

The Minor Prophets #27

Zechariah

by: Ronald L. Dart

I find myself constantly fascinated at the way the prophets in the Bible interlace with one another. You wouldn't know this on a single read. You wouldn't know it by reading a chapter here or a chapter there or by reading somebody's argument that has proof texts drawn in from everywhere. You have to read the Bible, all of it again and again and sooner or later, the relationships begin to emerge.

If you have never read the Bible, for yourself, all the way through, get a copy of "The One Year Bible." It's easy to read and it's laid out to help you read the whole book in about 15 minutes a day, in one year. Make the Bible a part of your life, you will always be glad you did. All the bad stuff you have heard about religion will fade into obscurity when you know what the Bible really says. And you won't be suckered by some slick talking preacher either, trust me.

Zechariah's Vision

Every time I read back through the prophecy of Zechariah, I see something there that I have not seen before. Zechariah is complicated, for example, let's look at Zechariah's vision.

Zechariah 4 verse 1: "The angel that had talked with me came again, and woke me up, like a man that is wakened out of his sleep, {2} And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I've looked, and behold a candlestick (lampstand) all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, that are on the top of it."

Now we are a long way short of candles at this point in history, this is not a candle stick, it is a lampstand. It is fueled by olive oil that runs down through pipes for each of the bowls that are there and they have wicks in them to burn the olive oil. When you go back and look at how they were made, each of the seven lamps is fashioned like an almond blossom. The almond tree was the first tree to bloom in the spring and this lampstand, in Hebrew, is the menorah. You have probably heard of that. It was the only light in the Holy of Holies.

Well, spring time of course, is Passover time, and this whole thing is suggestive of Christ our Passover, who is the light of the world and God only knows what other meanings are hidden within this particular thing that exists here, that Zechariah was looking at.

The Lampstand

Frankly it's worth your time to grab a concordance and make your way through the Bible looking up all the places where the word 'lampstand' occurs, because it is an interesting thing and it has become the symbol of Judaism, that seven branched menorah.

Two Olive Trees

Continuing in verse 3 of Zechariah 4, "The two olive trees that were by the lampstand, one on the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. {4} And I answered and I spoke to the angel that talked with me, saying, "What are these?" {5} Then the angel that talked with me answered and said to me, "You don't know what these are?" And I said, "No." Now the angel digressed a bit.

{6} Then he answered and spoke to me, saying, "This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel.""

Now Zerubbabel was the governor and one of the tasks that Zechariah had been given was to communicate God's word to the governor.

"This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel saying. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts.""

Now this little phrase, "by my spirit," has past into our language as far as Christians are concerned. The understanding that we don't accomplish things for God, by our own strength or by our own power, we don't do it by building up massive amounts of money, we don't do it by building huge organizations, we do it by His Spirit.

Continuing in Zechariah 4 verse 7, "Who are you, O Great Mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it." Talking about the completion of the Temple. {8} "Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, {9} "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and you are going to know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.""

This is obviously set in the time when the exiles were returning from Babylon. The foundation of the Temple had been laid, the construction had been interrupted by local politics and here comes the prophet saying, "Hey, we're going to get this done."

He continues in verse 10 saying: "For who has despised the day of small things?" Now they had a tendency to look at things like this and say, ah this is no big deal, he says, "They shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet," that's a building plummet, "in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth."

Zerubbabel, interestingly enough, was the governor charged with building the Temple but he is also emerging, even here, as a type of Christ. Zechariah will not be put off and he hasn't gotten his answer about the olive trees. Did you notice that? He asked about it. The angel started to say, "Do you know what they are?" "No, I don't know what they are." Then the angel launches off into this explanation about Zerubbabel getting busy and finishing the Temple. But Zechariah wants to know, what are these two olive trees?

"So I answered and said to him, {11} "What are these two olive trees on the right side of the lampstand and on the left side thereof?" And I answered again, and said unto him."

He had to ask him two more times.

Verse 12, "What are these two olive branches that through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?"

You begin to wonder about this angel.

He answered and said, {13} "You don't know what these are?" How many times does Zechariah have to tell the angel? "And I said, "No!" {14} Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

Literally in Hebrew they are called "the two sons of oil," probably a reference to the priest and the governor both of whom were anointed with oil.

When we come to Jesus though, both offices are combined, priest and governor, Jesus is a priest king. In history, these two olive trees would have been Joshua and Zerubbabel, but there seem to be more than that here.

The Two Witnesses

If you're a reader of the Bible, there may be something nagging at your memory about this time, it's a story from the book of Revelation, where there is a pivotal moment in John's vision. I call your attention to the book of Revelation chapter 11, John is in vision, all sorts of things are going on, and we finally come to a point where he says.

Chapter 11: "There was given me a reed like a rod: and the angel stood, saying, "Get up, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. {2} But the court that is outside the temple leave out, don't measure that; for it is given to the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty two months."

This is the famous "Times of the Gentiles" that you may have heard about, its three and a half years in this fulfillment.

The angel goes on, {3} "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." Three and a

half years again. "These are the two olive trees, and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. "

There is no other explanation at all in Revelation and in fact, I don't know of anywhere in the Bible where there is any explanation of it, except Zechariah, where he answered his question, "What is the two olive trees?" Well they are the two sons of oil, that stand by the God of the earth. So now we understand that here, way down in time, Zechariah, it would seem, is looking far down into the future. There are two individuals, still in the future, at the time of John's prophecy that was given in Revelation, who are going to prophesy three and a half years clothed in sackcloth and they will be the two witnesses.

Now this thing really captures people imaginations and there are all sorts of people with ideas about whom the two witnesses are, or will be, or have been, you name it. In fact I feel confident in saying I have probable met at least four of the two witnesses in my lifetime, and the irony of that should not be lost on you.

Well we don't know exactly how this plays out or what it means but you can make this connection, this connection is valid. This is what I meant when I talked about the prophecies tend to interlace together as you read them but you have to do a lot of reading or it will never become clear to you.

A Flying Scroll

Zechariah 5: "Then I turned, and lifted up my eyes, and looked, and behold a flying scroll."

You kind of get the feeling what's next in this prophecy; I think there are more of these verbal icons in the prophecy of Zechariah, verse for verse, than anywhere else in the Bible.

"And the angel said to me, "Zechariah, what do you see?" And I said, "Well I see a flying scroll; the thing is huge, it's twenty cubits long, and ten cubits broad"" (The size is about 30 feet by 15 feet.)

Now it's interesting, that when you take this as an icon, which is exactly what it is, it means bad news. Something like it is found in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Revelation, and every one of them is like this one, it is bad news. Why is it flying this time? For speed? I have no other suggestion to make.

Scroll in the Book of Revelation

There is an interesting element though in the book of Revelation, that has to do with a great scroll written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. I think it would be a mistake to overlook the connection between these two scrolls.

Revelation chapter 5. John is in vision and he is in the throne room of God. There is a big throne in the middle and somebody is sitting there, and there is also a lamb there looking like it had been slain and yet it was alive.

Revelation 5 Verse 1: "And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a scroll written within and on the backside, and sealed with seven seals. {5} And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll, and to loose the seals thereof?" {3} And no one in heaven, or on earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the scroll, neither to look thereon."

"What?" John said, "Not even the one sitting on the throne could do it?"

Verse 4, "And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and to read the scroll, neither to look thereon."

John was absolutely broken hearted about this. If you have ever cried in a dream you would know a little bit about how he felt.

"One of the elders turned to me" {5} "and said, "Don't weep: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll, and to loose the seven seals of it. {6} And I looked, and, there in the middle of the throne and the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

I've talked about icons elsewhere, so I won't go into all the horns and eyes, as icons today.

Verse 7, "And he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. {8} And when he had taken the scroll, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. {9} And they sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open the seals thereof."

And the question sits here on the table to be answered, why is this Lamb worthy and no one else was? Their song answers it.

"You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

All Judgment is Committed To the Son

Now this is a very revealing statement, the reason it is so, is back in His ministry, Jesus made a cryptic statement to the Jews on one occasion which could be really helpful in understanding what's going on here, it's found in the fifth Chapter of John.

Verse 19: "Then Jesus answered and said to them, "I tell you the truth, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what He sees the Father do: for what things soever He does, these also does the Son likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He does: and He will show Him greater works than these that you may marvel. {20} For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them;" gives them life, "even so the Son gives life to whom He will." Now our statement in verse 21, "For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son."

A Fundamental Principle in Law

Now the connection between what is said right here, and what we just read in the book of Revelation, should be obvious, that this scroll is God's judgment on the earth, no one can open this. No one can actually judge people except the Son. Why? Well it calls to mind an incident in Genesis, God stopped off to see Abraham on his way down to Sodom, and you find this story in Genesis 18 verse 17. He stopped and Abraham brought God and the two angels with Him, water to wash their feet, he fed them a meal all of which is very fascinating, but as they were departing the LORD said, almost to Himself.

"The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; {18} Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? {19} For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they will keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment.""

Notice those two words, to do 'justice' and 'judgment,' I was reading earlier and in Psalms 37 in verse 28 it says, "The LORD loves judgment," and I think that's the sense in which He mentions it here.

In other words, Abraham will do this. Continuing in Genesis 18 and verse 19, "that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him." And so he spoke now to Abraham. {20} "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; {21} I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come to me; and if not, I will know."

Now this runs counter to a lot of what we think we know about God. We may picture God with a great console before him with various and sundry levers and buttons. I remember seeing a cartoon showing God sitting at a big console and there was a button on the console with the letters, "SMITE" across the top of it. We may think that God can see everything without moving from his throne and thus know what's going on and besides, if the angels can come and tell him what's going on in Sodom, isn't that enough, apparently not.

There is a fundamental principle in law, that you don't render judgment from a distance. As a judge you must see the criminals face to face in order to be seen to be just. It was necessary for God to go down, just as it was necessary for Him to come down on Sinai and speak to the people of Israel in order to enter covenant with them. He wasn't entering a second hand

covenant. He wasn't telling Moses everything, and saying, "You go tell the people." No, there were certain things God had to say to them Himself. He scared them to death and He probably loosened some loins on some people when His voice came rolling down the mountain breaking the rocks, but never the less it was necessary.

Son of God Judges

Now from what Jesus says about judgment, it was none other than the Son of God that visited Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone.

Remember what He said, "The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). Why? Because Jesus would live in the flesh, would face every temptation that we face and His position to show mercy where it is due. He has qualified to be a judge by living and dying. He is the Lamb of Revelation. The book or scroll that the slain Lamb opens in Revelation, we call the seven seals of the book of Revelation and they are the judgment of God upon man and they are frankly, when you read through them, curses.

Back to the Flying Scroll

So that takes us back to the flying scroll in Zechariah's prophecy.

So while Zechariah stands there looking at this scroll, the angel goes on to explain. in Zechariah 5 and verse 3.

"This is the curse that goes forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that steals shall be cut off as written on this side of the scroll; and every one that swears shall be cut off as on that side of the scroll. {4} "I will bring it," says the LORD of hosts, "and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that swears falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of the house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof. "

It's God's judgment. He says, "It's over folks! I'm not going to put up with this any longer."

Whenever you go back to the Menorah, with its image of the almond tree on the little bowls, the almond blossom, the first blossom of spring, generally speaking in prophecy, this means, it's going to happen early.

The Woman in the Basket

Continuing in Zechariah 5 verse 5: "Then the angel that was speaking to me came forward, and said to me, "Look up now and see what is appearing."

Zechariah looked at it and I guess he didn't recognize what it was.

"And Zechariah said, {6} "What is it?" And the angel replied, "This is a measuring basket," and he added, "This is the iniquity of the people throughout the land." {7} Then the a cover of lead was lifted up, and there in the basket sat a woman!"

What a strange thing here? Why a cover of lead on a measuring basket? The Hebrew word is 'ephah' which is a dry measure and it's obviously a rather large one for there is a women sitting inside of it. What's this all about?

Well I think that this is probably not just any woman, this is probably 'The Woman.' And if you study the Middle East very much and Middle East history, you know who 'The Woman' is? Every one of the nations around Israel had their gods. There was Baal, there was Moloch, there was Dagon, there was all kinds of *male* gods.

What's really strange about that whole region is, that every single one of these nations also had a female god, but they were all the same. She was the Asherah, by whatever name she may have carried, but they were still the same goddess. It's really interesting because Baal worship in particular, actually practiced child prostitution, under the supervision, shall we say under the Asherah.

I didn't all together understand in years gone by, when I would read about temple prostitutes. I knew they were common throughout the Greek world. I knew they were common throughout the ancient world, and where there would be a temple, there would be prostitutes there providing sexual services to the people who came there.

I don't know what I was thinking. I guess I thought grown women would make the conscious decision, "I'll be a temple prostitute because I really believe in this sort of thing." Actually that wasn't what happened, as you begin to study history, you begin to realize that little children, male and female, were sold into these temples and were made prostitutes, whether they liked it or not. Child prostitution was common throughout this whole region and all of it related to this female goddess.

Now the angel continues speaking to Zechariah.

"And he said, {8} "This is wickedness," and he pushed her back into the basket; and he clamped the cover of lead down on the mouth of the basket."

You know the fact that this cover of this basket is lead almost implies this woman is hard to keep caged up. One thing you should know, during the period before Israel went into captivity, excavations throughout that area shows all kinds of little images of the Asherah cropping up in little towns, and little shrines and what have you. Throughout the Middle East, throughout Israel in the old days, she was very prominent. In fact there was even an altar, I guess for Yahweh and His Asherah, that was an assumption people made, if she's the goddess of everybody then she must be for Yahweh as well. However even though that had

become very common in Israel, after the exile, they don't find any of these idols, these particular cult objects in Israel. They learned their lesson.

She was in a basket with a lead cover on her. He shows it to him, pushes her back into the basket and slams the cover back down on it again.

Verse 9, "Then I looked up, and there before me were two women, with the wind in their wings! They had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the basket between the heavens and earth. {10} And I asked, "Where are you taking the basket?" {11} And the angel replied, "To the country of Babylonia to build a house for it and when it's ready, the basket will be set there in its place."

Now you can study this, pray about it, think about it and see what you make of it. At the moment what I make of it, is the fact that, this is a time when this woman has been exiled from Israel, she is gone. And in order that we do not think in the terms of that woman as the bad things you have two good women with the wind in their wings, who pick up this basket and carry it away. So the effect is to point to the woman inside the basket, as the problem, not women.

Now they took her down to a house, that is being built, to house this thing and one wonders, if this is taking it back to where it originally came from, to close it in where it will stay put and not spread abroad again? I don't know, as I say, you'll have to pray about it, give it some thought and come to your own conclusion.

Vision of the Four Chariots

Zechariah 6 verse 1: "I looked up again and there before me were four chariots coming out from between two mountains; the mountains were mountains of bronze. {2} The first chariot had red horses; and the second chariot had black horses; {3} The third chariot had white horses; and the fourth chariot had dappled and all of them very powerful. {4} Then I asked the angel who was speaking to me, "What are these?"

Horses and chariots, you must understand and remember, are instruments of warfare. Horses were not used for agriculture in that world. They were used to fight. The question is, whose army is it we are talking about?

Verse 5, "The angel answered me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the LORD of the whole world. {6} The chariot with the black horses is going to the north country; and the one with the white horses is going after them (probably east); and the one with the dappled horses is going toward the south."

Why didn't anybody go west? Well the only thing west of Israel at that time was the Mediterranean Sea and so there was no nation out there? So God's conquering army goes out north, east and south from Jerusalem. The two mountains are assumed by most

commentators to be Mount Zion and Mount Olivet and they proceed from this particular place.

Now the prophecy turns back to the time of Zechariah and the building of the Temple, but unfortunately, I'm running out of time. We will go on from there next time.

Be sure to get in touch with us and remember our web address is: www.borntowin.net. Until next time, I'm Ronald Dart.

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