



MONDAY 16 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 4:1-5 & Exodus 25:31-40; 27:20-21

Plug In...

Maybe you feel a bit like Zechariah here, not knowing what this lampstand is all about? The lampstand takes us to one of the most significant items in the tabernacle/temple. It is described like a plant blossoming and bearing fruit and has lights continually burning (Exodus 27:20-21). It often is mentioned alongside the Table of the Bread of Presence. Both are located in the middle room of the tabernacle/temple – the holy place. The Israelites were aware that the descriptions of the tabernacle are similar to descriptions of the Garden of Eden. The Israelites likely saw this tree-like lampstand pointed to the tree of life standing in the temple-like garden where God dwelt with mankind. This light-bearing source points to the glorious light of God's presence there (cf. Exodus 3:2-6; Psalm 90:8).

We'll see in a few verses attention will be given to the categorical success of the temple rebuild, it will be completed (4:9). The lampstand most likely is used here as a part representing the whole – if the lampstand exists, then the temple exists. Lampstand, and therefore the temple, are a powerful sign that God's presence is with them.

Chew It Over...

Zechariah has been saying that God will return to His temple once it is rebuilt. However, it seems that for a people in exile and under another ruler, there is no hope of rebuilding the temple unless God returns (hasn't that been the tone of the previous visions?). It feels like a bit of chicken-and-the-egg conundrum. How does this vision answer which one comes first?

Following Jesus is hard given we cannot visibly see him right now. He's returned to heaven and we look for his return (Acts 1:9-11). What is it about what the lampstand represents and how it came to be can be a truth that drives you to trust God's promises over above our perceptions?

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God that you find rest in the truth that He is with us. Ask that He drive that truth deep down into our hearts so that our perceptions do not deceive us.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 17 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 4:1-6 & Nehemiah 2:1-9

Plug In...

After Zechariah reveals he doesn't understand the significance of the lampstand, the angel explains that it is a word to Zerubbabel that God will rebuild the temple by His Spirit. Verse 6 confirms that the image of a lampstand is signifying God's presence is back. God's Spirit has turned up for the Jews, so it is guaranteed that the temple will be rebuilt and completed.

Jesus was just as confident: "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [Hell] will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18).

Chew It Over...

Currently there is much discussion regarding legislation that may have an impact on Christians building and doing church (e.g., marriage laws, ethics and religious teaching in schools). It makes you want to 'do something' about it. Think about how this truth that God will build His church by His Spirit, not by power and might, impacts Christians in Australia and their lobbying. Should we advocate? Should we not? How do we balance "let God and let go" (Zechariah 4:6) and "let God and so let's go" (Nehemiah 2:4-5)?

Prayer Suggestion

Ask the Lord to causes us to pray – displaying complete reliance on His Spirit. Ask for wisdom in controversial discussions. Ask for encouraging evidences that the gates of hell are not prevailing against Jesus' church.



The Lakes

WEDNESDAY 18 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 4:7-10

Plug In...

The Old Testament often uses the mountains competing for height as an image denoting kingdoms and their relative power and might in a clash. The mountain that the temple is located on is called Mount Zion and, although small in reality, is pictured as being taller than all the mountains of the world. Why? Because it is where God dwells (*cf.* Psalm 48).

We know from Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai that Zerubbabel and the people had threats to the success of the temple rebuild coming from alternate kingdoms (e.g., Samaritans, at one point the Persians).

The laying of a foundation stone for the temple is by God's power with the result that the threat of any mountain is levelled.

[NB: v.7b, NIV says "to shouts of God bless it". Literally it is the word 'grace', so literally: "shouts of grace to it, grace to it".]

Chew It Over...

Have you ever taken time to identify your fears, and then frame them up theologically? Ask yourself, what fears do you hold? Think through what fears are induced by certain goals and hopes you have. Would these fears drop away if you realigned your goals and hopes to directly reflect God's goals? [Many of our fears can be traced back to a threat we feel when our personal-kingdom is clashing with other kingdoms]. Once realigned, where can you spot in your life and around you activities that show Jesus' temple foundation being laid and built up towards completion? Where's a brick being laid in God's church-based temple can you yell out "grace to it!"? Think through family circles, work circles, friendship circles.

Prayer Suggestion

May God fill us with shouts of God bless/ God's grace, God's grace at the sheer encouragement of seeing the church built and hell depopulated!



The Lakes

THURSDAY 19 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 4:10

Plug In...

There is a warning here. The one who looks God's kingdom building from a glass-half-empty perspective will be shamed. All the while, God – and by implication those pumped up with expectation at Him fulfilling His promises – will rejoice. The contrast for the people of Zechariah's day is what they see right in front of their eyes (maybe just a small building) and the unseen reality that God's eyes are so comprehensive that the scope of the entire world is in His vision and subject to His evaluation and judgement.

It has been said: *Small things add up. Small things are ordained by a very big God.*

Chew It Over...

There is a challenge here to our view of the world. Can you think of a time where you recently said something like “oh what’s the use!” Have you given up praying regularly (or praying for something); given up trying to work hard at your job in a Christ-like manner; given up giving respect to those in authority (or your parents)? Have you given up because the payoff hasn’t been there, and the difference from all your hard work is negligible? This maybe the setting in of despising; signs that you’ve become a despiser. Begin to correct this by taking time to remind yourself of all the numerous ‘small things’ that you have seen add up to the Big God’s successful plan. Reflect on how things looked one way with the death of Jesus on a cross, but turned out another way the day of the resurrection. Reflect on this each day until your paradigm changes lest you be shamed.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that God may increase your perception of the small things. Ask for the clarity to see the small things that God works through and ask for resolve to maintain investing in those things that seemingly give little return. Ask for the energy to continue inputting into those things you know are close to God’s heart despite how they look and ask for an increasing trust in God to deliver the final outputs.



The Lakes

FRIDAY 20 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 4:11-14

Plug In...

This is the more enigmatic part of the vision. Zechariah feels so. He comes back again asking what the two olive trees mean. We know the lampstand is part of the temple furniture and so pointing to the temple being back in action soon. Experts in the study of Zechariah are divided as to whether the two olive trees are representing the high priest and the king (both roles were anointed roles in the Old Testament). Or, is it referencing two prophets (prophets are constantly described as being powered by God's spirit as they deliver His word). On the first view, we have Joshua the High Priest and a Davidic 'governor', Zerubbabel, mentioned in chapters 4 & 5. For the second, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah could be in view as they funnel God's word to the people concerning the promises and the power for the rebuild.

Whichever way you go, what is striking is that the lampstand is being fuelled by olive trees that seem to exist with a continuous flow in contrast to the former lampstand which had to be serviced daily by humans (Exodus 27:20-21). This difference could further extend the idea in verse 6: "not by might, nor by power, *but by my Spirit*, says the LORD Almighty".

Chew It Over...

We don't see a physical temple – neither really did Zechariah at this stage. We don't see all threats finally done away with. So against this backdrop, do we let the unseen realities that God's presence is with us drive the seen realities. Think about how Jesus lived his life, even to the point of obedience to death on a cross, because he was in touch with the unseen realities. Reflect on an important decision you need to make today. Ask yourself how will a tight grasp of the unseen reality change up and direct what you will decide to do.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask the Lord to help you live by faith and not by sight – especially when it seems counterintuitive.



The Lakes

WEEKEND 21-22 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 4:1-14 & Revelation 1-2

Plug In...

The opening of Revelation calls the churches lampstands (Revelation 1:20). Revelation 2 has a warning that a lampstand can be removed if the church of Ephesus does not repent. Jesus' words to the church of Ephesus conclude with the charge anyone who is listening should hear this message of the Spirit that those who overcome will eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

The start of Revelation is very conscious of the imagery of God's presence in the tabernacle represented as a lampstand. It uses the same imagery to display that God's Spirit is in each church – each church has a lampstand.

The people in Zechariah's day needed to know that God's presence – the lampstand – was still with them; this was to be the impetus to get moving again and rebuild the temple. We know that the vision of the lampstand and olive trees in Zechariah is given in a context where God is warning them to trust Him now and get on with rebuilding (Zechariah 1:1-6). Now for the New Testament churches we should not need to relearn this lesson, yet Jesus calls all churches to not forget and reject that God's Spirit is amongst them. When we drop holiness as a church and tolerate persistent sin, we display that we've become despondent and no longer believe God's Spirit is truly amongst us, or we show that we despise God's kingdom strategies and feel that our way is the way to cut through.

Chew It Over...

How can you encourage your church to keep alive the vision that God's presence is truly amongst them? Think about how you can walk into church this Sunday and point that out? What words of encouragement will you use? Who do you need to direct them to? Have you prayed for The Lakes recently? Review your prayer commitment, does it reflect that you believe and rely on God's Spirit being present to get the job done?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for The Lakes church. May we be a church that is empowered by God's Spirit continually flowing through our veins. Pray that you and others at The Lakes boldly speak His word to one another.