

Zechariah 4:1-6, Acts 1:6-11
“The Second Temple or Zerubbabel’s Temple”
Sunday February 25th, 2018

Last week one of the themes in the message was the vast stretches of times involved for us as human beings when we work with God. There is our time and then there is God’s time. When you work with God you learn the meaning of **“Waiting on the Lord.”** We want it now and God says, “In my good time, my Kairos moment.”

On the back of our bulletin I have listed a timeline for the buildings in the Bible I have talked of so far in this series and the theme of each week’s sermon that went with that building. The dates are approximate, but this timeline illustrates the vast time stretches involved in our relationship with God.

All we have talked about so far is there, from prehistory, to about 1440BC and the building of the Tabernacle, to 516BC and the dedication of the 2nd Temple or Zerubbabel’s Temple. It is nearly 1000 years of God reaching out to us, forming covenants with us, and us breaking those covenants with God and then suffering the consequences.

And to the themes we have seen so far we can add **“a remnant will survive!”** Despite all the sin and broken relationship with God on our part, God did not abandon his people, and a remnant always survived.

After the flood Noah and his family survived. After the Northern 10 tribes are destroyed by the Assyrians the southern two tribes survived. After Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple were destroyed by the Babylonians a remnant survived and went into a 70 year exile in Babylon. And finally, for today, after the Exile a remnant returns to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple and eventually the walls of Jerusalem.

Though human beings and the nation of Israel suffered the consequences of their disobedience, idolatry and sin God, did not abandon his people. Israel lived out again and again the truth of the

scripture that “sin is its’ own punishment”. God still, though he disciplined them, did not abandon them. God does not abandon us!

Our OT lesson comes from the book of the prophet Zechariah. God sent 2 prophets: Haggai and Zechariah, whose books bear their names, to preach to the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem and ran out of enthusiasm to rebuild the Temple.

They had worked on the Zerubbabel’s Temple for 6 years and then the work stopped for 10 years when the neighbors complained and threatened them with war and also complained to their Persian overlords. If you think your HOA is bad just read Ezra and Nehemiah to see what the returning Jews had to face. They worked for a while using one hand to work and holding a sword in the other.

Zechariah is most known for the quote, “**Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord.**” It is also from the prophet Zechariah we have prophecies concerning the last week of Jesus’ life here on earth, what we call Holy Week.

Zechariah prophesied Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, “**Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!**

Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zech. 9:9

And he prophesied Jesus’ betrayal and Jesus quoted him on the night of his betrayal, “**Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered,...” 13:7**

In our verses today Zechariah sees a vision of a lampstand with a bowl with 7 wicks and on each side of the lampstand there were 2 olive trees. Unless you had an interpreter you would have no idea of what this was about. Here’s an artist’s interpretation of Zechariah’s vision:



Lampstands like this actually existed in ancient times and here is one from a Mideast archaeological dig:



Fiber wicks would have been in each channel to suck up the olive oil for the flame. The idea behind this vision is that the abundant supply of oil symbolizes God's fullness or the completeness of God's power through his Spirit. It is a visual symbol of what God says in verse 4:6. **"By my Spirit it will be done."** The number 7 of course meaning it will be completely done!

The two trees stand for the Priest at that time, Joshua, and Zerubbabel the king. It was through them that God's Spirit would work to get the job done. "The combination of the priestly and royal lines and their functions points ultimately to the Messianic King-Priest and his offices and functions". NIV Study Bible note 4:3 p. 1411 In other words this vision pointed to Jesus the Christ who is both Priest and King.

In the meantime Joshua and Zerubbabel were appointed by God to build. And reminded that they were in that position, they had the power to proceed and should proceed, **"Not by strength, not by their own power, but by the Spirit."**

God had brought Israel to great power and strength under king David and king Solomon, but their sin led to the kingdom of Israel splitting apart shortly after it reached the peak of its power.

In God's call to Solomon to build last week was this warning, **"Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes,**

obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them,

then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father David.

I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel.” 1 Kings 6:12-13 The emphasis was on the relationship not the building. The building, the temple was simply the picture frame for the covenant, the marriage license between God and his people.

The Israelites’ sin led to the kingdom splitting in 930BC between the Northern 10 tribes and the Southern 2. God is long suffering and gave them plenty of opportunities to repent and turn to him. He sent many prophets to speak to them about turning from their idolatry, adultery, and injustice in many forms. He sent the Northern 10 tribes the prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah. God also sent them Isaiah. They listened to none of them, so in 721BC the northern 10 tribes were destroyed.

Some of the most famous words of the judgements of God through Amos are these: *“Thus says the Lord: ... I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals— they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way; father and son go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned; they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge; and in the house of their god they drink wine bought with fines they imposed.”* Amos 2:6-8

They sold the poor into slavery for the cost of a pair of sandals. They sold the righteous into slavery. They abused the poor and afflicted. They committed adultery and sexual sins, they committed idolatry lying down next to their idols on clothing taken from the poor and with wine they paid for with extortion.

And one of the most famous lines from Amos, *“I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.*

Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them;

and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
I will not look upon.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'

The buildings we build for God are for God's glory and honor. They are to remind us of our relationship with God that needs to cause a different relationship with our neighbors. As God has loved us we need to love others.

As God treats us with justice and mercy we need to treat others. Oh how we soon forget when we are convinced we have God's blessing. Our relationship with God symbolized by these buildings comes with great responsibility in this world. The privilege that comes with our relationship with God is often kept for the next life.

Again back to our timeline and scripture verse, **"Not by might, not by power but by my Spirit says the Lord."** The Jews in exile did not rise up and destroy the Babylonians. God left that up to the Persians. It wasn't a Jewish king that brought the exiles home it was the Persian King Cyrus. In 539BC he defeated the Babylonians and in 537BC he sent the exiles home with the resources to rebuild.

They worked on the Temple for 6 years and then the progress ground to a halt when the neighbors complained. As I said, you may think you have a tough HOA; well their neighbors harassed them day and night. They ridiculed them. They threatened them with violence and they turned them into their Persian overlords as rebels, but God took care of it all.

It was not by the returning Jews strength or power or money they preceded. The articles that had been taken from Solomon's Temple by Nebuchadnezzar were returned. Ezra shows that even the expenses to rebuild were to come from the Persian Empire's treasury.

Ezra 6:8 says, King Cyrus decreed, “The expenses of the men are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop.”

A weak and vastly diminished people, the Jews returning from Exile could not have rebuilt, did not have the financial resources to rebuild, but did rebuild because God moved King Cyrus’ heart and later God moved King Darius’ heart. “Not by strength, not by power but by my Spirit says the Lord.”

The temple they rebuilt was about half the size of Solomon’s Temple. It wasn’t ornate or covered inside with gold, but it was theirs! It symbolized the renewal of the Jewish life after the devastation of the Exile. Whereas the 1st Jewish Temple, Solomon’s temple was built with forced labor the 2nd Temple, Zerubbabel’s Temple was built by the people themselves. Though partially funded by the Persian Empire it was the Jewish people who built it and maintained it.

Here is another view of what it might have looked like from the New International Version study Bible. Not as elaborate a reconstruction as on the cover of our bulletin but maybe more reflective of their economic state.



We will build here at Vista not because of our might, or power, or money—but because of the Spirit’s power. The Spirit moved us to think, to plan to pray. The purpose of the puzzle pieces you have received or are being sent is to remind you to pray.

It is the Spirit’s power that will move hearts to give to this effort. In our giving we perform a deeply spiritual act for we are responding to the Spirit’s prompting to do God’s work and will. We are participating in the spread of the Kingdom of God on earth. We are living Jesus’ prayer, “Thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

By the Spirit's power we will build here and by the Spirit's power we will send the witness of our worship here out into the world through Live Streaming.

I close with this thought, in Acts, as Jesus was about to ascend into heaven, he said to his disciples and through them to us, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you;

and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

My friends we build here at Vista for our current and future ministry and mission; and through Live Streaming we will send the Gospel message to the ends of the earth!

In Jesus' Name

Amen