance of God] shall cover the earth [speaking of the time of the Tribulation], and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. ³The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."

When Jesus came, He affirmed this high calling when He said to the Jews of Israel, **Matthew 5:14-16, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."**



But this lampstand, in verse two of Zechariah's vision, is different from the menorah in the temple. The lampstand in the Temple needed to have priests attend to it and refill the lamps with fresh oil every day (Ex. 27:20-21; 30:7-8).

In this vision there were two olive trees on either side of the lampstand, they were dripping olive oil into a bowl.

The bowl had tubes running from it into each of the seven lamps to provide a never-ending flow of oil to keep the lamps burning without any need for human priests.

Oil in the Bible is always a symbol of God's Holy Spirit. This vision symbolizes a coming time when there would be an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the nation of Israel, in the absence of a priestly system.

This is what Joel 2:28-32 prophesied, and what began to be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2).

It is not coincidental that on the Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2:3, we are told that tongues of fire came down from heaven onto the heads of 120 born again Jews (representing ten from each of the 12 tribes of Israel) who were gathered in the upper room.

It was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God to empower them to take the light of the Lord into the dark world.

However, this outpouring of the Holy Spirit which took place on the Day of Pentecost, was completely independent of the Temple worship and of the priestly system of Israel.

Because, when they crucified their Messiah, the fire of God left the temple, but His fire entered into the hearts of the church.



Then, in AD 70, the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, and the Romans removed the menorah, the lampstand, and carried it away from the temple.

This demonstrated that God had removed from Israel, temporarily, the privilege of being a light to the world, and He had given that privilege to the church.

However, though the church was given Israel's mission, the church was not a replacement for Israel. The menorah has never been a symbol for the church.

Instead of Israel's symbol of one lampstand with seven branches, the church was represented by seven individual lampstands, spread throughout the churches.

Revelation 1:12-13, "Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man..."

Revelation 1:16, 20, "He had in His right hand seven stars... ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches." These seven churches represent seven major periods of church history, and we are living in the last one.

And what about the two olive trees in this vision?

Zechariah 4:3, "Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left."

Zechariah 4:11-14, "Then I answered and said to him, "What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?" ¹² And I further answered and said to him, "What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?" ¹³ Then he answered me and said, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." ¹⁴ So he said, "These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.""

The book of Revelation gives further insight, explaining that these two anointed ones come into Israel's history during the Great Tribulation, when the church seems to be with Christ and the Lord resumes His focused work with the nation of Israel. Notice the connection in Revelation to the power for witness—which is associated with the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Revelation 11:3-4, "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth."

Zechariah 4:4-7, "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. 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!"'"

We have a dual prophecy here. Like the layers of an onion, there is a clear meaning predicting an event that would come to pass in Zechariah's day.

But as you peel that first obvious meaning away there is another meaning pointing to a later event. Today I will focus on the later, yet future event, as that is more relevant to where we are in history today.

The obvious meaning: This message is directed to Zerubbabel, who had laid the foundation of the second Temple 16 years earlier, but had never completed it.

Zerubbabel is now assured that he would overcome seemingly impossible opposition (the great mountain) to complete the task (*bring forth the capstone*).

Now let's peel back that first, obvious layer of the onion, and take a deeper look at the second aspect of this prophecy.

Just as the high priest, Joshua in chapter 3, stood as a representative of the nation of Israel, so Zerubbabel, who is a direct descendant of King David, and a great, great grandfather of Jesus (Matthew 1:12-13).

Zerubbabel was therefore a representative of the royal lineage of David, and of the future great King—Jesus the Messiah.

In verse six we have the very familiar passage, “*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.*”

The word translated into English as, “might” is a Hebrew word which also means an army, and implies the combined strength of many.

The word translated as “power” is a Hebrew word which means the physical, mental, and moral strength of one man in leadership. (*David Baron, p. 137*)

So, there is no powerful leader, or mighty army—that will accomplish the completion of God’s plans for Israel. Prime Minister Netanyahu couldn’t accomplish it, the Israeli Defense Forces can’t accomplish it.

The promise will be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit alone.

And verse 7 reveals that the Holy Spirit will accomplish it through a descendant of Zerubbabel.

Verse 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!”

Mountains in prophecy, are often symbolic of political, or government authority and rule.

For example, *Isaiah 2:2*, “*Now it shall come to pass in the latter days [in the time of the Millennial Kingdom] that the mountain [government authority] of the LORD’s house [His Temple in Jerusalem] shall be established on the top of the mountains [in authority over the government authorities of all nations], and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. [All nations will submit to the authority of the LORD].*”

Here, in Zechariah 4:7, this great mountain, is believed to represent the allied gentile world powers that stand together in opposition to Israel in the last days. (*David Baron, p. 138*)

God promises that before Zerubbabel (or a descendant of Zerubbabel—i.e., Jesus, at His second coming) the great mountain of world powers will be levelled.

It doesn’t matter if they have nuclear weapons, or if they massively outnumber Israel with soldiers, bombs and planes, Jesus, the descendant of Zerubbabel, will come and destroy those armies and their governments, and He will complete all of the Lord’s promises for Israel.

Zechariah 4:8–9, “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ⁹“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you.”

Just as the Lord promised so it happened. Four years after this prophecy was made Zerubbabel, who has begun building the temple, returned to the unfinished task and he completed it.

But this is also prophetic of a spiritual temple that Jesus started building when He first came to earth, that He will return to complete in the last days.

Zechariah 4:8–9, “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ⁹“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple [the foundation being the cornerstone, who is Jesus, which was laid in the ground (i.e., crucified and buried) at His first coming];

“His hands shall also finish it [Jesus will return to complete the promises He began to fulfill at His first advent. The construction of a building is completed when the capstone (verse 7) is put into place. Jesus is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega, the foundation and the completion, the cornerstone and the capstone].

“Then [at the second coming of Christ] you [Israel] will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you.”

Not until His second coming when He brings judgment upon the nations and rebuilds a glorious Temple, will Israel as a nation recognize Him and acknowledge Him as their Messiah].

Israel will then be restored to her intended function as a Spirit-empowered nation bringing great blessing to the nations and glory to God globally.

This prophecy specifically emphasizes that the outpouring of God's Spirit would be for the last days.

Now, in the last days, we should not look at past history, (the first century church, or the great missionary movement of the 1800's) as the glory days of Spirit-empowered ministry, but we are just as much a part of the last days, and we must, with expectancy, be dependent upon the power and enabling of Go's Holy Spirit.

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