

Not by Might or Power—Only by God's Spirit

*“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”
—Zechariah 4:6*

ZECHARIAH WAS A prophet of the Lord who, along with the Prophet Haggai and a group of other Israelites, returned from

Babylonian captivity to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. This was in response to God's provision made through the proclamation of King Cyrus found in Ezra 6:3-14.

While most Old Testament prophets date their writings according to the reign of a king in Israel, both Haggai and Zechariah's prophecies are dated in conjunction with the reign of Gentile kings, thus indicating that the "times of the Gentiles" had begun. (Hag. 1:1; Zech. 1:1; Luke 21:24) Part of Zechariah's mission was to encourage Zerubbabel and all who labored in the rebuilding of the Temple, and who had been beset by many oppositions and difficulties.—Ezra 4:1-5; 5:1,2

WORDS OF THE PROPHETS, MESSAGES FROM GOD

There are two general views respecting Zechariah's prophecy, as well as others found in the Bible. One view, favored by the "higher critics," is that the prophets exhorted the people with merely their own thinking, reasoning and vision of what would be helpful to the general populace.

The other view respecting Bible prophecies, stated by the Apostle Paul, is that "they are written for our admonition." Peter similarly said that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," recording things which were not their own ideas, but rather messages from God. This view of their prophecies gives the glory to God and makes their words, therefore, authoritative and reliable. —I Cor. 10:11; II Pet. 1:21

Prophecies recorded in the Scriptures often have different meanings besides merely an application to the time in which they were originally written by the prophet. They also contain important principles and lessons for the followers of Christ today. Examined from this standpoint, it permits us to appreciate the true force, value and beauty of Bible prophecy.

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

Several centuries prior to Zechariah's day, God had promised the Israelites, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." Later, Moses said, "Thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the

nations that are upon the earth.” (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2) Similarly, the Lord has promised to those at the present time who accept the heavenly calling, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”—I Pet. 2:9

Out of those Israelites who had been taken captive to Babylon—first of the ten tribe kingdom and later of the remaining two tribes—only a relative few had a strong enough faith and zeal in God’s promises to respond to the opportunity to return to Jerusalem. (Ezra 2:64) Many Israelites had become comfortably settled in Babylon, socially and financially, and their interest in these things outweighed their faith in the promises which God had previously made to their nation.

In this manner God sifted the Jewish nation. The mixed group from all twelve tribes of Israel who returned to Jerusalem included only the most loyal ones among the people. In like manner, not many have responded to the heavenly call during the present Gospel Age, only a “little flock.” (Luke 12:32) The Apostle Paul writes: “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, ... That no flesh should glory in his presence.”—I Cor. 1:26-29

Loyalty to the Lord and faith in his promises are costly. Thus, he proves his people during the present Gospel Age, separating those who are believers, in name only, from those who are fully dedicated,

selecting to himself his “peculiar people.” The Apostle Peter writes, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people [“people for a purpose,” *The Emphatic Diaglott*]; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which has not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”—I Pet. 2:9,10

BEGINNING OF THE WORK

The beginning of the work in laying the foundation of the literal Temple in Zechariah’s day, we believe, corresponds with the establishment of the Gospel church at Pentecost. The joy and zeal associated with the rebuilding of the Temple was followed by a period of slackness, which was the result of opposition from their Samaritan neighbors, who employed every technique at their disposal to discourage the Jewish rebuilding and to cause an interruption of the work. As a result, several years elapsed before the rebuilt Jewish Temple was finally completed.

Similarly, not long after the founding of the Early Church by our Lord and the apostles, and the great season of refreshing associated therewith, there came a period of fierce opposition and persecution from Satan and his blinded servants.

DIFFICULTIES

The returning Israelites reached Jerusalem, only to find difficulties. Very few of them had ever seen the city before, and the few who did had only seen it through the eyes of childhood. After seventy years of the land being “desolate,” Jerusalem’s

wall and Temple lay in ruins. (II Chron. 36:17-21) Surely this must have been a great trial of faith to those of the Israelites who had returned.

The Lord also permits our faith and zeal to be tested, not to destroy these qualities, but rather to deepen and fix them in our character. As with natural Israel then, so it is now with the Lord's followers. All such trying experiences, under God's providence, will work out to our advantage if we persevere in faith, love and zeal. The Apostle James writes, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."—James 1:12, *New International Version*

A GOLDEN CANDLESTICK

God gave Zechariah different visions to encourage the Israelites in the rebuilding work of the Temple. In the vision recorded in chapter 4 of his prophecy, the prophet saw a "candlestick all of gold," having a "bowl upon the top of it," and "seven pipes" leading to "seven lamps." (Zech. 4:2) Zechariah was likely familiar with such a candlestick, since it corresponded in some ways to the one made by Jehovah's direction, which was placed in The "Holy" compartment of the Tabernacle and later in Solomon's Temple. This candlestick was the only source of light in The Holy. (Exod. 25:31-37; Num. 8:2) The vision given to Zechariah was an illustration to show that God would be the source of their wisdom and strength in the work of rebuilding the Temple.

Zechariah also perceived that the candlestick in the vision represented in some manner divine favor,

enlightenment and blessing in connection with the promises which God had previously made to Israel. However, the candlestick in this vision differed from the one in Solomon's Temple and the Tabernacle, in that there were also "two olive trees" connected to it with golden pipes. (Zech. 4:3,11,12) The oil flowed from these "trees" to the lamp, which then generated light. Thus was indicated that the supply of oil for this candlestick, and therefore the supply of Israel's light, did not come from a human source. Rather, it was from God, and represented an inexhaustible supply of his favor and enlightenment.

The prophet, along with those who heard concerning his vision, drew considerable blessing and encouragement from it. It indicated the Lord's continued favor with them, regardless of the persecutions and difficulties which were present in every direction. It is likely that they interpreted the two olive trees to represent in some manner the offices represented by Zerubbabel the governor and Jeshua [sometimes translated "Joshua"] the high priest. (Ezra 2:1-36; 3:8,9; Hag. 1:1,12-14) They were God's special representatives related to the Temple rebuilding work in Jerusalem.

HIGHER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VISION

We believe that there is also a greater significance to Zechariah's vision to be found in the New Testament. Here we find not only a golden candlestick, but also two olive trees mentioned about six hundred years later, in the revelation God gave to the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos. (Rev. 1:12; 11:4) We believe this is an indication that the vision

given to Zechariah had a deeper meaning beyond merely the encouragement of the builders of the Jewish Temple in his day.

In the Book of Revelation, the last message given to the Christian church, our Lord explains that the “seven candlesticks” represent seven stages or periods of the church during the Gospel Age, symbolized by the seven congregations in Asia which existed in John’s day. (Rev. 1:20,11) In the Bible, the number seven often represents completeness. We believe the light of the seven golden candlesticks in the Book of Revelation pictures the daily conduct and devotion of the true followers of Christ. Jesus used the symbol of a candlestick, stating, “Ye are the light of the world. ... Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 5:14-16

In the future, the glory of the completed spiritual temple in heaven, the glorified church, will “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom.” Together with her Lord and head, Jesus Christ, these faithful ones of the present age will bless and uplift the world of mankind.—Matt. 13:43; Mal. 4:2

SPIRITUAL TEMPLE BEING BUILT

Just as there was the work of rebuilding the literal Jewish Temple in Zechariah’s day, so also there has been another “temple” being built during the present Gospel Age. This temple is not a physical building made with hands, but rather it is a spiritual one, symbolized by those who faithfully

follow in the sacrificial footsteps of Jesus during the present time.—Rev. 2:10

The Apostle Paul writes concerning the building of this spiritual temple, stating: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ... For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” “Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (I Cor. 3:16,17; II Cor. 6:16-18) Thus we understand that this spiritual temple, now in the process of being built, consists of all those who have accepted the heavenly call and are developing the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The “foundation” of this spiritual temple is “the apostles and prophets,” with “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Eph. 2:20-22) The Apostle John recorded what Christ said concerning this spiritual temple, stating, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.”—Rev. 3:12

“SHINE AS LIGHTS”

Applying the lesson of the spiritual temple, we understand it relates to the development of the church as a whole during the Gospel Age, when the

“living stones” for this symbolic temple are being shaped, chiseled and polished. (I Pet. 2:5, *International Standard Version*) Related to this lesson is that God is supplying to us the light of truth, through the power of his Holy Spirit, in the midst of the surrounding darkness of the world. God supplies this light to us by the two olive trees, the “two witnesses,” which we believe symbolize the Old and the New Testament. (Rev. 11:1-4) From these two sources of instruction, the “sons of God” are to be filled with his spirit and thereby “shine as lights in the world.” (Phil. 2:15) As Paul wrote to Timothy, “All scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for that discipline which is in righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work.”—II Tim. 3:16,17, *Diaglott*

We should not expect that our participation in the building of the spiritual temple will result in worldly success. Instead, we are to expect that the Lord will furnish us with his supply of “oil,” the Holy Spirit, and light because we are his people, as long as we are continually striving to do those things which are pleasing to him.—I John 3:22-24

BY GOD’S SPIRIT

The angel of the Lord then explained to Zechariah, “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.” (Zech. 4:5,6) The Israelites were reminded that the success of their Temple rebuilding work was not by the might, influence and favor of the Persian monarch to whom they were subjected, nor by their own power

and ability as laborers. They were to learn that the success of their efforts should be attributed to God alone, whose Holy Spirit, power and influence would guide and control their affairs.

Similarly, the Lord's church during the Gospel Age has not been established through Crusades, nor through large organizations combining with worldly systems and powers, nor by uniting with wealthy groups. The spiritual temple which the Lord is building, is to have a beauty, honor, and dignity—not in its construction, nor in the value of its individual stones, but by reason of its completion and then being filled with the glory of the Heavenly Father.

Christ Jesus was the foundation laid for God's spiritual temple. (I Pet. 2:6,7) Together, they will complete the building work, and it shall be acclaimed glorious. (I Pet. 5:4) Christ is "chief Shepherd," and although we may, at times, be discouraged and feel that we have not made adequate progress in transforming our character into his image, yet we should be of good courage and remember that our victory will not come through human might, popularity or influence. It will neither come by our own power and abilities. Rather, victory will come only by the Lord's spirit of holiness. The Apostle John writes, "Every one who is begotten of God doth overcome the world, and this is the victory [Greek: *nike*, the means of success] that did overcome the world—our faith."—I John 5:4, *Young's Literal Translation*

MOUNTAINS TO BECOME A PLAIN

The angel continued his message to Zechariah, stating, "Who art thou, O great mountain?" (Zech.

4:7) This probably referred to the mountain of difficulties which stood in the way of the Temple rebuilding work in Jerusalem and was preventing its completion. The Lord's assurance was that these difficulties would be removed and "become a plain." This "great mountain" is also a fitting symbol of the "present evil world" which is ruled by the great Adversary, Satan, the god and "prince of this world," and which has the appearance of being an immovable obstacle to mankind. (Gal. 1:4; II Cor. 4:4; John 12:31) However, during the present great time of trouble there will be "the removing of those things that are shaken"—that which is sinful and contrary to God's will. Eventually only the things "which cannot be shaken," and are in harmony with God's kingdom of righteousness, will remain. This will leave a smooth "plain," called the "way of holiness," on which the world of mankind will have the opportunity to return to full harmony with God under the great Priest and King, Christ and his bride, the church.—Heb. 12:26-28; Isa. 35:8; 11:1-10

The prophecy then states that just as Zerubbabel "laid the foundation of this house," his hands would "also finish it." (Zech. 4:9) So too, our Lord Jesus, as the Father's representative, began the building of the spiritual temple at Pentecost, and will in due time complete the work, seeking those who are his and operating in them through the Word of God. Paul wrote to the brethren at Philippi, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [complete] it until the day of Jesus Christ." —Phil. 1:6

THE “PLUMMET”

Israel was also exhorted in this prophecy not to despise the “day of small things”—that is, the small beginnings, the seemingly little progress, and difficult conditions with the rebuilding work. Instead, they were to “rejoice,” and see “the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.” They were to realize that God’s wisdom and power was with them and would oversee the work until its completion.—Zech. 4:10

The “plummet” refers to a small weight which was attached to the end of a string, or line. Such a “plumb line” was used while building a structure as the standard for insuring a correct straightness in the vertical direction. The Prophet Amos used a similar expression, writing, “The Lord stood upon a wall, ... with a plumbline in his hand.”—Amos 7:7,8

The angel explained to Zechariah that the plummet represented “the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.” (Zech. 4:10) Thus is indicated to us that God’s perfect and much diversified wisdom is necessary in preparing the living stones and building the spiritual temple. Peter assures us that “the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous.” God notes our sorrows and joys, our trials and victories, and he cares for all our interests. The apostle then further encourages us: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”—I Pet. 3:12; 5:7

We are to recognize the plummet is in the hands of our loving and all-wise Heavenly Father—squaring, straightening, proving, and testing—both our faith as well as our character. Only those who are sufficiently developed under the tests permitted and

directed by God will ultimately constitute the living stones in his glorious temple.

In addition to our own development, let us also strive to edify our fellow body members, building one another up in our “most holy faith.” (I Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24; Jude 20) Let us use the “plummet” with love and kindness, encouraging one another with the assurance that, ultimately, the glorious plan of God shall be accomplished through the small things, the seemingly insignificant experiences of life. Let us seek to be more and more filled with the Holy Spirit and remind ourselves that as the light of the golden candlestick of the Lord, we are to shed the light abroad at the present time, whether others hear or disregard.

The spiritual temple will soon be complete. After the last member has been proven “faithful unto death,” “the glory of God” will fill the spiritual temple. (Rev. 2:10; 21:9-11) Then will be the shout, “Grace, grace unto it!” (Zech. 4:7) Finally, the great work of blessing and uplifting all the families of the earth will begin. The blessings shall flow from the throne of the spiritual temple—“a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,” for the healing of all nations and people.—Rev. 22:1,2 ■