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"BY MY SPIRIT, SAITH THE LORD."

– ZECHARIAH 4:1-10. – OCTOBER 29. –

Golden Text: – "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

ZECHARIAH prophesied during the period of the rebuilding of the Temple. In our last lesson we noted the beginning of the work in the laying of the foundations, and that this corresponds with the establishment of the Gospel Church at Pentecost. The joy and zeal associated with the founding of the Temple was followed by a period of slackness, the result of the opposition of the Samaritan neighbors, who employed their every art to discourage the builders and to cause an interruption of the work. As a result several years elapsed before the structure was finally completed.

Just so, after the founding of the 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. As a consequence of this opposition very little was done for centuries upon the building up of the Church – the preparation of the living stones; yet finally, with the Lord's assistances and encouragements through the Reformation movement, etc., the work of collecting the living stones has progressed, and now we are in the time when the Temple of the Lord is nearly complete – the spiritual Temple which, when completed, will receive its top-stones in the sense of being brought directly in contact with and under the guidance of the glorified Lord, who is the capstone of the spiritual pyramid – his Church.

Haggai's prophecies were delivered to Israel about the time of their return from the captivity, and therefore at the time of the founding of the Temple, the prophet at this time being advanced in years. Zechariah, a younger prophet, was raised up by the Lord at

this time, and other messages were sent to the discouraged Israelites to show them that they must not expect great national prosperity at the time, but that nevertheless the Lord was with them, and that going on faithfully in an apparently small, insignificant matter, they would be accomplishing his purposes. This corresponds in some degree with the messages which have come to the Lord's people since the time of Wycliffe, and which have led to the Reformation movement in its various aspects, and incidentally to the development and preparation of the various living stones of the glorious Temple.

PROPHETS TO BOTH ISRAELS.

Our lesson treats of these visions given to Zechariah and related by him to the people, which served to encourage them to proceed with the work. They were not spiritual Israelites, neither was the Temple they were constructing the true, glorious Temple of the Lord. Those were only the types – the better things, the antitypes, are ours. Nevertheless they got a blessing in connection with the types as we get still greater blessings in connection with the antitypes, and the same messages which mean so much for us meant a great deal to them, though they did not understand them so clearly.

For instance, this prophecy respecting the Golden Candlestick, etc., to natural Israel at that time was properly understood to mean that they were to be God's light-bearers amongst all the nations of the world, and that God himself would see to the supply of light which they would shed forth. And all that was true of natural Israel for centuries; they were God's light-bearing nation, and undoubtedly their influence in the world hindered a greater degradation than might otherwise have occurred. The nations furthest away from them and the light which God placed in them and which shone out from them were the nations which became the most degraded, while the nations nearest them and their light were the nations which went downward least rapidly. Assuredly, however, it was not intended that they

should understand the full meaning of this prophecy, and the prophet himself did not understand its full meaning.

The Apostle Peter explains the situation to us when he says, "Holy men of old spoke as moved by the holy Spirit." And yet he proceeds to say, The things which they uttered were not for themselves but for us upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:21.) The prophets spoke and wrote mechanically, as they were moved by the holy Spirit. They saw some meaning, some significance of the things they wrote and spoke, but not the true, the deep significations, which were not then due to be understood. Only since the true Temple began to be built at Pentecost, only since the anointing of the holy Spirit came upon the spiritual household, the body of Christ, has it been possible for any to enter into the real spirit, thought, intention of the divine purpose as expressed in this and in other prophecies.

THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND.

The Golden Candlestick, or, more properly, lampstand, was an important feature in connection with the Tabernacle services and subsequently with the Temple services. It was the light in the Holy as the Shekinah glory was the light in the Most Holy. We may gain an accurate conception of the appearance of this golden **[R3650 : page 317]** lampstand from the arch of Titus at Rome. Titus was the Roman general whose army destroyed Jerusalem A.D. 69. Amongst the spoils of the city which he carried away with him was the golden lampstand from the Temple. The arch in Rome was built as a memorial to that victory. It still stands, though somewhat dilapidated, and chiseled in it are representations of Hebrew captives bearing the trophies of war. Amongst these trophies the golden candlestick is represented. The cut herewith produced well represents it.

The golden candlestick shown to Zechariah in this vision differed from the one in the Temple and in the Tabernacle in that it had a special bowl as an oil reservoir and pipes leading from the bowl

to two olive trees, one on each side of it, the oil being thus represented as flowing from the tree to the lamp and thus perpetually supplying a light. We remember that similarly, in his last great message to the Church, our Lord pictures seven golden candlesticks or lampstands separated from one another, and explains that these represented the seven stages or epochs of the Church symbolized by the seven congregations of Asia. The seven lampstands united in one represented, therefore, the Church as a whole from first to last, its every member complete, the number seven representing completeness.

We are not to think of this lampstand as representing the Church in the future state of glory, giving light to the world. No! Thank God! The future glory is represented otherwise as the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in its beams, and we are particularly told that the Church will constitute with her Lord that Sun of Righteousness, which shall bless the world and heal its sin-sickness. – Matt. 13:43. [R3651 : page 317]

"LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE."

In applying this lesson, then, we should recognize that it relates to the Church as a whole during this Gospel age, during the time when the preparation of the living stones for the Temple is in progress. The lesson to us is that God is supplying to us the light amidst the surrounding darkness of the world – the light of truth, the light of the holy Spirit. Nevertheless, God is pleased to supply this light through peaceable agencies represented by the two olive trees, which we understand to symbolize the Old and the New Testaments. From these two sources of instruction the Lord's Church is to be filled with his spirit and to shine as lights in the world in the midst of darkness, in the midst of crooked and perverse peoples. From this standpoint they are not to expect that their success in the building of the Temple will be in the nature of worldly success. They are rather to expect that the Lord will furnish them with this supply of oil and

light because they are his people and because they are doing the work, and they are thus to be assured of its ultimate accomplishment no matter how or what agencies are in opposition. "Greater is he that is for us than all they that be against us."

Zerubbabel was one of the princes amongst the people of the line of David, and therefore represented the kingdom hopes of the people. His name implies alienation from Babylon. He also represented our Lord Jesus, the prince of the house of David, whose Kingdom is ultimately to be established in the whole earth for the blessing and enlightenment of all, but who for a time was to be unrecognized by the world. The message given to Zerubbabel, therefore, in a general way applies to Jesus the Head of the Church and to all the members of his body, and particularly to all who are his representatives in the Church in the capacity of teachers, elders, etc.

HE SHALL NOT FAIL NOR BE DISCOURAGED.

We are reminded here of another statement applicable to our Lord, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged until he have set judgment in the earth." (Isa. 42:4.) The message here to the Zerubbabel class is to encourage the work, that the Temple must be built, that it shall be built, and that ultimately great blessings shall flow to all people through it. The message reads: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The implication is that the Lord's Church is not to be established through Crusades, nor through mighty organizations combining with worldly systems and powers, nor by unions of wealthy sects. These all build along different lines. The Temple which the Lord is building is to have a beauty, an honor, a dignity, not in its construction, nor in the value of its stones, but by reason of its completion and of its then being filled with the glory of the Lord – in the first resurrection.

The oppositions of the surrounding neighbors and the difficulties which they put in the way of the building of the Temple

must have seemed to the people of that time like an impassable mountain before them blocking their way. And so throughout the Gospel age the various agencies of evil, the civil power and subsequently the ecclesiastical and civil powers in combination, have seemed to have thoroughly blocked the way for the development of the living stones for the Kingdom. From the human standpoint, discerning the class which the Lord is selecting, all the outward circumstances have been unfavorable. The prosperity of Churchianity has meant the hindrance of the truth, the hiding of it under forms and ceremonies and creeds, until those who fear the Lord and who speak often together have wondered why the Lord has permitted such great obstacles in the way of finding the very elect and building them up in the most holy faith. And when the power and strength of present institutions are considered we may well ask, Where will the Lord's little flock be found? how will they ever be glorified? and how can they eventually take possession of the Kingdom under the whole heavens?

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE ZERUBBABEL CLASS.

The message here through the prophet is intended to encourage the Zerubbabel class, representative of all those who are co-laborers with the Lord in the building of his Temple, in the preparation of the stones. The assurance is that however great and formidable the opposition, the apparent mountains of difficulty shall disappear. What we need is faith in the Lord that he is carrying out his work and that ultimately all his good purposes shall be accomplished. Instead of mountains before us shall be a plain, and ultimately God will bring forth the headstone, the capstone, to the great complete Church, and Head and body together shall be glorified, and then will be the shoutings of Grace, grace unto it! God's favor upon it! Then the Shekinah glory shall fill the Temple, every member, every stone, shall be glorified, made partaker of the divine nature, and be fully

qualified to carry out all the gracious purposes of our God. [R3651 : page 318]

The message adds that as Zerubbabel laid the foundations of the house, he also would complete it, and the message to us is that as our Lord Jesus was the Father's representative and founded the house of sons at Pentecost, so in due time he will complete the work and it will be completed along present lines, not by power of men nor by the might of men, nor by the riches of the world, but by the Lord's spirit, seeking those who are his and operating in them through the Word to the chiseling and polishing, the shaping and preparing, of them for the glorious positions they are to occupy. He who began the good work in us is able and willing to complete it unto the day of Jesus Christ. – Phil. 1:6.

A DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

To the Jews returned from Babylon the effort to build the house of the Lord and the materials with which they worked all seemed insignificant and poor and unlikely to result in anything great or glorious or lasting. And so with us who now are free from Babylon and who are seeking to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the present time seems a day of small things; not many great, not many wise, not many learned are to be found amongst the living stones, but the Lord knoweth them that are his, and our confidence is to be in him. If we despise not these small things we shall ultimately rejoice. We are to recognize the plummet in the hands of the Lord, squaring, straightening, proving, testing, not only our faith but also our characters. We are to recognize that only those who will stand the testing of the Lord shall ultimately constitute the living stones in this glorious Temple. We are to recognize also that the eyes of the Lord are upon all his people and upon all their interests, to note their tears and their joys, their trials and difficulties and their prosperity, to care for all their interests.

In this symbolical picture the eye of the Lord is represented as seven or complete all-seeing, everywhere, all-knowing. This is our confidence, this is our rejoicing. Let us then in our double capacity not only be conformed to the plummet line, to all the elements of justice and truth and righteousness and love, but let us also, as associated with our Lord in the work of upbuilding the Church, build one another up in the most holy faith. Let us use the plummet with love, with kindness, and let us encourage one another with the assurance that ultimately the glorious plan of the Lord shall be accomplished through the small things, the mean things, the insignificant things of the world, the little flock whom he is choosing to be his agents and representatives in the great and glorious work which is to follow. Let us accordingly seek to be more and more filled with the spirit. Let us remember that we are the golden candlestick of the Lord, to shed the light abroad in the present time, whether men will heed or whether they will forbear.

Indeed we have the Lord's assurance that the darkness hateth the light, and that therefore the world will not love or appreciate the efforts, even though they may recognize them as being in many respects good and proper. It is ours not to please the world but to please the Lord, and in order to please him we must let our lights shine out. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." But we cannot as the Lord's Church in the world let our lights shine out unless we have the oil, unless we have his spirit, and we cannot have the oil, the spirit of the Lord, except as we receive it from his appointed channels or agencies; and we are to recognize that not the wisdom or learning of men is our supply, and not our own wisdom, not the wisdom of this world, but the wisdom from above, which is supplied to us through the two olive trees – the Old Testament, with its glorious prophecies and symbols and instructions and types – the New Testament, with its explanations and assistances and encouragements and exhortations and promises.

"A voice once still and small
Rose sweetly on the ear;
With love so clear and full, that all
In heaven and earth might hear.

"It spoke of peace, it spoke of love,
It spoke as angels speak above;
And God himself was heard.
For oh, it was the Father's voice
That bade his trembling world rejoice."

