

Sermon

- We have been looking at the exiled Judeans return from captivity in Babylon and noticed three movements that gave them hope and purpose in their rebuilding:
- The temple – Worship; their covenant – discipleship; the wall – community.
- The purpose of these three movements was spiritual renewal.
- The Judeans were ‘doing all the required things’, but their hearts hadn’t changed, what they needed was a renewed spirit.
- Today we are going to look at the prophet Zechariah who alongside of the prophet Haggai, spoke hope into spiritual renewal for the Judeans as they embarked upon rebuilding their worship, covenant and community.
- God spoke to Zechariah through several dreams and visions and angel visitations, we are going to hear God’s word from Zech. 4:1-7

“The angel who talked with me came again, and wakened me, as one is wakened from sleep. ² He said to me, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it; there are seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. ³ And by it there are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.” ⁴ I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” ⁵ Then the angel answered me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” ⁶ He 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. ⁷ What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain; and he shall bring out the top stone amid shouts of Grace” (Zech. 4:1-7)

- This vision sounds a little strange...if an angel woke me up and showed me this vision...I would probably reconsider what I have for dinner.

- But in this situation, God was wanting to show Zechariah an image that would encourage all who were discouraged, disappointed, exhausted and confused.
- Zechariah was both a prophet and a priest. He was probably born in Babylonian captivity and returned very early in life.
- He began ministering among the Jews who had returned, and the central theme of his writing is encouragement and hope.
- It wasn't just an encouragement and hope for the immediate crisis they were in, but rather he gave encouragement and hope for the long term.
- Zechariah painted a big picture for his audience, it was as though someone painted a mural and to best appreciate it, one needs to stand back at a distance and look at it.
- The mural Zechariah painted, was a mural of hope and the absolute key, the main figure of this hope is the coming of the Messiah.
- Zechariah has more to say about the person and work of Christ, than all the other minor prophets combined. Isaiah is the only exception.
- Zechariah ministered to inspire this hope in the heart of the discouraged Israelites. That was his purpose.
- You see, people experiencing adversity frequently see only things that are close at hand.

When news of a complete shutdown hit, everyone went into hoarding food and other essential items. We only see what the immediate threat/concern is.

- So it was for the returned Judeans – they were only focussed on what was happening or not happening in the immediate situation.
- Zechariah provided hope that encouraged his audience to lift their eyes to behold the larger plans and purposes of their God.

- To help us understand this vision we really need to take a step back ourselves and look at Zechariah's understanding of God.
- Zechariah used the title, 'The Lord of Hosts' 35 times in his book.
- This title is first used in 1 Samuel regarding the Philistine army.
- Prophets used this title sparingly over the centuries, but Zechariah, uses it 35 times.
- This title obviously was important for him and for his audience.
- The word "hosts" in the Bible describes stars, angels, the people of Israel, and the armies of other nations.
- The title "the LORD of hosts," then, describes Yahweh as the sovereign Lord and Master of all the stars, angels, Israelites and armies of the world.
- In fact, God is the Lord of the entire universe – a pretty impressive title.
- When the prophets used it, they stressed Yahweh's sovereignty in action, not just as an abstract name or title → God is at work!
- Zechariah lived when Israel had lost its army, had no military power, and had little political organization. Thus, by referring to Yahweh as "the LORD of Hosts," Zechariah was reminding his hearers of their God's abiding and active sovereignty.
- And that hasn't changed!
- That brings us to this rather interesting vision:

"I see a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it; there are seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. ³ And by it there are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." (Zech. 4:2-4)

- The lampstand in this vision represents the temple and the Jewish community, who were to hold the light of their testimony of Yahweh up to the rest of the world. More simply, it represents Israel.

- The two olive trees standing on either side of the bowl represent their current Godly leadership in Joshua and Zerubbabel.
- The important feature of this vision is the oil from these two trees flowing directly into the lamps, indicating God's singular provision of oil.
- Or God's singular provision of sustaining power!
- Here is the key phrase:

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 4:6)

- 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts,' declares hope, guidance, empowerment and victory through His Spirit – to all who are weary, troubled, challenged, confused, and helpless.
- The people did not need to work harder or smarter or longer or faster. They needed to turn their hearts towards the LORD of Hosts and let His Spirit work in them and through them.
- The very next statement the angel declares:

⁷ What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain; and he shall bring out the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace!'" (Zech. 4:7)

- In other words, any mountain of opposition the people of God were experiencing in rebuilding the temple would become a flat plain before them because the LORD of Hosts of stars, angels, people, and armies will move by His Spirit to empower, restore and rebuild all that has been ravished and broken down.
- Today, we live in the season/generation where we see our world ravished and broken down by darkness and chaos – **but**, we also live in a season/generation where empowerment, victory and restoration has been completely accomplished in the person and work of Christ.

- The foretelling from Zechariah about the Messiah, has been accomplished in our day!

“¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:15-20)

- Sounds like a perfect description for the LORD of Hosts.
- Through Zechariah, God promised His empowering presence to restore a rebellious and hard-hearted people – both in the immediate term to rebuild their temple, covenant and wall; but also, in the bigger picture – through the Messiah.
- If success is to be gained in the achievements of the people of God, it will not be secured by human effort, but it will be secured by what God has done in Christ, and what will do through the Spirit's work.
- Whatever you are facing this week, this month, this year – God is bigger and greater than it.
- And God in Christ has already overcome it. It is defeated.
- And you have everything you need to stand firm, to move forward and to overcome your challenge and your obstacle or your mountain!

- For the Judeans it was overcoming the mountain of persecution as they were going about their rebuilding, for you it might be a health concern, a relational breakdown, fear of an unknown future...
- Hear God's word of hope to you, whatever you are facing, you will not be alone. Not will you accomplish it through your might or your power or your intellect, or your experience, or your creativity or anything else you do. God will accomplish great things in you and through you by HIS SPIRIT.
- Just turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face and let the things that weigh on your heart become strangely dim as HIS Spirit works in and through you to accomplish great things!

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