

## ***Session 5 Grace to Build the House of Prayer (Zech. 4:1-14)***

### **I. REVIEW**

- A. Zechariah's fourth and fifth visions (Zech. 3-4) go together in a special way in the eight visions. They show that God will cleanse and anoint His people so that they may walk in the fullness of His promises as set forth in the first three visions (Zech. 1-2). His sixth, seventh, and eighth visions go together, and cover two chapters (Zech. 5-6); his message on fasting is in Zech. 7-8.
- B. In the first three visions, the Lord promised to manifest His zeal and mercy by returning to personally live in Jerusalem, to fill the temple with His glory, to take full possession of the land of Israel, and to draw all the nations to worship and obey the LORD (1:16; 2:10-12).  
*<sup>14</sup>“I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal...<sup>16</sup>I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house [the temple] shall be built in it.” (Zech. 1:14-16)*  
*<sup>10</sup>“I am coming and I will dwell in your midst...<sup>11</sup>Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day...and I will dwell in your midst...<sup>12</sup>And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land.” (Zech. 2:10-12)*
- C. Zechariah saw the main leaders of the temple in Jerusalem (Zech. 3-4), because this vision presents Israel's leadership and national calling as priests to all the nations (Ex. 19:6; Isa. 61:6).
- D. These two visions encourage the two primary leaders responsible for rebuilding the temple.
- E. These two visions focus on the two main leaders in Israel, **Joshua**, the high priest (Zech. 3) and **Zerubbabel**, the governor (Zech. 4). The spiritual condition and experience of the leaders in the kingdom impact and reflect the spiritual condition and experience of the people they lead.
- F. The Lord addresses the **two main obstacles** that hinder His people from enjoying their destiny. The first obstacle is **our sin** therefore He provides spiritual cleaning and renewal (Zech. 3). The next obstacle is **our lack of resources** therefore He gives supernatural provision (Zech. 4). In other words, we need His grace for continued **spiritual renewal** and **supernatural provision**.
- G. In Zechariah 3, He **cleanses their heart** and leads them to wholehearted obedience (3:3-7). In Zechariah 4, He **helps their work** and values it even when it is small and difficult (4:6-10). In other words, He desires wholeheartedness and diligence from His sinful and weak leaders.
- H. The first obstacle to overcome is the lie that we **fail too much** to be used by God (3:1-5). The next obstacle to overcome is the lie that we **lack too much** to complete God's will (4:6-9).
- I. The message of Zechariah 3-4 is the revelation of God's grace to His sinful and weak leaders. The message is that God forgives and **cleanses our hearts**, even from our greatest sins (Zech. 3). The message is that God provides for and **uses our work**, even in our smallest tasks (Zech. 4).



**The Golden Lampstand**  
*Zechariah 4*

## II. FIFTH VISION: THE GOLD LAMPSTAND AND TWO OLIVE TREES (4:1-14)

- A. **Summary:** The lampstand in the holy place of the temple was the main feature in the vision. Zechariah saw a seven-branched lampstand (menorah) with a bowl on its top (4:2b) to receive the oil that came from two olive trees. At the end of each of the seven branches of the lampstand was a burning lamp with a pipe connecting to the bowl (4:2c). Two olive trees stood next to the lampstand (4:3). Two olive branches dripped oil into receptacles (extensions) of the two golden pipes (4:12) that enabled the oil to flow to the bowl on top of the lampstand. The two olive branches are symbolic of two anointed leaders who God used to keep the lamps aflame (4:14).  
*<sup>2</sup>“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. <sup>3</sup>Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left...<sup>12</sup>What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains [flows]?...<sup>14</sup>These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.” (Zech. 4:2-3, 12, 14)*
- B. The message of this vision was to give Zerubbabel assurance that he would successfully mobilize the people and overcome all the obstacles to complete the temple through the Spirit’s help. The message was that the Lord will bring a seemingly impossible project to completion by using His servants (Zerubbabel and Joshua), who He will anoint and give supernatural help to. This message is applicable to any ministry assignment that God has given to any of His people.
- C. Zechariah 4 also speaks of God’s promise to give Israel supernatural help to fulfill her national calling to be a lampstand of truth to the nations (Isa. 60:1-3; 62:1-2). It presents Israel in her mission to bring light to the nations under Messiah, her king-priest. After Israel as the priestly nation has been cleansed from defilement, she will enter into her priestly calling to fulfill God's original purpose in her as the bearer of truth to the nations (Zech. 3-4).
- D. The vision has three parts: the symbolism related to the golden lampstand (4:1-5), two prophetic oracles (4:6-7, 8-10), and the explanation of the two olive trees (4:11-14).
- E. Zechariah received this vision on February 15, 519 BC (1:7), five months after September 22, 520 BC, when Israel had begun the work of rebuilding the temple (Hag. 1:12-15). It took almost four years to build the temple (September 520 BC to March 516 BC; Ezra 6:15).
- F. Zerubbabel made financial provision for full-time singers to minister to God night and day.  
*<sup>47</sup>In the days of Zerubbabel...Israel gave the portions [money] for the singers. (Neh. 12:47)*
- G. **What are these:** Zechariah needed help understanding the visions, so he asked the interpreting angel for insight. He asked, “*What are these things?*” seven times (1:9, 19, 21; 4:4, 11, 12; 6:4). He asked it three times in this vision (4:4, 11, 12). This gives us a model to follow as we read this book. If we pause to dialogue with the Spirit by asking Him to show us what He sees and feels in each part of this book, He will surely teach us many wondrous things (Jn. 16:13).  
*<sup>13</sup>“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.” (Jn. 16:13)*

### III. THE SYMBOLISM IN THE VISION OF THE LAMPSTAND (4:1-5)

A. Zechariah saw a lampstand (menorah) with a bowl on top of it, next to two olive trees (4:3).

*<sup>1</sup>Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.” <sup>4</sup>So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, “What are these, my lord?” <sup>5</sup>The angel who talked with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” (Zech. 4:1-5)*

1. ***What do you see:*** The interpreting angel asked him if he understood what he saw (4:2a). The angel knew the symbolism was such that he may have been able to understand it if he concentrated on it (because Zechariah understood the symbolism of the temple). Zechariah looked carefully to describe to the angel everything that he saw (4:2b-3).
2. ***Lampstand:*** The Hebrew word for lampstand is *menorah*. It symbolizes God’s people being witnesses of the light of God’s presence and truth. Being made of solid gold speaks of its direct relationship to God’s person and purpose.
  - a. The mission of Jesus, Israel, and the Church is be a light to the nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 60:1-3; 62:1-2; Mt. 5:14-16; 6:22-23; Mk. 4:21; Lk. 2:32; 8:16; 11:33; 12:35; Jn. 1:4-8; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46; Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thes. 5:5; Rev. 1:20; 11:4).
  - b. Moses’ tabernacle had a golden lampstand shining in the holy place (Ex. 25:31-40). Solomon’s temple had ten golden lampstands in the holy place (1 Kgs. 7:49).
3. ***Seven lamps and pipes:*** The lampstand had seven lamps branching out from it (4:2c). Each of these lamps had its own pipe that was connected to the bowl on top of the lampstand. The seven pipes were conduits through which oil flowed to the seven lamps. The number seven symbolizes the abundance and fullness of God’s light.
4. ***Two olive trees:*** The two olive trees stood to the right and left of the lampstand (4:3). The lamp in the temple burned olive oil continuously; it never went out (Ex. 27:20).
5. ***What are these, my lord:*** Zechariah asked what the two olive trees represented (4:4). Instead of answering his question, the angel asked Zechariah if he knew what they were, implying that he might be able to grasp its meaning if he concentrated on it. In this way, the angel emphasized Zechariah’s responsibility to search out the meaning. Zechariah asked twice more for understanding about the olive trees (4:11, 12). In the exchanges between Zechariah and the angel, we see the importance that the Lord gives to the human process. Our actions (3:7; 4:10), prayers (3:5) and even the measure of our understanding (3:5; 4:2, 4-5, 11-13) contribute in various ways to the increase of His kingdom work.

#### IV. THE MESSAGE OF THE FIFTH VISION (4:6-10)

- A. The interpreting angel now answers Zechariah's question, "What are these?" (4:4) with two oracles (4:6-7, 8-10). The angel explains the olive trees in light of God's command to Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple. The two oracles have the same basic message: to assure Zerubbabel that he would complete the temple with the supernatural help of the Spirit.
- B. The Lord promised to give Zerubbabel supernatural help to overcome the obstacles to doing His will, and assured him that He valued his work even when it seemed small and difficult (4:6-10). We are to have confidence that God values and uses our work and will help us to be diligent. This applies to any assignment in building the kingdom amidst mountains of opposition.
- C. The message of the first oracle was that God's power would prevail over all the obstacles in the rebuilding and maintenance of the temple according to God's purpose (4:6-7).
- <sup>6</sup>*"This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts. <sup>7</sup>'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!"'"* (Zech. 4:6-7)
1. **Zerubbabel:** Here, he is a type of Jesus who will build the millennial temple (Zech. 6:12).
  2. **Not by might or power:** The terms *might* and *power* speak of human ability and resources. Zerubbabel was not to put his hope in the political or military might of Persia as his primary resource, nor in the financial power of his own people. Human power will never be sufficient to remove the mountains of opposition. This is not meant to demean the value of human effort, but to emphasize its limitation. The Lord requires our effort, but without the Spirit's help it will be insufficient to establish the Lord's purposes.
  3. **By My Spirit:** The work of the Spirit was Zerubbabel's primary resource in rebuilding the temple. The work was bigger than their best efforts. A common lie that we must guard against is that we lack too much or will not have enough resource to complete God's will.
  4. **Says the LORD of hosts:** The Hebrew word that is translated *hosts* is a military word, emphasizing the power of God in confronting the enemy (4:6)
  5. **Mountain:** This speaks of the many obstacles that stood in Zerubbabel's way. There were four main obstacles: the **Samaritans'** political and civil opposition (Ezra 4:1-8; 5:6-17); **Israel's** spiritual lethargy, compromise, fear, and strife (1:2-4; 8:10; Hag. 1:2-4, 9); an **economic crisis** that was intensified by drought and agricultural failures (Hag. 1:1-11), and the **desolation of Jerusalem**—the city still lay in ruins, lacking civil infrastructure, and needing the rubble from the former temple to be cleared, etc.
  6. The eschatological mountains will include commerce and immorality (Rev. 17).

7. ***Shall become a plain:*** The heap of rubble from the destruction of Solomon’s temple 70 years earlier was completely removed as Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple.  
***<sup>7</sup>Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” (Zech. 4:7)***
  8. ***Shall bring forth the capstone:*** The capstone was ceremonially put in place when the temple project was finished. Zechariah received this word on February 15, 519 BC (1:7) and he completed the temple about three years later in March 516 BC (Ezra 6:15).
  9. ***Shouts of grace:*** Zerubbabel was to pray, or speak, grace over the temple project each day as part of his participation in the mountains of opposition being removed.
- D. At the very same time that Zechariah prophesied to Zerubbabel about the mountain moving, King Darius commanded Tattenai, the Persian governor of Samaria and Judah, to stop resisting Zerubbabel and to give him financial provision and help (Ezra 6:6-17). In other words, the Lord immediately removed the political hindrances and sent financial resources from Persia.
- <sup>6</sup>Now therefore, Tattenai...<sup>7</sup>Let the work of this house of God alone...<sup>8</sup>Let the cost be paid at the king’s expense from taxes on the region beyond the River; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered. <sup>9</sup>And whatever they need...let it be given them day by day without fail...<sup>11</sup>I issue a decree that whoever alters this edict...let him be hanged...<sup>13</sup>Tattenai...diligently did according to what King Darius had sent...<sup>15</sup>The temple was finished. (Ezra 6:6-13)***

## V. SECOND PROPHETIC ORACLE (4:8-10)

- A. The message of the second oracle (4:8-10) assured Zerubbabel that he would finish the temple. When he finished the temple, it would be clear that God had spoken through Zechariah (4:9).
- <sup>9</sup>“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. (Zech. 4:9)***
1. ***You laid the foundation:*** Zerubbabel laid the foundation of the temple twice. The first time was in their second year (after returning from Babylon) which was 536 BC (Ezra 3:10). The second time was in 520 BC, after a sixteen-year delay, (8:9; Hag. 2:18)
  2. ***His hands shall finish it:*** The angelic interpreter promised Zerubbabel that he would finish the temple (4:8). He finished it about three years later (Ezra 6:14-15).
  3. ***You will know the Lord sent Me:*** After the temple was finished, “you” or Zechariah will know that the Lord (the Father) sent “Me.” The passage does not clarify the antecedent of the pronouns “you” or “Me.” I think it is saying that Zechariah would know that the Angel of the Lord (Jesus) was sent to him. The Angel of the Lord (Jesus) used the phrase “He sent Me” three times in the third vision (2:8, 9, 11), “Me” seems to refer to Jesus, who is the Angel of the Lord in the book of Zechariah (1:11-12; 2:8-9, 11; 3:1, 5-6).

B. The Lord rejoiced in Zerubbabel's work and diligence in the day of small things (4:10).

<sup>10</sup>***“For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.” (Zech. 4:8-10)***

1. ***Plumb line***: A plumb line is a tool that is used during the early stages of a construction project when the foundational structure is being put in place. When Zerubbabel took hold of the plumb line, he took the responsibility and ownership of building the temple. In this hour, God is giving grace to people who have the spirit of Zerubbabel, who will accept the responsibility to build the house of prayer. They take ownership and work hard, regardless of how small the task or how little recognition they receive. They have the Psalm 132 vow burning in them, and will be diligent through difficulty and the mundane.
2. ***God's eyes***: “These seven” refers to God's eyes, signifying His omniscience. The “seven eyes” of God's omniscience run through the earth. Nothing is hidden from God. His eyes see our enemies, needs, obstacles, efforts, tears, love, and the value of our work.
3. ***Rejoice***: God rejoiced to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand. The eyes of the Lord watch each step of our progress in the work with rejoicing.
4. ***Do not despise the day of small things***: The Lord values our work even when it is small, and He desires diligence from His leaders in hard and small ministry assignments. Many despised the smallness of the work on the temple as insignificant (Ezra 3:12; Hag. 2:3). Haggai's message four months earlier, on October 15, 520 BC (Hag. 2:4), called them to be strong and to work diligently instead of despising the work and quitting.  
<sup>3</sup>***“Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?” <sup>4</sup>Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel...and be strong, Joshua...and be strong, all you people of the land...and work; for I am with you,” says the LORD of hosts. (Hag. 2:3-4)***
5. The key issue is always to “see” properly. In the “plumb line season” of smallness, we must not focus on the mountains of opposition or the smallness of our accomplishments. What we “see” determines whether we despise or rejoice in our work. Part of the answer to boredom is to feel the nobility of our work to God, even amidst the mundane. The plumb line is not only concerned with the size of the building, but with the quality of work done in it. We must not care only about how big it is but about doing it right.
6. The hard work included carrying and cutting stones and timber (Ezra 5:8; Hag. 1:8a). We must know that Lord values, uses, and takes pleasure in our smallest tasks (Hag. 1:8c).  
<sup>8</sup>***The temple...is being built with heavy stones, and timber being laid in the walls... (Ezra 5:8)***  
<sup>8</sup>***“Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the LORD. (Hag. 1:8)***

## VI. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE TWO OLIVE TREES (4:11-14)

- A. The interpreting angel explained the meaning of the two olive trees (4:11-14).  
*<sup>11</sup>I answered and said to him, “What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?” <sup>12</sup>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?” <sup>13</sup>Then he answered me and said, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” <sup>14</sup>So he said, “These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.” (Zech. 4:11-14)*
- B. ***What are these:*** Zechariah persistently asked for an explanation of the olive trees. He asked for it three times (4:4, 11, 12). He changed the question slightly from asking about the olive trees to asking more specifically about the branches (4:12).
- C. ***Do you not know:*** Twice the angel asked him, “Do you not know what these are?” (4:5, 13). Finally, the angel answered him (4:14). The Lord usually does not give us deeper insight into various truths until we have cared enough to personally search it out in the Word.
- D. ***Two olive branches:*** He asked about the meaning of the two branches that supplied olive oil to the receptacles of the two gold pipes, which carried it to the bowl atop the lampstand (4:2). The picture is a little unclear since it uses a Hebrew term not used anywhere else in the Bible, which is translated here as *receptacles of the pipes*. It refers to a kind of extension protruding from the branches, connected to the two golden pipes that drained the oil into the lamp’s bowl. The exact nature of the extensions is unclear, except that they were conduits for the oil to flow to the lamps.
- E. ***Two anointed ones:*** The two branches represent two anointed ones who stood beside or before the Lord (4:14). He showed the two anointed ones in their close relationship to the Lord. The term *anointed ones* is literally *sons of oil*. Five hundred years later, John received more insight into these “olive tree ministries” (Rev. 11:4). They will be end-time forerunners anointed to prophesy and do miracles and to “provide oil,” or inspiration and insight for many.  
*<sup>3</sup>I will give power to My two witnesses [forerunners], and they will prophesy...<sup>4</sup>These are the two olive trees ...standing before the God of the earth...<sup>6</sup>These have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. (Rev. 11:3-6)*
1. ***Standing before:*** This is an official term for priestly ministry. The tribe of Levi was to stand before the Lord to minister to Him (Deut. 10:8-9), like the high priest (Judg. 20:28), the priests of Zadok (Ezek. 44:15), Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:1), Elisha (2 Kgs. 3:14), John the Baptist (Jn. 3:29), the two witnesses (Rev. 11:4), and the angels (Lk. 1:19; Rev. 8:2).
  2. The *sons of oil* can only function from a lifestyle of standing before the Lord. This is the only place to freely receive the oil; it cannot be earned or produced by our efforts.
- F. ***The God of the earth:*** This emphasizes the worldwide scope of their ministry impact.



- G. **Golden oil:** *Golden oil* signifies oil of the purest quality and value. Oil is a symbol of the Spirit. This oil is related to an earlier promise of the Lord releasing the anointing and activity of His Spirit (4:6). Both *Messiah* (Hebrew) and *Christ* (Greek) come from the word *anoint*.
1. In the tabernacle, priests brought olive oil every morning and evening to supply the lampstand so it would burn continuously (Ex. 27:20-21; 30:7-8). They had to *produce* the oil by a process that included picking and crushing olives. Then they *hand fed* the oil into the lamps. Zechariah saw something unusual—there was no need to *produce* the oil or to *hand feed* it into the lamp; the olive trees dripped oil continuously into the bowl.
  2. The oil flowed automatically, continuously, and abundantly, indicating a supernatural work of the Spirit as promised earlier (4:6-7). The supply of oil was supernatural—no one crushed the olives to make oil, nor hand fed oil into the lamp. Rather, the two olive trees instantly produced oil. This never-ending supply of oil from the two olive trees symbolizes God’s continuous provision for us in the midst of human obstacles.
- H. The promise of the two olive trees was initially fulfilled by *Joshua and Zerubbabel*, who were anointed to serve God in the kingly and priestly offices. These were the only two offices in the Old Testament that were publically anointed for service in the Old Testament. These two men point to Jesus, who combined both offices, as the ultimate *son of oil* (6:12-13; Ps. 110:2-4).
1. These two *sons of oil* were entrusted with the Spirit’s anointing to *finish* and then *sustain* the work related to the temple by mobilizing and inspiring the workers, and by receiving supernatural provision and direction to see God’s purposes for the temple prosper.
  2. The Lord responded to the difficult work of building the temple (4:10) by releasing supernatural help and inspiration through His anointing on Zerubbabel and Joshua. Israel’s blessing was deeply connected to the faithfulness and anointing of their leaders. God’s leaders are to be channels through which the people (symbolized by the lampstand) are inspired by the Spirit (symbolized by the oil that fueled the lamps).
- I. **Summary:** The promise of the two olive trees, initially fulfilled by Joshua and Zerubbabel, will have a greater fulfillment in the *two witnesses*. I believe there will be many *lesser “sons of oil,”* who will live in the same spirit, all pointing to Jesus, the ultimate *son of oil*.
- J. In Jesus’ final teaching before the Upper Room, He exhorted His end-time leaders to cultivate oil before the Bridegroom God (Mt. 25:1-13). Jesus widened His invitation to be sons of oil, calling all who would hear to live as *wise virgins*, by taking the time and effort to acquire oil (Mt. 25:8).
- K. The message of Zechariah 4 is about the certainty of the activity of the Spirit to build the *temple*; it is relevant to Israel specifically and to the Church in general, as they function within a culture of prayer. This message is a great encouragement to all who are serving in a house of prayer.