

*The angel who talked with me came again, and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. He said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I have seen, and behold, **a lampstand all of gold**, with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon; there are seven pipes to each of the lamps, which are on the top of it; and **two olive trees by it**, one on the right side of the bowl, and the other on the left side of it."*

*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 me, "**Don't you know** what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." Then he answered and spoke to me, saying, "This is **the word of Yahweh** to Zerubbabel, saying, '**Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit**,' says Yahweh of Armies. Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you are a plain; and he will bring out the capstone with shouts of '**Grace, grace, to it!**'" (Zechariah 4:1-7)*

Does **might make right**?

Maybe this **question** itself contains a **false paradigm** – that our **being right** is the **most important** thing to God. Maybe we need to progress to a level of **maturity above** the lower levels, to develop a **better moral compass** than simply doing whatever **avoid negative consequences**. What if we are still **stuck** in a level of thinking that is **deficient** in what is needed to **grow beyond** our current understanding of truth and righteousness?

We can probably see that simply **using force** to **compel** other people to **agree with our perceptions** of what is right may **not be a most mature** way of relating to others. Yet **obsessing** over getting **right answers** as a high **priority** in our lives that we can slip into moving from **subtle emotional pressure** to eventually **threats of violence**. What about our subtle methods, like laying **guilt trips** on people who disagree with us, or denouncing them as **heretics**, or **shaming** people and **distancing** ourselves from everyone who is not willing to embrace **our version of truth** and holiness?

When the angel came to **share advanced light** with the prophet Zechariah, he was given a vision involving familiar things, yet with **implications** beyond his current understanding. The response of Zechariah can be instructive for us. He was shown **familiar symbols** – an item of furniture from the sanctuary, the place of worship central in their religion received through Moses. Yet this **lampstand** made completely of gold parallels something important in the vision given to John in **Revelation** that is very relevant for our time.

*I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. Having turned, I saw seven **golden lampstands**. And among the lampstands was **one like a son of man**, clothed with a robe reaching down to his feet, and with a golden sash around his chest. (Revelation 1:12-13)*

Significantly, Zechariah also saw what appeared to be **two olive trees** on each side of the golden lampstand with its seven outlets of light that **required a supply of oil** to fuel those lights. These two olive trees represented **two sources of fuel**, again eliciting a concept familiar to Zechariah as this was all **part of the worship design** received by Moses, and olive oil was the **specific fuel** designated to be used as supply for the lampstand in the holy place of the sanctuary.

Again, if one is familiar with Scripture, they will immediately recognize another **link** to the vision of John where there is also reference to **two olive trees**. We would do well to discern how both of these contribute to a greater awareness of the **deeper meanings** in both of these visions.

*I will give **power to my two witnesses**, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." **These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands**, standing before the Lord of the earth. If anyone desires to harm them, **fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies**. If anyone desires to harm them, he **must be killed** in this way. These have the **power to shut up the sky**, that it may not rain during the days of their prophecy. They have **power over the waters**, to **turn them into blood**, and to **strike the earth with every plague**, as often as they desire. (Revelation 11:3-6)*

My **question** today is this: What is **important to know** about these visions? What **criteria** do we use to discern what is most important in **how we interpret** these metaphors and symbols? How much do we **rely on tradition** and preconceptions when it comes to **revelations** from heaven that may **challenge** how we have long **perceived truth** in relation to **what God may be doing** around us?

This **vision** given to Zechariah **challenged traditional perceptions** of **how God advances** His agenda. The **principle** expressed by the attending angel still **challenges our opinions** about how God relates to us and deals with sinners. Our **addiction to compelling power** is still very problematic and **interferes** with the **startling revelation** brought to us in the light of the cross of Christ. Thus **both** of these **visions** have much to contribute that **challenge long-cherished paradigms** and prompts us to **reconsider what we believe** about God's **methods** and **motives** in overcoming the powers of darkness.

Before plunging in to explore more about these symbols, let's **compare** them with an **intriguing event** in the life of Jesus that can provide **pivotal insights** to inform us better about what challenged Zechariah's perception of God's reality.

*After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain by themselves. **He was transfigured** before them. **His face shone** like the sun, and his **garments became as white as the light**. **Behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them talking with him**. Peter answered, and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you want, let's **make three tents** here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."*

*While he was still speaking, behold, a **bright cloud overshadowed** them. Behold, a **voice came out of the cloud**, saying, "This is **my beloved Son**, in whom I am well pleased. **Listen to him**."*

*When the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and **were very afraid**. Jesus came and touched them and said, "Get up, and **don't be afraid**." Lifting up their eyes, **they saw no one, except Jesus alone**. (Matthew 17:1-8)*

Moses and Elijah are highly recognized symbols in Judaism and represent what is referred to as the **Law and the Prophets**. This is shorthand for the **Old Testament** which was all that was available in the religion of Jesus' time. His disciples had been taught that **the law** of Moses (the Torah, the first 5 books of our Bible), and the writings of **the prophets** (the rest of the Old Testament) were the **most important authorities** for knowing how to **obey** God and live as His chosen people.

Today we teach that **Jesus** was the **fulfillment** of all that the Law and the Prophets pointed forward to was the **ultimate revelation** of God. Yet is it possible we still retain the **short-sighted disposition** the Jews had in Jesus' day? Jesus came to **reveal the God's will**. Yet are we willing to believe that the disposition and methods of **Jesus reflect the Father's ways** as well?

*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says Yahweh*

What Jesus taught and demonstrated about God created **constant conflict** with the religion of those around Him. His disciples were not immune to this tension and were constantly **under pressure to doubt** His identity, for there were so **many incongruities** between what Jesus said and did contrasted with how **religious authorities** exegeted the **Law of Moses** and the example of the **Prophets**.

There was one particular issue causing **continual tension** over whether or not Jesus could possibly be the true Messiah sent by God to rescue His people. The **kind of God Jesus presented** was nearly opposite from the picture the Jews had of God based on Moses and especially the example of Elijah. They were bold, **assertive** and sometimes impulsive. Elijah was **not averse to using violence** against his opponents. Yet Jesus **refused** such a disposition which created dissonance in His followers.

The question we need to consider today involves similar perceptions of **how we expect God to act** and what **methods** are required to **defeat the powers of evil**. We may be in just as much **danger of misinterpreting** Scripture as were the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day if we are unwilling to humble ourselves enough to perceive what these **symbols actually mean**. If we embrace the stance Zechariah took and **ask for more insight**, we will discover that much of what we have **assumed in the past** will be **challenged** by revelations that both **unsettle everything** we have believed is most important up to now, but also can **open our hearts** for the Spirit of truth to introduce key aspects of what it means to believe and **follow the Lamb** who alone reveals the truth about God's heart.

The three disciples experiencing this revelation of the glory of God's kingdom, had to **grapple with the dissonance** from that experience as the clearest **symbols** of their religion were **contrasted** with **Jesus** right in front of them. Their upbringing and religion raised questions and **doubts** that **discredited** this Man as the true Messiah. How were they to deal with the **glaring discrepancies** reinforced by religious leaders defending the **sacred writings** upon which their whole **identity as a nation** was based. The **tension** between the **old and familiar** in contrast to radical **departures from tradition** by this Man claiming to be sent by God, was **disturbing** and intense. Everything that was assumed to **define righteousness** and holiness was now **being challenged**, and it **felt reckless and irreverent** how Jesus related to **tradition** and the kind of God viewed as **absolute in power**.

*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says Yahweh*

We might think it is easier for us to avoid the problem these disciples felt because we are confident we **now know the truth** about the divinity of Jesus. But **simply believing** Jesus was the **divine Son** of God sent from heaven to save us from our sins, **may be less liberating** than we might imagine at first. **How much are we willing** to allow the Spirit of truth **challenge our own settled traditions** of what constitutes truth? How much are we willing to **allow Jesus to redefine our perceptions** of God's disposition towards us? How willing are we to have our **definitions** of words, yea our very perceptions of **what is real** and important, come under fresh **scrutiny in the blazing light** sent to this world that **exposes everything** hidden in darkness and deception? **We are not exempt** from having our settled religious opinions challenged. Consider some critical teachings of Jesus that just may challenge our deeply held assumptions about **how God relates** to us.

*No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You can't serve both God and Mammon. Therefore, **I tell you, don't be anxious** for your life: what you will eat, or what you will drink; nor yet for your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food, and the body more than clothing? See the birds of the sky, that they don't sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. Your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you of much more value than they?*

*Which of you, by being anxious, can add one moment to his lifespan? **Why are you anxious** about clothing? **Consider** the lilies of the field, how they grow. They don't toil, neither do they spin, yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today exists, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, **won't he much more** clothe you, you of little faith?*

*Therefore **don't be anxious**, saying, 'What will we eat?', 'What will we drink?' or, 'With what will we be clothed?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, for **your heavenly Father knows** that you need all these things. But **seek first God's Kingdom, and his righteousness**; and all these things will be **given to you** as well. Therefore **don't be anxious** for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Each day's own evil is sufficient. (Matthew 6:24-34)*

When Zechariah was asked if he knew **what the symbols** of the lampstand and the olive trees **meant**, he responded appropriately by **pleading ignorance**. By doing so **opened himself up** for new perspective from the heavenly messenger that could **challenge the core of how he perceived** the way **God relates to power**. The **answer** from God passed through the angel messenger is **just as radical** and widely resisted today as it has ever been.

*Then he answered and spoke to me, saying, "**This is the word of Yahweh** to Zerubbabel, saying, '**Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit**,' says Yahweh of Armies. (Zechariah 4:6)*

How many of our beliefs, **assumptions** and doctrines about God involve might, **force, coercion**, manipulation and **fear**? All of these are **foreign to how God's kingdom operates**. Yet these elements have been so **embedded in our thinking** since the fall of Adam that it is difficult to even question them without arousing **defensive reactions**, particularly from those in places of power.

What is the point of Jesus' instructions about **not being anxious**? It has to do with what we believe about **God's disposition** towards us, how much we believe **He cares** about our needs, how **willing** we are to **trust and rest in His love**, or we imagine we have to **take things into our own hands** lest we fall short of having all our needs met.

**Everything we worry about is a source of unbelief** on our part – unbelief that God actually loves us and cares about the things that are important to us.

**Anxiety** is simply another label for **fear**, and fear is the **opposite of faith**.

*For **God didn't give us a spirit of fear**, but of power, love, and self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7)*

*Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death **He might render powerless him who had the power** of death, that is, the devil, and might **free those** who through **fear of death** were **subject to slavery** all their lives. (Hebrews 2:14-15)*

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*In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, even so are we in this world. **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment. He who fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because he first loved us.*** (1 John 4:17-19)

***Jesus came and touched them** and said, "Get up, and **don't be afraid.**" Lifting up their eyes, **they saw no one, except Jesus alone.*** (Matthew 17:7-8)

*God, having **in the past** spoken to the fathers **through the prophets** at many times and in various ways, has at the end of these days **spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds. His Son is the **radiance of his glory, the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power**, when he had by himself made purification for our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become so **much better than the angels**, as he has inherited a **more excellent name** than they have. (Hebrews 1:1-4)*