Kings and Prophets 17-10-12

This is Thursday, the 12th of October, 2017. We continue our study of kings and prophets. We're in the book of Zechariah, and we've come to chapter 4. It is the vision of the lampstand and the two olive trees.

This follows our look at the high priest Joshua in chapter 3. Let's take a moment to dedicate our time and our study and our fellowship to the Lord, and then we'll begin. Father, we're so grateful for the provision you've made for us, not only in our salvation, but as we continue in this world, you provide us with challenges, with opportunities to exercise our faith and to practice the things that we learn, to cement them into our souls so that they will be a part of the permanent arsenal of resources that we can employ in service, both in this life and in the life to come. We thank you for the Lord Jesus and His wonderful example.

We thank you for these foreshadowings and previews that reveal to us in some ways more than even the New Testament Scriptures do, and we pray that as we look at this portion of your Word tonight, that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, will illuminate the page, not only give us understanding but also an appreciation for the effect that these truths can have on us, on our daily lives, our walk before you, our testimony before the world, and our time of fruit bearing in this life under the ministry of your Spirit. We pray that you'll bless our study tonight and each one who participates in it, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, without investing too much time in review, it is important to remember what's in Chapter 3 as a companion chapter to Chapter 4 that we're going to look at tonight. It is an unusual thing. Here's a little pop quiz.

You think back to all of the prophets and all of the kings, pharaohs, and potentates of various shapes, sizes, and descriptions throughout the Old Testament who had visions. Pharaoh had visions that Joseph interpreted. Nebuchadnezzar had visions that Daniel interpreted.

The prophets themselves in some cases were quite replete in the vision department. But can you think of a vision where in the vision a living person, a contemporary, appears? I cannot. I think this is somewhat unique in that both Zerubbabel and Joshua, the founders of the Let's Rebuild the Temple effort, are figuring in it, and they are alive at the time.

So the vision that Zechariah sees is people that he sees. You know, sometimes you dream about people you know, and they don't always act like they should or like they would want to in the dream. It can be sort of a dream version or a nightmare version.

But you recognize them and you say, oh, well, you wake up the next morning, I dreamed about my kids, or I dreamed about my spouse, or I dreamed about somebody I know. I dreamed about somebody I used to know. I dreamed about somebody that used to be here and has gone to glory.

You know, there's all kinds of things. But in Scripture, I find it pretty unique, if not totally unique, here that this set of visions here, this is vision number four and vision number five in our set of eight, are populated by these living examples that Zechariah can go talk to the next day and say, you know, I dreamed about you last night. I saw you in a vision.

And I wonder why that is. We have symbolic elements, animals and horns and ribs between their teeth and shoulders higher than another and spots and heads that don't belong on the bodies and all kinds of things in the Daniel visions. You have images.

You have all sorts of things. And so it's, yet in chapter three, we had Joshua standing there. And I think that may be, it is certainly the only one that comes to my mind.

If there's another one, email me and let me know. This is the only one I know of. But the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Savior I know of.

And we saw last time how manifestly and beautifully this Joshua presages the coming Yeshua. And if you read commentaries and listen to people who try to interpret chapter three, very often they think that Joshua represents us. And this is a symptom I've mentioned in the past.

I think everybody listening to the sound of my voice knows my position on the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, that he is God's factotum, God's spokesperson. And when he speaks, that you're hearing the voice of God. He will speak in the first person for God, but in the same way that your telephone does or your walkie-talkie in the case of what we use here.

I don't think the walkie-talkie is talking to me. My mother's on the other end and that's her talking to me, but all I see and hear is this device. And the angel of the Lord has the honor of representing God.

And you can imagine that if Lucifer originally held that function and perverted the message, was not faithful to it and began to merchandise and began to ad-lib and extemporize and put his own thoughts, not necessarily take things into the throne room, just adjudicate them in his own mind and, you know, I can do the God job. I don't really need to bother him with this. I'll just do it.

And hey, I can raise myself up while I'm doing it. But this would be a very egregious breach of trust and of responsibility. So I bring that up because if you believe that the angel of the Lord is the Lord Jesus in a pre-incarnate appearance, you can't conclude that Joshua represents Jesus Christ because the angel of the Lord is standing in the vision.

And Jesus is a lot of things, but when he's manifest, he's not in two places at once. So you don't have the angel of the Lord as Jesus and Joshua as Jesus. And this drives the interpretation in another direction.

And it's just an example to me of how even sometimes the things that we're maybe less completely confident of, I wouldn't stake my salvation on the identity of the angel of the Lord,

but I think being careful allows us to see things we might not otherwise see. And in this particular vision, it much more closely comports with the soon to come Messiah's person, work, and high priestly function that he himself is not sinful, but it is put on him. He is clothed with it.

He bears it, literally. He bears the tattered, dirty garments. But because those garments are removed at the voice of God, the angel of the Lord says, speaking for God the Father, remove those clothes.

Well, there is a basis for it. And the basis is he is not the person to be wearing dirty clothes. Those do not befit him.

He needs clothes that befit him. And so the old ones that he has put on, which are ours, are taken off at the word of the Father and replaced with righteousness. And it's a wonderful picture because you think our dirty clothes were put on Christ, he bore them, he went before the Father, and based on his righteousness, God the Father says, remove those dirty clothes and put clean ones on him.

And you get the idea that in a reversal sense, now those clean clothes are going to be distributed to us to replace our dirty garments. And the Lord Jesus is the means by which that takes place because he is acceptable to the Father. And we are made acceptable in the Beloved.

So it's really a beautiful picture. And I think rather than saying, well, Joshua represents us, and God forgives our sins and takes our tattered garments off and puts them on, all of that is true. But it could be that you would miss a really wonderful anticipation of the Lord Jesus.

And Satan accusing, you remember, Satan personally opposed the Lord Jesus on several occasions. And even when Judas betrayed him, it doesn't say, there's a, I just heard this in a sermon yesterday, there's this ongoing belief that Satan tried to kill Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. I've heard it more than one place, and I think it showed up in Mel Gibson's movie as part of the Catholic tradition.

There seems to be a strong myth associated with that. Probably where it comes from is Scripture noting that Satan entered into Judas at the point of the betrayal. But Satan was not trying to kill the Lord Jesus in the Garden.

Or when Judas came up to Kissimmee, they had a shiv and stuck it up under his ribs or something. The group that came with staves and swords and so on is there to arrest him. The Pharisees very much want to convict him under the law and have a righteous cause to take to the Romans because they no longer have the power of capital punishment and have to defer that to the Romans.

So they themselves would be guilty under Roman law for murdering a guy without a trial. So they weren't there to kill him, but they were there to make sure that no opposition prevented him from being arrested. And Peter actually starts to play into their hands and the Lord Jesus has to stop him and mend the damage that he did because, you know, like many other things,

suffer it to be so now.

It is necessary for us to fulfill just as the baptism did at the beginning. But back to the picture in Chapter 3 and thinking about all of the previous visions that we were cycling through to see, have we ever had a living person figure in a vision as a symbolic presence? And what you do notice when you think back is most of those previous visions are inanimate objects. You've got heads of grain and I guess a cow is an inanimate object, but Pharaoh's dream, you know, it's not human.

It isn't sentient or anything. And then in Nebuchadnezzar's dream you've got the image, you've got animals figuring several times, and these represent kingdoms, they represent coming famines, they represent abstractions of events and entities, right? And there is a turn here where these visions point us not to a coming cataclysm, not to a succession of kingdoms and who's going to crush whom and take their place. Our attention is being drawn not to history, not to environment, but to a person.

And Joshua the high priest standing there and God's removal of the dirty garments and replacing them with clean garments, he is a high priest. Why Joshua? Well, nobody can remember any of the previous high priests because it's been two generations. In fact, I'll tell you something else that makes me think Joshua represents the Lord Jesus.

Joshua's father, Josedach, did not get to serve as high priest because Joshua's grandfather was high priest when they were taken captive. And so there was no access to the temple, there was no temple, Nebuchadnezzar knocked it down. And so this long line of Aaronic priests coming all the way down to Joshua's grandfather stops there.

And then there's this weird interruption where Joshua's father isn't actually a high priest. He would have been, could have been, but he's not in the same way that Joseph would have been and could have been his father, but he's not. There's a happenstance whereby Joshua, the high priest, doesn't come from a father who was high priest in the same way that Jesus didn't come from a father who was human.

And not only that, but Joshua's son is never said to serve as high priest, it's Joshua's grandson who is going to be high priest in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. We're kind of going back and forth a little bit here, but we haven't come to Ezra and Nehemiah yet, and it will be Joshua's grandson that's high priest at that time. So Joshua is in splendid isolation.

His father was not high priest, his son was not high priest for some reason, whether he died young or Joshua lasted so long and then it was time that the grandson finally took it. We don't know what happened, but the high priest in Ezra and Nehemiah's day doesn't say son of so-and-so, the high priest. He doesn't appear to have been one.

Certainly scripture does not denote him as such. So Joshua stands unique in his generations, so to speak. But we're in the big picture, we can't look at all the wonderful details in Zechariah.

I'm so tempted to just go back to 1.1 and just exegete the thing and take three years to do it. But what we can see is in a big general way, the attention of God's people, Israel in the first blush and all the rest of us ever since, is focused on a person. It is a personal interaction.

Here is a person who cannot fulfill his high priestly function while he is bearing these sins. So God the Father through the angel of the Lord says, remove those garments, clothe him with the appropriate garments. What does a high priest do? What's his job? He is the intermediary between God and God's people.

In the Old Testament day, he's the guy that gets it done. On the day of atonement, he's going to go in behind the veil, sprinkle the ark with the blood of atonement. And he can't do it if he's out of uniform, if he's wearing soiled garments and is defiled.

So God the Father judicially removes the defilement and commands clean clothes. Now this high priest Joshua can function, as it says in the New Testament, there is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus, Christ Yeshua, Christos anointed. The anointed Yeshua is the intermediary.

Joshua now with these clean clothes is a picture of bridging that otherwise unbridgeable gap between God and man. But it is a person that does that. It's not a ritual.

It's not a fast. It's not a sacrifice per se. It is the presence and the qualification of this person.

And it has never been more important than in our present day to remember that our faith is not in a book. Our faith is not ultimately in a system. It is in a person.

We, like the Apostle Paul, know whom we have believed. Whom we have believed, not what, whom. And that is really starting to distill and to come into focus at this point, this late point in Old Testament prophecy.

Well that brings us to chapter 4. And here we are also going to see our attention. The vision is going to be of another inanimate object, but it is going to be tied to a person. But the content of this vision requires there to be the lampstand and the trees.

So let's read this in chapter 4. You'll notice at the end of chapter 3 that in verse 8, I am bringing forth my servant, the branch. This flows directly out of the now qualified Yeshua. He can now serve.

He's qualified. My servant, the branch. The stone I have laid before Joshua upon this stone are seven eyes.

Notice the eyes. I will engrave its inscription. Remove the iniquity of the land in one day.

And that is tied to the removal of the dirty garments. So evidently, Joshua was not responsible for the soiled and tattered garments. This is the iniquity of the land.

And because he has borne those before God, he has come before God bearing that, God has judicially removed it and replaced it with clean garments. And the follow-up here, it's almost like Jesus explaining a parable. He says, this is a picture of the iniquity of the land removed in one day.

And it is because of this person. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree. And this is a picture of in the land, universal prosperity.

You get the idea there won't be any poor in the land. Everyone will have a vine and a fig tree. Everyone will have agricultural abundance where they can invite others to come and share.

It won't be a matter of, you know, be kind to the poor. Everybody will be well off and we'll just invite each other over the way Job's children did. So chapter four, now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me as a man who is wakened out of his sleep.

And the Hebrew word here really does mean return. This guiding commentator angel that we've seen all the way from the beginning when he saw the horses in the grove, it is apparent in multiple passages that divine revelation is exhausting to the recipient. We saw Daniel become weak and have to be helped up several times.

We've seen many people go on their face. Moses had to be unusually strong to last up in the mountain. And evidently he came down for rest periods with the shining face and all of the Hebrew description of him wearing the veil and so on speaks of habituation.

This happened across a long period of time, perhaps months where he was going up and down the mountain. So at any rate, he seems to have become exhausted by the previous four visions and is resting. So now the angel comes back and wakes him up and says, what do you see? So I said, I'm 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.

Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left. So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me saying, what are these my Lord? 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. 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.

Who are you? Oh, great mountain before Zerubbabel, you shall become a plane. He shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of grace, grace to it. Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me saying, the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house.

His hands also shall finish it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you for who has despised the day of small things. These seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.

These are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth. Well, you can see why Zechariah might have been getting exhausted because it seems that there are multiple meanings. It's like they used to teach us in the Bohr model of the atom.

Sometimes you can have situations where there is a polyvalent situation. It can act like more than one type of charge. It can either pick up or drop electrons.

Normally you talk about the valence is minus one and in H2O oxygen is minus two and hydrogen is plus one. So they go together and cancel each other out and that's why you have water. Well, these seem to have multiple meanings complicated by, keep your finger here and turn over to Revelation chapter 11, which is a clearly and directly related passage in the New Testament.

Revelation chapter 11. This is now John instead of Zechariah. What was John's father's name? Anybody? Zebedee, right? Thunder.

He's the son of Thunder. James and John, the sons of Thunder, sons of Zebedee. Here's what John says in chapter 11.

I was given a reed like a measuring rod. What did we just see somebody was going to have in his hand over here in Zechariah 4? Zerubbabel is going to have the plum line. He's going to have a measuring device in his hand.

So John is given a measuring rod. The angel says, rise and measure the temple of God, the altar and those who worship there. Leave out the court outside the temple.

Do not measure it. It has been given to the Gentiles. They will tread the holy city underfoot for 42 months and I will give power to my two witnesses and they will prophesy 1260 days clothed in sackcloth.

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. What do we see in Zechariah 4? We see two olive trees and one lampstand with seven bowls and seven feeder pipes to them. And if anyone, verse 5, wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies.

And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy. They have power over waters to turn them to blood, to strike the earth with all plagues as often as they desire.

And so you're working your way back to Moses in the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt. You have fire devouring enemies. God has done this on numerous occasions in the Old Testament.

But verse 7 of Revelation 11, when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. You think, what has

happened to the God of heaven? If these are his witnesses, and they've got fire to breathe and plagues to rain down on people, and their enemies all are subdued by fire and are killed by the fire, did God not equip them? He gave them enough to get the small fry, but the big dog enemy, they're not equipped because they are overcome and killed. And you think, well, that's not good.

That's a loss for the good guys and a win for the bad guy out of the pit. And it is a reminder just in passing that sometimes our circumstances look similar. It looks like a setback or a defeat.

And it is in that moment. It is a setback, and it is a defeat. But we remind ourselves that God often uses setbacks and defeat to draw the enemy into a vulnerable position.

It's kind of like what the Germans did at the Battle of the Advance, kind of overextended, and then the Germans tried to flank them and cut them all off and wipe them out in the middle. And this is a common tactic in warfare where you can cause your enemy to believe that you are weak and vulnerable and invite an attack, and you have to sacrifice a few people to do that. It can't be that you're not killing anybody, and they're all running away.

That would be a little too obvious. And it's a sad thing. You're one of the guys that gets sacrificed for a deception, perhaps, to lure the enemy out where he can be summarily dealt with.

And so these witnesses are killed, and their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city, spiritually it's called Sodom in Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified, if there's any doubt. Then those from people, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three and a half days and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. This is sort of like hanging the body of Saul and his sons on the city wall after the battle of Mount Gilboa.

They're trophies. We finally got rid of these fire-breathing, insensitive, bigoted witnesses. Those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another because these two prophets afflicted those who dwell on the earth.

But after three and a half days, the breath of life from God enters them. They stand on their feet. Great fear falls on those who see them.

They hear a loud voice from heaven saying to them, come up here. They ascend to heaven in a cloud. Their enemies see them.

In that same hour comes the great earthquake. So, and you remember that's the common element at the end of the seals, here the trumpets, and later on the bulls, is not a great earthquake, the great earthquake. So, we see quite a bit of reference made here to Zechariah chapter four, and we ask ourselves, well, how do you translate the symbolism? What does it mean and why do I care? I mean, it may be interesting, but I've got a life to lead here, so let's cut to the chase.

So, first of all, look at the commonalities. We have a different number of lampstands. They seem to be slightly differently configured.

They seem to be associated with different things. In Zechariah, it's directly tied to Zerubbabel. In John's vision, it is these two witnesses who I think John is perhaps seeing a preview of himself and his brother.

Are ye able, said the master. You remember that great hymn when their mother comes and says, as Mrs. Zebedee comes and says, Lord grant that James and John consider you right and left hands in your kingdom. And I think Jesus appreciates that she has enough faith to ask for that.

She really does believe the kingdom is coming and she's trying to secure a spot and do well by her sons, as all good mothers do. But Jesus says to James and John, he says, are you able to drink the cup that I have to drink and be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? And they say, and you remember the chorus of that hymn, it always comes to my mind, the tune, Ernie Ford singing it, Lord, we are able. Our spirits are strong.

We are able. And what does the Lord reply? Do you remember? You shall indeed drink my cup and you shall indeed be baptized with my baptism. Well, what is the Lord's cup that he prays about in the garden of Gethsemane? Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me.

It is the cup of death on behalf of others, of the death at the hands of enemies and those who celebrate that we've finally gotten rid of the problem. Their bodies are on the earth, not in the earth, for three and a half days, splitting the difference between Jesus and Lazarus. Jesus was in three days.

Lazarus was in four. So these two are in three and a half days. But in any case, the two olive trees and two lampstands standing before the God of all the earth.

And you have those same two olive trees, but now instead of one lampstand, you have two. So you get the idea that if we are in the same room looking at the same symbological scenario, then we've added a lampstand, right? So I just want to point this out because as we begin to decipher the code here and see the meaning of the symbolism, it's helpful to know that there's going to be another lampstand. So we don't misinterpret the lampstand back here and then say, well, oh, now that I go to Revelation, that doesn't work.

I've already been to Revelation. So it informs us as we interpret this. So keep that in mind as we return to Zechariah chapter four.

So this is a lampstand of solid gold. What does this make you immediately think of? Where do we have a solid gold multi-branched lampstand with seven lamps? In the holy place. We've had two previous, actually, it's a little bit of a misunderstanding.

We've had one previous exemplar of a seven-branched golden candlestick or lampstand. It's

not really a candlestick for multiple reasons. It's a lampstand, but that was in the tabernacle.

A little trivia question. What did the lampstand look like in Solomon's temple? Ten branches. I don't know why.

Maybe that was the beginning of Solomon's going off the reservation, but it did not match the instructions God gave Moses for the lamp in the tabernacle's holy place. Solomon's had ten branches. I don't know why, but it did.

This is seven, just like the one in the tabernacle. Solid gold. It's got the bowl.

Remember the bowls and the knops and the flowers and all the rest. Very detailed. And the word here, lamp, is menorah.

That's what the word is. It's the word menorah translated lamp here. So these seven pipes, two olive trees, one at the right and the other at its left.

What are these, my Lord? And we saw last time, he says, do you not know? How many times does Jesus provoke the disciples to further thought by saying, did you count the baskets? Do you not yet understand? Looking at the Old Testament scriptures with the two on the road to Emmaus, you should have known that the Son of Man would need to suffer and would rise again the third day. John 3, Nicodemus, are you a teacher in Israel and you do not know these things? How is it that you do not know this? You err not knowing the scriptures of the power of God, Jesus says to the Sadducees who don't believe in the resurrection because whose wife will she be? And so sometimes when we face a problem and we want to go to the Lord and make appeal before his throne and say, oh Lord, I can't see what the solution to this is. Please intervene in divine power and make this situation right.

I hesitate sometimes and ask myself, I think if I walk into the throne room, is God going to say, Sam, do you not know that I've already told you how this resolves? I've already told you that this is not a thing that comes by prayer. If you're trying to overcome a besetting sin or if you're trying to figure out what to do, haven't I told you that it will be given to you, what you should say, you'll be guided, you'll know when the time comes. If you are sitting by the battlefield waiting to join in conflict and Samuel hasn't shown up yet, just wait.

Saul didn't wait, lost his kingdom. So he says, do you not know what these are? And he says, no my Lord. So he answered and said to me, this is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel.

This vision, not given to Zerubbabel, given to Zechariah is for Zerubbabel, much as there were visions given to other prophets to the king. You know, here's the word of the Lord for you, O king, either the vision or the interpretation. And clearly the olive trees with the olive oil feeding the lambs represent the Holy Spirit because he says, the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord.

So you get the idea that, and this is stretching just a little bit, I haven't seen anybody else have

this thought, so take it for what it's worth. But the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel is, there are two things that it's not and there's one thing that it is. Well, where do I have two things in this vision? I've got two olive trees.

They are equal to each other and yet there are two of them. You don't just have one bigger one supplying the oil, you have these two things. And I'm at the end of a somewhat long bamboo pole here, but this is what I think.

Not by might nor by power, I think in the same way that the two temple pillars were named Boaz and Jashen, you remember that? These are two pillars, nothing wrong with the trees. The trees are righteous, holy and good, just like God's law. But you can't pick up the left one that's called might and use it by itself.

You can't saw up its branches and construct yourself an ark or something with it or make a wooden spear or build a bridge with it. The tree on the left, in my mind, is might. The tree on the right is power.

Now, and those are different kinds of enablement. What do we know, what does the Bible say is powerful? The word of God is alive tree and powerful, right? So if I'm pretty confident that the right hand tree is power and it's alive and it could be the word, what would the other tree be? That would be the spirit. How did people get enablement to build the tabernacle in which the golden lampstand originally stood? Bezalel and Aholiab was God's spirit.

But not just God's spirit alone. God didn't say, Moses, and watch this, I'm going to put my spirit on Bezalel and Aholiab and you just leave them alone because my spirit is going to guide them and they are going to make all of these wonderful furnishings for the tabernacle. Bezalel and Aholiab were enabled and empowered by the spirit, but what else did they have to build all that stuff? The word of God that Moses brought down from the mountain, the spirit by itself was not sufficient and obviously Moses didn't come down and say, look, I got some blueprints from God for the tabernacle, here you go.

They needed the spirit. Neither one of those by itself will suffice. You can't be a bibliophile and not have that information energized by the spirit and turned into application.

Nor can you seek the ever-present comfort of the spirit and ignore the word of God. The spirit has a very limited vocabulary. Pretty much, you're wrong, it's conviction of sin, you're wrong, something's wrong, but it's a largely mute witness without the word.

Jesus said the spirit doesn't speak from himself, he's going to take these truths that I have communicated to you verbally and he will impart them to you. He will energize them, make them It's not by might alone, you could put in, it's not by power alone, it is by my spirit. And the idea here is you say, well, isn't it kind of confusing because this isn't the oil, the spirit, but it is that which flows from the combination.

This lamp apparently will not burn off of either tree. The lamp only burns with both trees and

that which every joint supplies, if you will, as Paul says in Ephesians, that which the trees, this pair of trees, this team of trees, this symmetry of trees equal and alive. The spirit is alive, God's word is alive, but it takes them in combination, both feeding the lampstand for the lampstand, the golden lampstand to have light that it can reflect and shed forth for the benefit of others.

In the same way that the high priest in the last chapter had to have clean garments. By the way, remember we pointed out that it's all a dialogue between the angel of the Lord, Satan is over there trying to oppose him, and the angel of the Lord says, take off those filthy clothes, put the good ones on. And then somebody pipes up and says, put a hat on his head.

You remember who that was? Who says, hey, he needs a hat, a turban, it says in your, who says that? It's Zechariah. Zechariah chimes in. Well, why does he do that? Zechariah is the son of Iddo and he himself is a priest.

This is something he's familiar with. He knows all about priestly functions and he says, well, he's got the clean clothes, but he's not got the hat because Zechariah knows his scripture. And obligingly, the angel says, yeah, get his hat.

He's going outside, put his cover on, might have to salute somebody. But that's a very priestly environment, a priestly picture, and a priest can look at it and sharpshoot it the way guys in the military like to read the ribbons on some guy on a TV show or a movie. They've dressed somebody up in a uniform who you know for a fact that actor has not ever served.

And so he's playing a part, but you always check to see, well, did they just grab something out of the wardrobe department or did somebody who knows what they're doing order these ribbons and make sure that he doesn't have a Navy cross down here under his national defense medal or something? Well, we know this because we're in the military and we read ribbons. It's a code to us. It's like a language.

I can see where you've been. I see that you were in Vietnam or I see that you were in the Middle East or I see that you've been overseas deployed. I see that you were in Desert Storm or you've been deployed since to Afghanistan or something.

I can read the ribbons and these things show where you've been. Well, Zechariah, looking at the priest, says, well, he's almost in uniform, but he needs the hat, which is the final symbol of authority. But there is a delay between the acquisition of the holy clothes and the putting on of the hat.

Why? There is a delay between the Lord Jesus bearing sin, having the Father judicially remove it out of sight as far as the east is from the west, clothes of righteousness, robes of righteousness, and the actual function of priesthood. There's a short delay. And there is a human witness that sees the cleansed high priest and says, well, he only needs one more thing to be ready to function.

And you have that delay between the resurrection of Christ and the ascension where he is now

seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede. But he tells Mary in the garden, handle me not, I have not yet ascended to my Father. And he doesn't mean I'm about to go there right now, I'll be right back.

He says, I can't do my priestly function until I have finished what I am doing here. I have a righteous life. You know, those of us who are saved by his death, how much more will we be saved by his life? And he's still got 40 more days of ministry.

He's going to impart the Holy Spirit to his disciples. Acts 1.8, you will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses unto me.

And he details them, gives them their five paragraph order. Then he is ready to go and start fulfilling the heavenly high priestly function. So, there is an anticipation.

And you find it more and more absurd, people that try to argue, well, the New Testament was written to match Old Testament prophecy so that everybody would think that it was a fulfillment. There are too many subtle fulfillments like this that nobody would have seen coming, and yet they align so beautifully and so naturally. Joshua here with Satan opposing him and the interplay and the interaction.

And then this lampstand with the trees. And the two trees occur both places because God the Holy Spirit is not changing and the Word of God lives and abides forever. Those two things are not changing.

What does change is what they empower, what they enable, what lights up with their fuel. And in Zechariah, there is one golden lampstand. Who is it? Zerubbabel.

Zerubbabel, you can't just go with instructions and you can't just say, I'm on a mission from God and God has given me authority. Those two things have to work together. They have to be two parts of a single whole in the same way that the Word of God has to be in the hands of the Holy Spirit in our souls.

And if we find ourselves searching the scriptures, trying to find enlightenment or comfort or guidance or solace or whatever it might be, clarity in the midst of a lot of confusion, that's a good place to go. But we also need to remember, based on passages like this, that God the Holy Spirit has to be there as well. And we have to check to be sure that we have qualified ourselves to hear what He has to say, to be susceptible to His use of the scriptures and the truth of God in our soul.

And if we have defiled ourselves, if we have unconfessed sin, if we're in some downward spiraling pattern that's going to result in evil, we're back to our memory verse, you know, the Lord's ear isn't heavy that He can't hear, His arm's not short that He can't save, your iniquities are putting distance between you and your God. And that's all the members of the Trinity. And when your sins are hiding His face, both directions of communication are going to be greatly slowed down.

God is our Father and He never completely cuts the ties with us, but He can seem very far away. You know, God even heard King Saul when he went to the witch of Endor. He went to the wrong place at the wrong time, violated all of God's parameters, but God sent him Samuel anyway.

Now, how did God know to do that? Because God still had His eye on Saul. Saul was still one of God's children. And even though He was as far out in the weeds as He could be, it didn't completely cut off communication.

I think sometimes we get the idea that, well, if you're, you know, He will not hear, well, then it's just, it's a blank, dark space. And, you know, not so. The Holy Spirit is ever with us in this age.

What a blessing He is there to convict, to turn, to talk with us, move us in the right direction, and to activate those portions of God's Word that are resident in our soul. And even when we are way out in the weeds, if you pray, God does hear. He may not respond, or He may, you know, He may seem far away, but it's a whole who moved thing.

So, not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord of hosts, Who are you, O great mountain, before as a rubble you shall become a plain? The Lord Jesus talked about this, did He not? If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could uproot trees and cast them into the sea. You could say to this mountain, be moved, and it would be gone. Well, He wasn't just pulling that out of His not yet acquired high priestly hat.

He knew His Scriptures, and He knows that Zerubbabel here is a foreshadowing of His kingly authority. Remember, He is prophet, priest, and king. He is a trinity within Himself in terms of being a Savior.

He is the prophet that Moses foretold. There will be another prophet, capital P, who will come like unto me, and you need to listen to him. Jesus came and revealed the Father.

God has spoken to us in these latter days by a Son. That was His prophetic ministry, His communication ministry, bringing heavenly truth to earth, embodying it, illustrating it, emanating it, being the example of it, of that greater love that no man can have. He is a priest, and we saw that in chapter 3. He is also the king, and Zerubbabel is the closest thing to a king.

He's the governor. He's got the most civil authority of any Israelite at this point, but he's got a unique birth. Remember, we said Joshua had kind of a unique thing because his father was not the previous high priest, but he comes into the high priesthood because suddenly there's a place to be a high priest again in his lifetime, and so he comes to it in an unorthodox manner.

He's not quite a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, but it's close. The Melchizedek order is unique because having neither father nor mother, obviously Melchizedek probably did, but in Scripture he doesn't, and in Scripture Joshua doesn't, and so it speaks of the Lord Jesus. Well, here Zerubbabel speaks of the Lord Jesus because he is reflecting and employing in equal measure the power of the Spirit in his humanity and God's Word.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by what? Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. If I'm casting demons out by the prince of demons, you might have a point, but if by the finger of God, he said, I'm casting out demons, what's the finger of God? What's moving the chess pieces around on the chessboard? What is meant by that phrase, the finger of God? That's God the Holy Spirit, right? And Jesus said, if you're going to start denying the work of the Holy Spirit, you're blaspheming the Spirit, and that's an unforgivable sin. You can even blaspheme the Son, but you cannot blaspheme the Spirit and get over it.

It is an unforgivable sin. Unpardonable sin is rejecting the witness of the Spirit who is incapable of defending himself, and the Father and the Son are going to take care of those who speak against the Spirit by eliminating them. So that's what I see here, and what a beautiful dual picture of the Lord Jesus.

It takes these two pictures to just even begin to anticipate. So much so, as we've seen many times, John the Baptist wasn't sure if maybe there weren't two messiahs, because he is so much and does so much. He is the suffering servant.

He's the conquering king. He is the one who heals, the one who bears iniquities, and by his stripes we are healed. But he is also the one who, with the might of his power and the sword that issues from his mouth, decimates and slays all of the enemies and moves them out of the way.

He's like the two witnesses in Revelation. When he speaks, stuff happens. And which role he is fulfilling at any given time, he to us is the gentle Jesus.

To those outside, he is the son of David ruling with a rod of iron, smashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel. So what do we take away from all of this? Think about the situation that Israel is facing coming out from under the Babylonian and Medo-Persian captivity, coming back to a devastated land. You can imagine people down in Houston and in parts of Florida and Puerto Rico and other things, some of them believers, coming back to a devastated situation.

And it can be extremely discouraging. So there were times in the past where hope was national. Well, God is going to bring you into a land.

He's going to establish you as a nation. He's going to give you territory. He's going to give you mastery over your enemies.

He is going to bless you agriculturally and so on. He is going to manipulate the environment in which you live and the circumstances that you face to make you blessed. What is the hope that is given to this returning generation coming back to devastated Jerusalem and sacked Judea? It isn't the old style promise, I will once again make the hills flow with milk and honey.

You will once again have this and the other. It is a person. You are going to have a perfectly qualified high priest.

You are going to have a ruler, a civil ruler, who is like a golden lampstand drawing dual power from divine sources. This is what you place your hope and your faith in. And we should do the same.

As our faith is increasingly under attack, the standards that are drawn from the Judeo-Christian tradition are dissolving and actively being attacked and purged. It's like a statue of Thomas Jonathan Jackson being dragged out of the city square. That's what's happening to a lot of our traditional values that were based on the Word of God and have time tested proven that they're just being dragged down like statues that people have arbitrarily decided shouldn't be there.

So where do we put our hope and our faith? What does God put before us? It is the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is our standing in Him. And you remember, speaking of this lampstand, and He is the first and great witness.

But He said to His disciples, I am going away. And then what does He say? You shall be witnesses unto Me. Each of you will be a lampstand.

What happens in Revelation 1, 2, and 3? He walks among the lampstands, which are the seven churches. But why are they pictured as lampstands and not as olive trees or as rocks or rocks with eyes or something else? Why lampstands? Because they are witnesses to the glory of Jesus Christ. That's their function.

They're supposed to be shining the light. God is light. In Him is no darkness at all.

If you're going to testify to God, if God is going to draw people to Himself, it is going to be that light that will draw them. And that light needs to be reflecting and emanating, emanates from us and reflects from us. The golden lampstand does both.

It's the source of the flame and it reflects it in all of these unusual curves and bulges and ridges and branches. It's not a pole with a lamp on top. It's this multi-branched and the light from one bowl bounces off a different branch.

They interact so that all of it becomes an amplification of any one lamp. But it is a witness. So now back to Revelation 11, just to close that loop.

Why are there two lampstands in Revelation? What does it tell you the lampstands are in Revelation? These are my two witnesses. And in the Tribulation, those guys are the witness. So it really helps us come back here and understand that Zerubbabel, as a foreshadowing of the single witness, the Lord Jesus Christ, is a single lampstand but cannot function without a durable, functional connection to the might and the power of God.

The Word and the Spirit is what I would understand those to be. But you can't help but see that it is a direct pipeline to the power of God. And that's what we need in our lives.

And knowing that certainly for us, how does the power of God come into the believer's life?

How many times have we reviewed that? How does the power of God come into your life and my life? Word of God, the Spirit of God. It's that simple. It's the left-hand olive tree and the right-hand olive tree.

Grab those pipes and stick them into your lamp. And this is the might and the power. It's not one or the other, but the Spirit of God gives us both.

The Spirit of God is the one that activates the Word of God. The Word of God is the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's a sense in which you could also see the two trees as the other two members of the Trinity who contact us.

We don't have contact with the Father, but we have direct contact with the Son. We have direct contact with the Spirit. And you can see it that way.

I think Jesus is the Word, John 1, so it doesn't greatly change the picture, does it? In any case, that great lampstand, if Jesus is one of the trees, then who's the lampstand? So I'm back to the Lord Jesus as a rubble bowl, as a bookend with Joshua. Well, we're out of time for tonight, but I trust that it is an encouragement. The concluding verse in chapter 4, when Zacharias says, what are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the gold oil drains? He answered me and said, Do you not know what these are? And I said, No, my Lord.

He said, These are the two anointed ones who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth. The two anointed ones who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth. Well, who stands beside the Lord of the whole earth? When you go to the Revelation, you have the sevenfold Spirit of God that is before the throne, and you have the Lamb who is seated at his right hand.

And so you're back to the Spirit and the Word. You're back to the Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Lord Jesus, partaking of our flesh, is now like the lampstand in the tabernacle.

He is like the lampstand in the temple. He is like the lampstands of the seven churches where the sanctified humans now are commissioned to shed abroad the glory of the Lord. Even if the bowl gets a little hot from the flame, it's a wonderful job to have.

And so this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Father, thank you for the truth of your Word. Thank you for the encouragement it gives us, the motivation it provides, the clarity and understanding that helps us parse our situation and manage our circumstances and pursue the high calling that you have given to us in the Lord Jesus.

And we pray that in the light of these things, the days ahead will reflect fruit of the Spirit in our lives, that we can lay hold of righteousness by faith, that we can partake of those righteous robes that you have given to your Son, the Lord Jesus, and that in Him we can freely receive those things that you have given Him to us to provide. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.