

The chapter opens with the same angel returning to the prophet to impart new information. Zechariah had been asleep, which is representative of the state of the dead. There is emphasis on this awakening, and it must therefore be significant in the correct understanding of what is involved in this next vision.

This is the fourth vision of the book, and each advances the development of God's plan with His people Israel set during various challenges. This is halfway through the scheme which God's spirit has mapped out.

First vision. The coloured horses among the trees. Chapter 1. Israel's future secure.

Second vision. Horns and carpenters. Chapter 1. Until then troublesome times.

Third Vision. Joshua's change of clothing. Chapter 3. The deficiencies in the priesthood.

Fourth vision. Golden candlestick. Chapter 4. Divine provision through dual conduits.

Fifth vision. Flying roll. Chapter 5. Temple to be consumed.

Sixth vision. Woman and the Ephah. Chapter 5. Unclean corruption to follow this.

Seventh vision. Emerging chariots. Chapter 6. Subjugation of the world.

Coming at the middle point this vision focuses upon the positives of the interactions which God has chosen for His people. The plan will be achieved not because of the faithfulness of Israel or indeed any other nation or group of nations, but despite the corruption and disobedience. Some however will believe and prove faithful and God promised to work through this class of people, who sadly never amounted to a majority, let alone the whole nation of Israel. God was calling out a people for His name, calling them out of

Israel itself, because it was already apparent that that nation had failed and would not repent nor reform!

The candlestick as the word is in the KJV is a poor translation as there are no candles in an oil lamp, instead there are wicks and the burning of oil, not wax. The central component of the vision is the lampstand in the middle of the trees. It needs to be kept alight and the best way is the direct transportation of fuel from source to the point required to produce light. Heat is also produced as it is not a 100% efficient process. Heat as a by produce reminds us that there is an emotional element in the production of spiritual light. God could just generate light directly like He did on the first day before the Sun and the other heavenly bodies were made, but He did not do this. Instead, He has selected to work through a mechanism that is imperfect in many respects but entirely fit for purpose and indeed He delights to utilise surprisingly vulnerable material in His plans as it not only shows what He is capable of doing in such a transformation, but it is His essential purpose to make divinity out of clay!

The lampstand has seven lamps fed by seven pipes. These pipes are said to be upon the top thereof and by implication drain fuel to each lamp from the golden bowl which is on the very top of this lampstand. Gravity will drain the oil to where it is burnt to produce light. The bowl being over the top of the lampstand in itself distracts from the distribution of light from its source, but there can be no light without the oil first being made available to where it is needed. This unruly arrangement seems awkward, but it is set up to continue as long as the oil keeps flowing down these pipes. It can operate as a self-contained machine designed and organised by the Creator. The light owes its distribution to the initial supply of the oil which requires the bowl to be present in the absence of priests continually refilling the lamps manually. It is a light machine! Its looks are not important, but its function is best served in this way. So it is, with the Truth. It might look awkward, and the One golden bowl hinders some of this light, but God utilises these

components to achieve the best overall effect. Knowing that the bowl is always there allows those seeking light to adjust to its presence in a way that a continual coming and going of priests or Levites would annoying block in a more irritating way which the observer cannot so easily compensate for. Thus, it is with the Truth. Knowing that the presence of the Truth-holders assists in the production of light to be disseminated should mean that those seeking light accept a little adjustment in their viewpoint to compensate for that element. By doing so they can still easily benefit from the light!

Seven is the number of completion or perfection. The seven lamps mirror the seven lampstands of the Apocalypse, Revelation 1v20. The complete or perfect collection of Ecclesias which God has called to represent His truth to the wider world, to shine as lights in the midst of darkness and to witness against that sinful world which is so far astray from their unrecognised Creator who in love offers them so much more!

There are wise and foolish virgins which have oil but having oil does not mean that the lamps are trimmed and ready. The oil needs to be where it can be used. It is no good having the oil in a container but not feeding the burning of the light. See Matthew 25v1-13.

There are many twos in this passage; two olive trees, two branches, two golden pipes. These couples remind the reader that there is a need for a coming together to complete the whole. Just as there are two people in a relationship, so here God is teaching that there is no clear solitary element in the advancement of truth.

There is no Son without the Father, no man without the woman, no saint without the sinner, no Jew without the gentile, no rich without the poor, no wise without the foolish, no strong without the weak.

In this section what are the two trees? These olive trees stand one on each side. Both cannot be on the favoured righthand, but both provided oil for the continual burning of the lampstand. In the

same way God has used both Jew and gentile as vehicles for the promulgation of His Truth and the gentiles were graft into the olive tree contrary to nature, see Romans 11v16-18. Christ's disciples are the light of the world especially since he has departed to sit at God's right hand in the heavens, John 9v5.

Trees are representative of nations or peoples. See Ezekiel 31v3, 17v24, Psalm 96v12, Luke 21v29,30. Each tree a separate nation, given space to grow and mature but with an inevitable cycle of eventual decline to follow. These olive trees are representative of Judah and Ephraim the two Kingdoms of Israel split after Solomon, and after that the divergence of Jews and gentiles for many centuries during the long 2,000 years of the time of the madness of the pigs.

Branches which are not properly connected with the tree wither and die. Such if identified earlier can safely be lopped off and discarded, but God usually waits until the branch has become disconnected and dried out on the ground before being gathered and burnt, John 15v1-7 links this to the central role of the Lord Jesus Christ in the interlocking association of believers. These branches were the subject of a question by Zechariah who did not know what they represented in the vision. The angel advised him that these were the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord of the whole earth. That Zechariah was one of these anointed prophets he was unable to recognise. He had personal humility and did not push himself forward to seize power or prestige, instead he humbly served his Lord, the LORD. The other prophet who was contemporary with him was the prophet Haggai, who witnessed to Israel at a similar time to Zechariah, Malachi was a little later being the last of the Hebrew prophets before the silence of a few centuries until Elizabeth spoke under inspiration of the same Holy Spirit in about 7BCE just before Christ was born.

This advancement of the cannon of scripture was an indication that that great work was not yet complete and that others would be raised to continue the work was appreciated by Zechariah even

if this vision did not specifically cover that issue. The whole 29 books of the New Testament were still to be penned and added to the cannon.

There is mention also of a great mountain which before Zerubbabel would become a plain. The rising colossus of Persia was in control of the Near East at that time, having taken over from Babylon as the chest and arms of Silver, the second beast of Daniel, the bear. The headstone of Persia would mark its grave, the place where it died, that would come later after the Macedonian usurper Alexander marched into Asia minor and defeated the great Empire of Cyrus' descendants in three great battles, Granicus 334 BCE, Issus 333BCE and Gaugamela 331BCE. It was in Mesopotamia where this third battle was fought and there the Persian Empire can be said to have died and was buried. Alexander went on to famously destroy all the records of the Persians as an act of spiteful revenge and the wilful destruction of so much history which denied them the recognition of others of the glories they had achieved. As they had a centralised authority and efficient library system it was very easy to obliterate these records from the annals of history. This was still future to Zerubbabel who died and was buried in Babylon. However, he saw the beginnings of this humiliation when this mighty force stumbled against the small and less significant cities of Greece in the failed invasion of that area and their defeat in the battles of Marathon, Salamis and Plataea which he would have witnessed according to the shorter Jewish chronology of this period.

Zerubbabel was also said to have laid the foundations of this house, and whilst he did not literally do this, he was instrumental in helping to organise the great work of rebuilding. Josephus adds so detail about the life of this important Bible figure but what he recorded does not carry the weight of inspiration, interesting and perhaps possible though this is. The second temple was finished in his day and thus the first period of Daniel's seventy weeks, the seven weeks of rebuilding was to be an earnest for the nation that

the LORD of hosts would conclude the sequence which ends with the Messiah cut off but not for (by) himself, see Daniel 9v24-26. We also live in a day of small things, but that will suddenly change as God sees fit!

A Voice from the Altar

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