



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Zechariah 4:1-14

“Zechariah - The Vision of the Lampstands and the Olive Tree”      TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Zechariah in the light of current events, and we are turning to the 4th chapter and reading this morning beginning with the 1st verse. Zechariah chapter 4, and verse 1, through the entire chapter.

“And the angel who talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps on it, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top of it. And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side of it. 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 unto me, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spoke unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone of it with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. (Now you remember that the background of this passage is the restoration of the remnant of Jews to the land of Palestine from the Babylonian captivity.

And they had come back under the leadership of two men, Zerubbabel and Joshua, Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the civil ruler. And their duty by permission of King Cyrus of Persia was to construct the temple. Now this particular chapter is written against that background and so when we read, ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD,’ that relates to that local operation which the returning Jews were to engage in. ‘O great mountain,’ therefore, is a reference to any kind of obstruction in this work which had come from God. And so when the statement is made that, ‘Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain,’ the purpose of the Spirit of God is to indicate that the difficulties and obstacles to the reconstruction of the temple would be met by the power of God and that these difficulties would be removed by the grace of God. And that building would proceed to its construction and the people would say when it was completed, ‘Grace, grace unto it,’ or what a gracious building this is. Now we continue.) Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the 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. Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the lampstand and upon the left side of it? And I answered again, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered and said, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth.”

May God bless this reading of his inspired word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank Thee that we are able to gather in the presence of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ with others of like precious faith and consider and meditate upon the word of God. We thank Thee that we have it, that Thou hast preserved it for us. And Lord, we ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit as we study it today.

We thank Thee for these great visions which were given to the Prophet Zechariah. And Lord, while they are very, very difficult and difficult to us today, we know that Thou hast authored them and are able to interpret them. And we look to Thee for understanding in the truth of God. And not only, Lord, do we look to Thee for understanding, but we look to Thee for enablement in order to carry out the things which Thou hast set forth for us here. We know that in ourselves we cannot do this. We know that we cannot please Thee apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And so, oh Father, we pray as a group gathered in the name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, that Thou wouldst minister to us and enable us to glorify Thee.

We thank Thee for everyone present in this audience today. For the many who have deep problems and who are seeking enlightenment and help and a lifting up from the hand of God. And so Lord, through the word, wilt Thou encourage and console, assure of Thy presence, and lead on to a life that glorifies to Jesus Christ. We know, Lord, that many are troubled by perplexities and problems that face them in their businesses and in their families. And so Lord, as we look to Thee, as we lift our hearts to Thee, the great God, who controls the entire universe, minister to our needs through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank Thee Lord as we look off to the cross, we are assured of Thy love. And so may it strengthen us and minister to us. For the young people who are here today with such bright hopes before them, and yet in a very, very dark and critical day. Wilt Thou bring them to faith in Jesus Christ. And may their lives be ordered under the word

of God. We pray that Thou will give each one of us a true vision to understand all of our lives in the light of divine things.

Now Lord, we commit the remainder of this service to Thee. And pray that it may speak to our hearts. And may Jesus Christ be honored and exalted in it. For we ask it in his name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] As I mentioned in the introduction to the Scripture reading our theme for the last six weeks or so has been Zechariah in the light of current events. And we are now in the 4th chapter of this great prophecy and we are looking at one of the most difficult of the visions which the prophet had in the section of the visions, The Vision of the Lampstand and the Olive Trees.

As we've been going through the study of the prophecy of Zechariah we have been trying to relate it to some of the current events of the day. And last Sunday we attempted to relate it to contemporary Judaism. Today's Judaism is a religion of laws. As you may know the Talmud which among other things is an attempt to gather together the interpretation and application of the Law of Moses has been in this particular great collection of works the Law of Moses has been reduced to six hundred and thirteen commandments. About three hundred and sixty-five of them are negative, things that you should not do. The remainder are positive, things that you should do. And so the Mosaic law is comprehended in six hundred and thirteen commandments. Judaism is a religion of law. It is a this worldly religion, not an other worldly religion as they themselves like to say for they like to stress the fact that in Judaism we are interested in action and not in creed or in belief.

Furthermore today, if you do not know this, the average Jewish college student is a person who is almost totally unexposed to the word of God. For just a moment let me remind you of some of the things that have been determined about today's college students among the Jews from surveys made among them. A few years ago a survey was

made in which two thirds of the students confessed that they no longer entertain the personal concept of God. These are Jewish students.

One third declared themselves skeptics, apostates, or agnostics. About three fifths of the students according to the study displayed doubt, confusion, or indifference with reference to their religion. Three fourths have never recited their prayers at home. There is, of course, no great value in reciting a prayer, but three fourths of them had never even recited a prayer at home or had given up that practice. Two thirds had never attended or had ceased to attend synagogue services. For those of you who know something more about Jews it might interest you to know that the deterioration in the Jewish religion has been most severe, not in the conservative or in the reformed groups, but in the orthodox groups.

So Judaism is a religion of laws, it's a religion of ethics, and it is a religion of ritual. It is all - today Judaism has practically no stress whatsoever upon a personal relationship with God. There is no emphasis upon the spirit of God and there is no emphasis upon religious experience.

I may have mentioned to you over the last couple of weeks or so the fact that one Jew writing, in fact one of the leading writers of Jewish history, a Jew himself, has stated that he has ransacked, delivered to of Jewish rabbis and laymen in order to discover if there might be some account of a spiritual experience among the rabbis or among laymen that might have been significant. And finally he asked a rabbi if he had ever heard of anything like this. This man told him no, the only thing he could think of was the spiritual experience of a Jewish rabbi who had been converted to Christianity.

So today in Judaism the work of the Spirit of God is practically unmentioned. The work of, or the experience of, a personal relationship to God is entirely absent. Now the reason I have mentioned these things in introduction is because when we come to the 4th chapter of the Book of Zechariah here we have set forth the antidote to this and in this

particular chapter the Prophet Zechariah turns our attention from human effort and legalism to divine activity and to the grace of God.

Now the key to the chapter, of course, is that 6th verse in which we have this phrase or clause which is almost a slogan, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." Judaism today knows practically nothing of this. Sometimes, you know, when someone says the things that I've said to you this morning we often sit in Christian churches and some of us who sit in evangelical Christian churches where the Bible is preached we kind of nod our heads in assent and say, "Yes that's true of the Jews and it's too bad." But we fail to remember that often today it's true in our churches.

Now not only is it true in our denominational churches which in many cases, not entirely, but in many cases have departed from the truth of God. It is also true in our evangelical churches. For today as I've often said to you we've reached the second and third and fourth generation now of our evangelical churches and the result is that many of the children who have grown up in our churches do not know what it is to have a personal experience with our Lord Jesus Christ. We sit and we hear the Bible and we would not think of having anyone enter into our pulpits who did not expound the word of God. We are very sure to see that he is dotting his I's and crossing his T's in correct doctrinal fashion. We want him to be sure and be a Premillennialist. And of course if he is a dispensationalist so much the better, but at least we want him to be orthodox and we want him to be a Premillennialist. We want him to preach the word of God.

But you know, so often in our churches there is that deftness that comes from the reception of the truth in the head, and a reception that has really never touched the whole of the man. There is an intellectual assent but there is no real personal response to the things of God. And may I say it, in Believers Chapel we need to get down on our knees too and be sure that there is that personal experience of our Lord Jesus Christ in our own congregation for it's entirely possible for someone to be in a congregation in which a preacher exhorts you constantly to be sure that you have a personal experience

and for you too to not have a personal experience and to sit in a congregation in which that exhortation is made. It seems strange. It seems that you would be very unhappy to be in a congregation like this. It seems that if someone continually put his finger upon something that was a need in your life to which you had not responded, that you would not like to hear that. And of course, there are some who do not like to hear that. But it's an amazing thing that Christians can sit under the ministry of the word in which they're exhorted to have a personal acquaintance with the things that they supposedly believe and yet they do not respond to them.

Now Zechariah's 4th chapter is a word for Judaism. It is also a word for contemporary evangelical Christianity too. Now it comes in with beautiful logic in our visions up to this point, for you remember that in the prophecy of Zechariah in the first two chapters in the three visions that are recorded there the prophet is given a beautiful picture of the future of the nation Israel. He is given good and comfortable words as it is stated in the 13th verse of the 1st chapter. Among these good and comfortable words are words saying that Israel shall be restored to their land. We have seen the remarkable transformation in the state of Israel and since 1948 and May of that year there is a nation Israel. Israel has been all over our newspapers in the last few weeks. Today Israel is back in the land. We do not know that that is the fulfillment of the prophecies of Scripture, it is entirely conceivable that someone shall uproot them from the land. But we know that ultimately they shall be in that land. Furthermore, we know that the city of Jerusalem shall become the capital of the entire earth and Zechariah has been setting this forth for us.

Now the natural question that would have come after that third vision with this glorious vista before the nation, how is this to be accomplished, for Israel has been disobedient? They have disobeyed God so that they have gone into captivity and now they are back in the land of pitiful little remnant of fifty thousand people or so. How is it possible for these great and grand and glorious promises to be fulfilled when there has

been so much disobedience? And then last Sunday morning we looked at that fourth vision in the 3rd chapter and we saw Joshua the high priest in the filthy garments. So vile that we could not even mention exactly the kind of garments they were in polite company. Then we saw that marvelous transformation produced by God himself. And amazingly Joshua the high priest is now arrayed in the garments of glory and beauty, and all by the grace of God. Joshua did nothing but God did the work for him, Joshua the representative.

And this, of course, designed to teach us that it is God who is going to perform these great promises which he has offered. He is the faithful God and he shall fulfill them. And he shall fulfill them in grace, not by the merits of Israel for Israel has no merits now nor never shall have any merits, nor do you and I for that matter. But he in his wonderful grace is going to transform that nation and later on in the Book of Zechariah, by the way, the details are given us of this, the details of the conversion of a nation in one day. But at any rate, Joshua now as the high priest arrayed in high priestly garments, a picture of the fact that the nation Israel shall become a kingdom of priests, God's intention for them from the beginning. A kingdom of priests for the whole of the inhabited earth. And God's law shall be mediated to men through the nation Israel from the city of Jerusalem. Read the 2nd chapter of the Book of Isaiah for the details.

Now this is an amazing thing, an amazing transformation. And it is traced to my servant the branch in the latter part of the 3rd chapter. It is the work of Jesus Christ, the saving work in which he died for us upon the cross at Calvary that makes it possible for God in righteousness. Righteousness, not unrighteousness, not by the palliation of evil and wickedness, but in righteousness, for their unrighteousness is born by the righteous one, our Lord Jesus. And on the basis of his work God is able to transform the nation Israel and to give them the garments of priesthood, of glory and beauty, and to make them a joy to the whole of the earth.

Now when we come to the 4th chapter and the fifth vision we have something that I say follows very beautifully and logically upon that. For you see, after the nation has been cleansed and made a kingdom of priests, they are to be a witness to the uttermost parts of the earth of the true God. And so in the 4th chapter of the Book of Zechariah we are given this marvelous picture of the lampstand which represents not Jesus Christ only as the light of the world, but the Nation Israel as the light of the world in Jesus Christ. And this lampstand is designed to represent the fact that the restored nation shall be a light of the knowledge of God and the Messiah to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And so just as in our personal lives we move from salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ to testimony to what he has done for us, so the Nation Israel shall undergo a similar experience. Moving from their national restoration and individual salvation of the remnant to a testimony to the ends of the earth, and that's what is portrayed for us here in the fourth chapter.

Now let's look at the vision itself in the first five verses. And you know, at this point I wish that we had an overhead projector and you'll be interested to know in the plans for the building in Believers Chapel we intend to have some kind of facility so that we can, if necessary, I'm not going to draw pictures for you constantly nor is anyone else who will be preaching here, but when the need arises and the need for illustration does come we want to have it available. Now is the time when you should observe some of my drawing but you cannot do it. So I'm going to have to kind of do it and picture it to you as best I can without any drawing.

Zechariah is given a vision of a lampstand. Now if you can just think of this lampstand and the trees and the branches as I'm going to portray it to you, you will have some idea, at least I hope you will, of what he saw. Now remember he has, according to the first verse, been overpowered by revelation. After all, he has received four tremendous visions from God. It is a very innervating thing to receive spiritual

illumination as he did and he was taking revelation, he was receiving revelation from God, new truth, and it is very exhausting. Now one of the most exhausting things in the world is to get up and make a speech, isn't that true? One of the most exhausting things is to get up and preach the word. It doesn't seem like it's exhausting, it seems like it's exhausting to you to listen, but I want to assure you that it is exhausting to get up and give a speech. And if you've given one you know what I mean.

Now Zechariah has received four tremendous visions. And so, exhausted, he falls into a kind of sleep. Now he was not the first man who fell asleep while God was speaking to him. In our congregations today some of the customers who come in often fall asleep while the word of God is being preached to them. You know, the pills sometimes don't work but I work very well. At least I work very well on some of you. I have a good friend who likes to say at this point he doesn't know of any safer place to fall asleep than in the church and perhaps that's all right.

The prophet, however, is very exhausted. He's received these visions. And now in the light of these visions and the exhausting character of them he has fallen into a kind of sleep himself. And so we read in the 1st verse that the angel, the interpreting angel, who has been helping him as he receives these visions, comes to the Prophet Zechariah and he awakens him. Now he doesn't awaken him in the way in which you awake, it's like that. You'll notice the text says, “As a man that is wakened out of his sleep.” I would assume from this that Zechariah was not just sleeping but the experience now that he has is the experience of exhaustion from revelation and the interpreting angel arouses him from his ecstatic slumber, if we can call it that, slumber can be very ecstatic, can it not. But this is a different kind of ecstatic slumber. He is aroused from this ecstatic slumber and now he is in the spirit or in the disposition to receive new revelation from God. So this is an awaking unto a real spiritual receptivity. That's the point. So the angel brings him to the place where he is responsive again to the revelation of God. And he asks Zechariah what he sees. Zechariah said, “I looked, and behold a lampstand.” I think

your text has a candlestick. Lampstand is really correct. “A lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and the seven lamps on it, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top of it: And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side of it.”

Now then let me just try to picture this to you. Let’s think first of all of a seven branched candlestick. Let’s think of one central branch and then let’s think of a branch which comes down and curves over, unites with the central branch or goes around it, and comes up on the other side. Then another which comes down and goes up. And then a third which crosses over and is up so that we have three branches on one side, three branches on the other of the center branch of the candlestick. Now they are united so that the branches are connected with the central branch. Now this is all of gold and Zechariah sees it all of gold. Furthermore, surprisingly, for this is different from the lampstand in the tabernacle recorded in the Book of Exodus, he sees above the lampstand, above the seven branches, he sees a bowl.

Now this bowl is obviously an oil reservoir. It is from the bowl that the lamps are filled so that they might burn the oil. Now not only does he see the bowl above it but he also sees two olive trees, one on the right side of the lampstand and one on the other side of the lampstand. Now it is from the olive tree that oil is derived. Furthermore he notices that one of the branches of the olive tree is an unusual kind of branch. As a matter of fact the Hebrew text here uses a word which was used often of ears of corn so that this branch is so full of olives that it kind of looks like a cornstalk with the ear of the corn sticking out. And on the other olive tree the same thing and they are standing up above the bowl so that the branch of the olive tree on one side comes down by means of a pipe into the bowl and the other olive tree also has a pipe or conduit which has a funnel on it, taking oil, symbolically from the olive tree, and bringing it down into the bowl upon the top of the candlestick.

Now the connections that are made between the bowl and the candlesticks or the branches of the candlestick itself commentators debate. Some say that there are only seven pipes from the bowl to the lamp, to the lights, one for each light. Others say no, the meaning of seven and seven in the Hebrew text is that seven connections are made from the bowl above to each one of the lights of the lampstand, of the seven branches of the lampstand. And I think that's the meaning of the Hebrew text. So to sum it up then we have two olive trees which signify a source of oil connected by means of conduits to a bowl above the lampstand. And then seven branches from the bowl to each one of the seven branches of the lampstand and the lampstand in the center so that the picture is of a lampstand that is all gold and glowing with light and supplied by a never ending, spontaneous supply of oil.

Now this was an amazing thing. Zechariah immediately is asked by the angel, “What are these, my lord?” Or rather he asks and says, “What are these, my lord? Now the angel who talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these are?” In other words Zechariah, it seems to me, from the word of God you should have an idea of what this really means. I think that what the angel means is if you had understood the tabernacle and the lampstand in that tabernacle you might have an idea of the significance of this. It seems to me that what he is saying is you should understand what you see.

But nevertheless Zechariah is an honest man and he says, “No, my lord.” “Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my lord.” You know, it's a very good thing to admit you don't know something. It's very difficult to do. But the prophet admits it twice in this one chapter and I think the principle there is that preachers and teachers and Sunday school teachers and in fact anybody who studies the word of God ought to be willing to acknowledge ignorance. And because that's often the first step to knowledge and so he doesn't know what this really means.

Well I want to try to give a simple expression of what I think it means. You will notice that the vision is never really interpreted. A message is given from it but the vision itself and the significance of all of the details is not given by the interpreting angel, nor by the angle of the Lord. So let me try to sum up what is meant by this. The lampstand, of course, is a symbol of light. And the design of the lampstand is to express the fact that Israel is the light of the world, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is only Israel that had the lampstand as a symbol. That nation alone possessed the tabernacle. That nation alone possessed the instruments of the tabernacle. And the obvious intent of it is to signify the fact that with the nation Israel there went the knowledge of God. They were the ones who possessed the word of God. So the lampstand suggests Israel as the light of the world in Jesus Christ. I wish I had time to go into the details of the lampstand for the central branch into which connections were made by all of the branches is undoubtedly a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. And the connection of the other branches with that central branch and that they together give for a light is designed to express the union of our Lord and the nation and what God intends to do through them.

Now the olive trees which stand on the side of the lampstand and feed oil into that lampstand most likely are designed to represent, since the 14th verse says, “These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth,” these two are designed to represent the office of king and the office priest, for they were anointed by oil and it is through them that God is to minister to this nation. The branches that connect the olive trees with the bowl are designed to represent the king and the priest at that time. Now the king or the civil ruler is Zerubbabel. And remember Zerubbabel is the great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather of Jesus Christ. You remember he is of the line of David. Now I’m not verifying that, I don’t really know exactly how many generations they are. But he is in the Davidic line, he is the Davidic king and that is very important because it is the Davidic king who shall rule over all of the

earth. Joshua is the great high priest and so he represents the priestly line. Our Lord Jesus when he comes shall be king priest but not until he comes.

Never do we have the union of church and state until the time that Jesus Christ comes. In fact, the union of church and state before that time is contrary to the word of God. So we have the two anointed ones, Joshua and Zerubbabel represented in the branches. They are they incumbents but the trees represent the offices. And the never ending, spontaneous supply of oil to the lampstand is designed to represent the fact that when the time comes that Israel shall be the light of God over the face of the earth. It is God in his wonderful grace who shall accomplish this and he shall do it by his power. Now there is a great contrast here with the tabernacle and it is important for us to see that. For you remember in the tabernacle there was no spontaneous supply of oil. There was no spontaneous keeping up of the furniture of the tabernacle. When Israel came out of the land of Egypt a group of people, the priests, were appointed to carry on the service of the tabernacle. The people brought oil in order for the lampstand to glow in the tabernacle. Then also the priests were responsible for trimming the lamps, they had to trim the wicks, they had to keep up the tabernacle and its furniture. So that in the tabernacle of Israel in olden times there was this expression of the testimony of God through Israel but there was also the expression of the fact that Israel was under law and they were responsible to do many things.

Now this is the unique feature of the vision that Zechariah receives. Zechariah receives a vision in which the supply is not given by men, it is given by this spontaneous flow from the olive tree. In other words, there is a great stress in this up on the grace of God.

Now the purpose of the vision follows in verses 6 through 10, “Then he answered and said unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” In other words Zerubbabel, here is Zerubbabel in the midst of a building program, the foundation has

been laid of the temple. For many years it has lain in waste and now the two prophets Haggai and Zechariah have begun to prophecy and the construction is begun. It's just a little temple in comparison with Solomon's temple and it doesn't compare at all with the temple that is to be in the age to come. And Zerubbabel is a civil ruler who has many problems and many difficulties, for you see when they first began this some years before they had some people who came up to them and said, “Now, let's build with you. We worship God just as you do, we offer the sacrifices that you sacrifice. We've sacrificed to God for a long, long time.” And so you see, infiltration was practiced. They came up and in effect they said, “What you need to believe in, Zerubbabel and Joshua, is the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. After all, receive us and let us work with you on this task.” And you remember that Zerubbabel and Joshua and the others refused to do this. Often today the people of God are confused by those who come to them and say, “We are Christians too, we worship the same God you worship. After all, we're all going to heaven by the same way. We're all going to heaven but we're perhaps going by different ways.”

Now this was a distraction, this was a very deceptive thing. The Jews had refused it. As a result they had become very incensed. You know, there are lots of people today who are do-gooders. They like to identify themselves with Christians because Christians are supposed to be doers of good. And they like to attach themselves to genuine Christians. Many Christians are very deceived by this. They cannot see that there is a great deal of difference between the biblical preaching of the word of God and acknowledgement of its doctrines and a kind of seeming acquaintance with spiritual things. Do-gooders come along and say, “Let's work with you.” But when you say, “No, we stand for something that is unique,” that's very upsetting to a do-gooder. I don't know whether you've notice it or not but in politics this is true too. That when a Liberal in politics, when a Liberal is refused he becomes a very, very different kind of a person.

Have you noticed that? There is nothing, in fact there is no person, who becomes more upset than a Liberal who is rebuked or refused fellowship in his politics by Conservatives.

Well a similar kind of thing works in spiritual things and so as a result of this there was a great deal of opposition. In fact, legal opposition. And so God now speaks to Zerubbabel, the civil leader, in order to encourage him in this. “Zerubbabel, it is not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD.” In other word, God is trying to encourage Zerubbabel to try to buck up this discouraged, fearful remnant and to impress upon them the fact that it is the power of the Spirit of God that is to accomplish the work of God.

May I stop for just a moment and say a few words here on this text? It is a tremendous text and it is one that we ought to all bear in mind always among Christians. For you see, the Lord’s work is always to be done, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD.” It is not the duty of a Christian to go out and do the work of the Lord in his own strength and in his own power, we can never expect to do that. We are saved by the grace of God when we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us. The work of God is carried on by the Spirit of God too. The moment that we, as individual Christians, attempt to do the work of God in the power of the flesh or in the power of our own natural talent we can be sure that we are going to do a work that is not honoring to the Lord. So it is, “Not by might, nor by power, nor by spirit, saith the LORD.”

Zerubbabel remember this, God’s work is to be done by the Spirit of God. Believers Chapel is to do its work by the Spirit of God. That’s not all of the message that comes to Zerubbabel. The second thing is not only is the temple to be completed by divine power only but the temple is to be completed despite obstacles. Notice the 7th verse, “Who art thou, O great mountain?” What about these obstacles? So what? I’ve guaranteed by my power that these obstacles shall be overcome. And Zerubbabel, you

and Joshua and Zechariah and Haggai shall be able to complete the temple of God. A mountain is a difficulty in the word of God.

“Who art thou, O great mountain?” Whether obstacles from individuals, whatever they may be, I am going to overcome them. So in effect, God is going to bulldoze the great mountain of difficulty regardless of what it is and we read that, “Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.” And furthermore, Zerubbabel is going to, “Bring forth the headstone of it with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.” God specializes in solving difficulties. He has a monopoly of grace. And as a result of his monopoly of grace he specializes in solving problems. And no matter what the mountain may be it’s going to be a plain.

Can I say just a personal word to you? This, of course, has primary reference to the construction of that little temple which they were building. The house of the Lord. But by application it applies to any Christian who has any difficulty, whatever that difficulty may be. It is God who is a great solver of our problems. And he has a monopoly of the divine grace that is necessary to do it. And all he wants us to do is to relax and let him do it. It’s so difficult, however, for Christians to relax. They love to do it themselves. They love to think that they’ve got to do it. And so as a result they interfere with the work of God. But it’s, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD.” And as we learn to rest in him he accomplishes his will and his work in us. And that’s the force of this.

Furthermore it is to be beautifully completed. When it’s finished Zerubbabel is told that the people shall cry, “Grace, grace unto it,” or, “What a gracious building this is.” Not very big, but beautiful nevertheless. Furthermore he goes on to say it is to be rapidly completed. In the 9th verse we read, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it.” In other words, we shall not have to wait beyond the length of time of Zerubbabel’s life. Zerubbabel shall be able to accomplish

this in his own lifetime. It shall be accomplished rapidly. The temple shall be built by Zerubbabel. It shall be completed rapidly.

Furthermore the last of the 9th verse states, “And thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.” Now this is rather strange. For if you look and see who is speaking it is the word of the Lord that has come to Zechariah. And he has said the hand of Zerubbabel shall complete this building and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me unto you. So that the Lord is saying to Zerubbabel as a result of this work that is done I the Lord say that you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me unto you.

Now those of you who are here for the first time you will not understand, perhaps, what is signified by this. But those of you who have been here from the beginning and particularly the 2nd chapter and the 1st chapter when we pointed out that the angel of Jehovah is a reference to our Lord Jesus in his pre-incarnate days and that he appears in the prophecy of Zechariah, you will realize that there is no contradiction when God says, “You will know that I, the Lord of hosts, has sent me unto you.” For it is a reference to our Lord Jesus who says, “As a result of this work that Zerubbabel and you are doing you shall know that there has been a divine mission of the Messiah to you. So it is obvious that in this construction of the temple we have something that signifies far more than just a local construction of a building. But in this construction of a building there is a pledge of the ultimate completion of the temple of God in the age to come. And so this is a kind of foreshadowing, a kind of prophetic fore-view of what is to come. And the prophet Haggai and later in this book too both prophecy in the fact that the ultimate temple shall be constructed in the day when Messiah comes. And so this little structure which is being constructed is designed to represent typically the great structure that shall come in the Messianic Age. And so the temple’s completion confirms the messianic meaning to Israel. In other words, the meaning of these events in their daily lives goes far beyond their daily lives.

You know, I think this is something that we as Christians need to remember too. We are not living in the identical age, of course, but the things that we do today have extremely long ranging significance. It is often thought that what happens today is not really of nothing in the sight of God. What happens today is very important in the sight of God. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will. And everything that transpires is important. And these people probably did not realize, as we shall see, the real significance of what was transpiring in their midst. They did not realize that it was God who was working in this little house that they were constructing.

And so we read in the 10th verse, “For who hath despised the day of small things?” You remember when the temple’s foundation was laid and those who had seen the great magnificent temple of Solomon, looked at that little structure which was to be constructed, there was a great shout of the people who were happy because the foundation had been laid. But there was also a great shout of people who were discouraged because they saw how small and how insignificant it appeared in the light of the great temple of Solomon which they had known. And so the prophet says, “Who hath despised the day of small things?” It looks like it’s a very small, little structure. But remember this, that anything that God does is very, very important.

You’ve often heard Christians quote the statement and particularly in connection with the feeding of the five thousand, “Little is much if God is in it,” and that is true here. “Who hath despised the day of small things?” Yes it’s just a little temple. It’s not anything to compare with Solomon’s temple. And furthermore, it will not compare at all with the great temple that is to be constructed in the Messianic Age, but it is God who is doing this work. And if it is God who is doing this work it is his will. And if it is his will it is important. And it is just as important for this age as that temple is for the age to come. Importance depends upon whether God is in it or not and he is in this, and he is doing this, and therefore it is extremely important.

May I also make another personal application? Now this is very personal and I hope you will not misunderstand it. I do not intend in any way to suggest that Believers Chapel is the only church, the only church in Texas, the only church in the United States, it is not. There are probably many, many hundreds of churches that are far closer to the Lord than we are. But, you know, it is a small company, it's not much. We actually don't even have our building. This is not very much of an auditorium, particularly when it's decorated up front with our dancing girls several times a year.

Those of you that are visiting today you have a blessing, you don't realize it. We have some very unusual decorations in the school auditorium at various times of the year. We do not have much by way of facility, we do not have any of the facilities that we would like to have. We do not have the Sunday school facilities that we would like to have. We do not have the nursery facilities that we would like to have. There are many things that we would like to have which we do not have. But I firmly feel myself, and I think the elders and deacons and many of the others feel, that God is in this work. It is an attempt on our part fumblingly, and feebly, to go back to what the word of God teaches.

Now we have failed, no doubt, in many ways. Will fail, perhaps, in the future. We shall see our mistakes and we hope we'll have the grace to rectify them. We hope we'll be able to do when you come to us and point out to us from the word of God that we are wrong in this. We hope we'll have the grace to say, “Yes, I think we are, we better change.” We have felt from the beginning the elders that we should be flexible, always flexible, waiting for the Spirit of God to direct us in any way. So you might see something new next Sunday, we don't know. It's a very small thing but we believe that God is in it. And furthermore, since God is in it we believe it is extremely important. We believe this work is extremely important. Insignificant, not sensational, does not attract attention to itself, but we believe it's significant. We believe it's important. We believe that God is in it. And I wish I had time to try to convince you of this. I wish you could

receive some of the letters, hear some of the conversations that I have with individuals. And some that the elders have with others, too, of how God has blessed through the ministry of this church.

After all, God works through a church, remember that. The New Testament picture is that God works through the local church. This is his organization for the communication of the truth of God. Not a church in which Jesus Christ is not named, I'm speaking of a group of Christians who meet in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, “Who hath despised the day of small things?” This is a small thing in the eye of the world but we've got to learn to take the divine viewpoint. And maybe five years from now, ten years from now, you'll look back and you will say, “I'm so glad that I took the divine viewpoint and now I see what God has done. He has done a tremendous work and I've been able to get in this and have a part in it and God has blessed me through it.”

I received a very tragic letter just a few weeks ago from a couple, one member of a family. They had attended Believers Chapel several times, in fact more than several times. They wrote me along this line, “I would long above everything else to be in this church. I feel that the ministry of the word of God has been most profitable to me, more profitable than I have heard anywhere else in the church of Believers Chapel. But one member of the family cannot seem to release his ties with his church where the word of God is not preached. And one of the reasons is because of the fact that this is a small thing.” Now that's a very tragic thing. Perhaps there shall be a change in the future.

“Who hath despised the day of small things? They shall rejoice, shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven.” What seven? Why the seven eyes mentioned in the 9th verse of the immediately preceding chapter. They are the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth. What Zechariah is told is simply this, God is doing a work and when he finishes this work it's small, true it's small, nothing like the temple of Solomon. But nevertheless, when it is completed the people of God

shall rejoice. And furthermore, and most significant, the eyes of the Lord which reigns through to and fro throughout the whole of the earth, the eyes of the Lord are upon this little structure and this little work which is being constructed.

The same eyes that rest upon our Lord Jesus Christ. The stone with the seven eyes. Those same eyes of the eternal God which move throughout the whole of the earth are concerned with this little work that is going on in the city of Jerusalem. You see, it is possible for the great universal God to be interested in something very, very small. Something even as small as Believers Chapel. And I think, and I believe with all my heart, that God in Heaven right at this moment is interested in what is happening right in this room, extremely interested. Not in the sense that he was then interested in little else elsewhere. But also interested elsewhere but interested here and vitally interested here. In other words, this temple is the object of divine supervision. Men may disdain it, God finds great favor in it.

Now finally Zechariah asks a question or two. He says, "What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the lampstand and upon the left side of it?" He has asked that question. He answers and says unto him, "What are these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?" Really another question. The angel answers Zechariah and says, "Knowest thou not what these are?" as if to say, "You ought to know." "I said, No, my lord." And then the answer, "These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth." The trees are the offices of king and priest. The branches are the men who are today serving in those offices, Joshua and Zerubbabel, who were anointed by oil and confirmed into their office.

Now, of course, this is not the ultimate meaning of this. For you see, the olive tree was spontaneously supplying oil. Joshua and Zerubbabel could not spontaneously supply oil. And so Joshua and Zerubbabel stand for someone who is to come. One who in the 6th chapter is called the king priest who unites in himself both of these offices. Just as Joshua and Zerubbabel could not supply it so he can supply.

May I sum it up now by saying just this, God's testimony must be spirit motivated and spirit controlled. Otherwise we have legalism and tabooism. Tabooism has been almost the death of the Christian church. If we do not recognize that it is by the work of the spirit of God that God's work is done we shall lapse into the ordinary kind of Christian church. We shall have a church that shall have a perpetual rally day every Sunday, interested in getting bodies into the auditorium. How many did we have today and that type of thing.

I have a friend who is in another city in this state and most of you know him. He says that too many of our preachers are fundamentalist medicine men. They are men who are trying to preach rah, rah, rah messages to rah, rah, rah people to get more bodies into the church building and that's the end of it. But that is not, of course, the work of God.

Secondly, God's work is not to be despised no matter how small it is. If it is God's work it is important and significant. And finally, Israel's testimony shall find fruition in the kingdom age. The present, Zerubbabel's day, is a type of the age to come. The lineaments and features of Zerubbabel, the great, great, great, great grandfather of Jesus Christ fade away and melt into the features of the Son of David, the Lord Jesus. He has laid the foundation of the temple. That foundation was laid in the blood of the cross at Calvary, the smallest of all small things. Who was interested in Calvary? If there ever was a day of small things it was Calvary. If there ever was a day when men despised the small thing that God was doing it was then. When the Son of God was crucified through weakness and hung there as the redeemer for our sins nobody, nobody thought it was the day that it was at that time. Only a few bothered to stay and look. But there God was preeminently interested in that little hill out to the north of the city of Jerusalem. There all of the consummation of the ages was taking place. The greatest thing that has every happened in the universe happened at a place and at a time which was despised by almost all of the people of the day. They did not take the divine viewpoint. There the

foundation of the temple was laid. It shall ultimately be constructed in the kingdom that follows. This day is its pledge and foreshadowing.

One final word to you, if you are in this audience this morning and you have not received our Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior I remind you of the fact that the most important thing that has ever happened is the cross of our Lord Jesus which even the disciples did not fully understand at that time. There he died for the sins of the whole human race, for your sin. And you may become a Christian not by joining the church, not by praying through, not by being baptized, not by doing good works, not by having a good education, not by coming from a fine cultural background, though all of these things may be good in their proper place. But you may become a Christian by simple faith in the Lord Jesus. That means that all you have to do in your heart is to say, “Thank you Lord for dying for me. I do take Thee as my personal savior. The moment that that is done you have this life.”

May God enable you to make that decision if you’ve never trusted in him. Shall we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit, who indwells all who have believed. The love of God be with all who know him in sincerity. And oh Father, for those who do not we ask Thou wilt give them no rest nor peace until they rest in him. For Jesus sake. Amen.