

GOD'S PROVISION FOR ACCOMPLISHING HIS PURPOSES
ZECHARIAH 4:1-14

Goats are social creatures, apparently. They like to do things together. So a couple of years ago, when two goats escaped from their yard in Pennsylvania, it was not surprising that they went on an adventure together. Their escapades took them to the Mahoning River bridge and they found access to the 8-inch wide lip of the support beam for the bridge and evidently one of them said, "I wonder where this goes?..." and the other one followed. And soon they found themselves 100 feet above the ground facing an abutment that would not allow them to pass. The only thing to do was to turn around. One managed the trick, and the other didn't. **So this was their dilemma.** Apparently the brown goat would occasionally head butt the white goat to get him to take a couple of steps backward. But on the 8-inch ledge 100 feet above the ground the white goat was understandably resistant. They were stuck. [\[NPR\]](#)



I hope you have never been on a literal ledge like that. But you have felt like you have been in such precarious positions, haven't you? You have experienced hard decisions, and like the white goat, felt like someone was pushing and provoking you into a dangerous position. You've suffered hardships in this world, and at times you have been attacked and provoked by others. It is a common plight in this world to suffer. After multiple episodes of persecution in Acts, Paul said, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). He is right. The history of God's people is a largely a history of suffering.

Suffering was something the Jews certainly understood. Even after they were allowed to leave Babylon and return to Judah after 70 years in exile, they still faced oppression. All they wanted to do was rebuild their temple. Yet after laying the foundation, the opposition grew so intense that they feared continuing and for 15 years, no work was done. Their foundation was bare and there was no place to gather for worship.

Into that circumstance, God sent Haggai and Zechariah to encourage and exhort the people to resume rebuilding the temple. Zechariah's ministry began with a series of eight visions on the night of Feb. 15, 519 B.C. Those visions were a revelation of God and His power to provide for the Israelites even while they were oppressed. This morning we consider the fifth vision where we find God's encouragement that —

GOD PROVIDES HIS PEOPLE ALL THEY NEED TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES.

This fifth vision, paired with the fourth vision (the two combining to be the center and heart of the eight visions), is given to encourage the two leaders, Joshua and Zerubbabel, that God has provided the resources they need to complete the building of the temple. It is a reminder to us as well that God is faithful to enable us to serve Him and to serve Him effectively when we appropriate what He has given us.

This morning, we consider Zechariah's fifth vision, which reminds us of God's ability to accomplish His purposes through people, by giving His people all they need to do His work:

1. What Zechariah **SAW** in the Vision (4:1-5)
2. What Zechariah's Vision **MEANT** (4:10b-14)
3. What Zechariah's Vision **REVEALS** About God (4:6-10a)
 - ✓ God has supplied an **AUTHORITATIVE** Word (vv. 6, 8)
 - ✓ God has supplied His **DETERMINATIVE** Spirit (v. 6b)
 - ✓ God has supplied **UNLIMITED** power (v. 6c, 9b)
 - ✓ God has supplied an **END** to all troubles (v. 7a, 9a)
 - ✓ God has supplied a **GRACIOUS** provision (v. 7b)
 - ✓ God has supplied a work that is not **SMALL** (v. 10a)

1. What Zechariah SAW in the Vision (4:1-5)

- We have noted that these are visions and not dreams — they are revelations from God in which Zechariah is shown realities; he is not sleeping, but is fully alert and awake.
 - ✓ When the angel **roused me** (v. 1), it doesn't necessarily mean that Zechariah had fallen asleep.
 - ✓ The word can also refer to "incite" or "stir up" to some action, as if he had been asleep or distracted.
 - ✓ It is likely that Zechariah was deeply contemplating the previous vision and the angel is alerting him to the next vision (something like "snap out of it...pay attention...").
- **What do you see?** was the question the angel posed to make him alert. He saw a **lampstand**...
 - ✓ When you think about a lampstand, you likely think of a **menorah**. That's not what Zechariah saw.
 - ✓ A typical lamp in the ancient near east was a **bowl with a single spout** for a wick.
 - ✓ The bowls on the lamp he saw contained **seven spouts** (7 wicks). [Jericho lamp]
 - ✓ The lampstand had a large bowl w. seven lamps, each w. seven spouts. **Like this?**
 - ✓ The purpose of the bowl was to be a reservoir for the lamps so that they would not need to be filled as frequently. This lamp was also large (several feet tall?) because it was beside **two olive trees**, being filled with oil from the trees (**v. 12**).
 - ✓ With its size and 49 wicks, it would have produced significant amount of light.
 - ✓ The lamp was also **gold**; most lamps of the day were of pottery. The gold indicated its value and its preciousness and beauty.
 - ✓ [Aside: lamps/light often represented the presence of God (**2 Sam. 22:29**; **Ps. 119:105**)]
- How this lamp differed from other lamps —
 - ✓ It was brilliantly bright (49 wicks); it had "perfect" light — emphasis on **seven** indicates perfection.
 - ✓ It was dazzlingly beautiful with its gold — no ordinary lamp.
 - ✓ It also did not need to be trimmed or maintained like all personal lamps (**Mt. 25:1ff**) and the lamps in the temple, which were serviced by the Levites.
 - ✓ No human agent or effort had to keep it supplied with oil. It is constantly supplied by the trees.
- Because Zechariah did not understand the meaning he asked the angel (v. 4), **what are these?**
 - ✓ It seems that he is asking about the lampstand and lamps, but after the angel doesn't answer, he asks again in vv. 11-12 about the trees. So it may have been the trees that interested him in v. 4.
 - ✓ Regardless of what he is specifically asking, we are meant to know that he doesn't understand; while the vision is "illuminated," his mind also needs illumination/explanation from God.
 - ✓ His need for understanding is reinforced by the angel's question (v. 5) — **do you no know...?** is not a critical question, but simply reaffirms Zechariah's need for supernatural insight.
 - ✓ He needs help understanding the meaning of everything in the vision.



2. What Zechariah's Vision MEANT (4:10b-14)

- In v. 5, the angel clarified that Zechariah needed help in understanding the vision, but in vv. 6-10, he does not actually explain the vision. The explanation begins in the middle of v. 10.
- **These seven will be glad...** = What seven?
 - ✓ Most logical reference is the **seven** lamps in the vision (v. 2) — presence of God (Ps. 119).
 - ✓ Notice also **these are the eyes of the Lord...** The lamps not only represent the presence of God, but His omniscience. God knows and sees all and is aware of everything **throughout the earth** (incl. Judah and temple construction).
 - ✓ To say that **these seven will be glad** is to say that God will delight and rejoice.
 - ✓ What will be joy to the Lord? When he sees **the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel**.
 - The term **plumb line** is only used here in the OT and we are uncertain of meaning.
 - Some translate it as “capstone,” referring to the stone that holds an arch/wall together.
 - Some translate it “tin tablet” or “ceremonial stone” indicating an ornament of decoration.
 - The translation “plumb line” indicates that after the construction is finished, Zerubbabel is checking that the walls are plumb/straight.
 - All of these allude to the completion of the temple (v. 9); after 15 dormant years it is finished.
 - ✓ When the temple is finished, YHWH will rejoice over its completion, and the people's obedience.
- But what about the **olive trees**?
 - ✓ Notice that Zechariah asks about the olive trees twice (vv. 11-12). (Again, he needs illumination.)
 - ✓ He asks in v. 11, and then without waiting for an answer he asks a second question in v. 12.
 - ✓ The second question reveals more about what he saw in the vision:
 - The **two olive branches** probably refers to the fruit of the trees; likely a cluster of olives.
 - From those clusters are two **pipes** (“channels”) which flow into the bowl with **golden oil**.
 - The **golden oil** is not just a reference to the color, but like the **golden lamp** refers to its beauty and purity — it is the best provision for the lamp (and notice again that no man is working).
 - [Aside: before olives can be used for oil, they need to be pressed and processed; that is omitted, which is a reminder that we don't want to press the details of the visions too far.]
 - In **Joel 2:19, 24** oil is used to demonstrate God's blessings on Israel (Hos. 2:8); we should probably see it in the same way; Israel has done nothing to produce blessing, but God is richly (“golden”) and abundantly supplying the needs of His people.
 - ✓ Notice that the angel again (v. 13) affirms that Zechariah doesn't know; the angel is not being critical, but he is reinforcing to Zechariah his dependence on God to illuminate and interpret.

- The answer is that ***these are the two anointed ones...***
 - ✓ Anointing was done for three individuals in the OT — the prophet (2-3x), priest, and king.
 - ✓ While Zerubbabel was governor (a “vassal” of M-P) and not king, he is representing the king’s role. He is the political authority in Judah (and descendent of David, 1 Chron. 3:17-19).
 - ✓ In context, the two anointed ones are references to *Joshua* (priest, ch. 3) and *Zerubbabel* (king, 4:6, 9-10), the key leaders God has given Judah for the restoration of the temple.
 - ✓ They also anticipate two coming witnesses (**Rev. 11:3-4**) and God’s final provision for Israel.
 - ✓ Further, they represent the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is often the allusion behind the picture of anointing oil (**1 Sam. 10:1, 9; 16:13; Is. 61:1**). “They are the channels by which Israel...is kept supplied with the Divine spirit.”
 - ✓ It is an indication of God’s provision of the Spirit to accomplish His purposes (**v. 6**).
 - ✓ Do not overlook the location of these two men — ***standing by the Lord of the whole earth***.
 - Obviously this is a position of honor and access (not unlike **3:7b**).
 - It also makes them servants of the Lord waiting to hear and respond to His commands.
 - They also prefigure the One who will ultimately fulfill the role as Prophet, Priest, and King.
 - The great ***Lord*** and the coming King are master of all the people of the earth (**Rev. 19:15-16**).
- What should we learn from this vision?

3. What Zechariah’s Vision REVEALS About God (4:6-10a)

- Like all the other visions, this vision is a revelation about the nature of God. It is as reminder to Zerubbabel and the other returnees to Judah that he and they are dependent on God to complete the temple. No one else is able and God is fully able.
- God speaks in two “oracles” (vv. 6-7; 8-10a) with multiple revelations about the nature of God.
- What do we specifically learn about God?

• God has supplied an AUTHORITATIVE Word (vv. 6, 8)

- ✓ Once the angel says and once Zechariah says, ***This is the Word of the Lord...***
- ✓ Both are making certain that the hearers understand that this is God’s message, not theirs.
- ✓ And specifically, the word is to Zerubbabel — not just governor, but responsible for reconstructing the temple (Ezra 5:2).
- ✓ What the oracles will reveal is that God has spoken authoritatively that His work will be accomplished — the temple will be restored (they can trust that and need to act on what God says).
- ✓ When God speaks, He always speaks with authority and we can trust. We demonstrate we are trusting when we act on what God says (and are not apathetic to His truth; cf. **Mt. 7:24a**).
- ✓ Especially as we think about our callings and the future (which appears uncertain), this is a reminder to be confident. I may not know *how*, but I know *who*, and I can rest confidently in Him.

- God has supplied His **DETERMINATIVE** Spirit (v. 6b)

- ✓ This verse is the heart of this passage (and perhaps the most well-known verse in the book?).
- ✓ The temptation of God's people is always to attempt to fulfill God's work with man's tools (without God's wisdom/Word, without prayer, without any of God's divinely constituted means).
- ✓ The temptation for Israel was to finish the temple by **might** or **power**.
 - **Might** referred to military force and authority ("I just need a bigger army")
 - **Power** referred to man's physical strength (cf. **Ps. 20:7**)
 - Neither of those is sufficient. Man's tools can never accomplish God's purposes. God's plans can only be fulfilled by God's means.
 - Note **Nehemiah 4:10** — the available manpower was wholly inadequate for the task. (Always is.)
 - If we try man's means, we get what man can do; when we use God's means, we get what God can do.
- ✓ What God has provided is **My Spirit** (the **Spirit** comes from Him and is empowered by Him).
 - The **Spirit** (breath of God) who worked in creation (Gen. 1:2) and opened and closed the Red Sea (Ex. 15:8-10), and brought dead people to life in Ezekiel's vision (**Ezk. 37:9-10**) will breathe and bring to completion the temple.
 - While the Spirit operated differently in the OT, it is important to note that He operated.
 - ... He restrained sin (Gen. 6:3 — days of Noah).
 - ... He empowered & equipped OT saints spiritually (even "naturally") (Num. 11:17; Ex. 28:3).
 - ... He inspired Scripture (2 Sam. 23:1-2; Neh. 9:30)
 - ... He had all the divine attributes in the OT that we see in the NT (didn't "become" deity).
 - The vision reminds us of God's provision and man's inherent inadequacy (though God uses man). The same Spirit who created the world and equipped Zerubbabel is available to us today (Rom. 8).
 - Note: there is no human activity to supply oil to the lamp to keep it lit; it's all God's work thru Spirit. Similarly, it is all the Spirit's work that would bring about the completion of the temple.
- ✓ The church does not need and we do not individually need more political power or more freedom from oppression/persecution. We need more submission to the Spirit and reliance on the Spirit.

- God has supplied **UNLIMITED** power (v. 6c, 9b)

- ✓ Notice again that the vision twice alludes to God as the **LORD of Hosts** — omnipotent God.
- ✓ When the omnipotent God acts, we have everything we need (and we need nothing else).
- ✓ The Israelites heard the threats of the governors of neighboring countries/states that were aligned with M-P and they were fearful (Ezra 5:2). "We aren't powerful enough to resist." And they weren't.
- ✓ But they were overlooking the omnipotent God (Gen. 1:1) whose Spirit had been given to them.
- ✓ Ministry tasks and worldly pressures haven't changed. There will always be resistance against God and us. But God is omnipotent and He has given us all we need to survive and thrive in this world.
- ✓ And when you see things like the temple being completed — hardened sinners repenting, young adults growing in Christ, old men remaining faithful? **Then you will know...** this is the Lord!

- God has supplied an **END** to all troubles (v. 7a, 9a)

- ✓ In v. 7, the angel turns to “talk to” the problem — **what are you, O great mountain?**
- ✓ He is probably talking about the mountain as an insurmountable problem or obstacle (Ezra 4:2, 4).
- ✓ The biggest obstacle in the world is of no consequence to the omnipotent God.
- ✓ All the accumulated problems from the whole history of the world are of no more difficulty to God than it is for a child to blow the fuzz off a dandelion. **What are you?** Nothing.
- ✓ The One who creates mountains with a word and levels them with another word (Is. 40:4) is not perplexed by a few minor obstacles like a rebellious ruler in Medo-Persia (cf. Dan. 5).
- ✓ I don’t intend this to be trite, but what is your biggest problem? It is *nothing* for God to overcome.
- ✓ Oh, and He also endows us with the strength and wisdom we need to overcome or endure. Did you notice **before Zerubbabel you will become a plain...?** He means that Zerubbabel will be the instrument that God uses to end the troubles faced by Judah.
- ✓ And indeed he did — Zerubbabel **finished** the house (v. 9a; Ezra 6:1-12).
- ✓ And today He still uses people to overcome and endure (Ps. 18:29; Mt. 21:21; 1 Cor. 10:13).
- ✓ Troubles are temporary, God is eternal.

- God has supplied a **GRACIOUS** provision (v. 7b)

- ✓ God completed (**cap stone**) the temple with **shouts** (petitions) of **grace, grace!**
- ✓ Because they couldn’t finish the temple themselves, the Israelites prayed for grace (undeserved favor). They were lowest among the nations. They were inadequate. They were rebellious.
- ✓ They were graced by God. They did not have grace because they merited it; they had grace because that’s the nature of God. He understands our frailty and is compassionate to us (Ps. 103:6-14).

- God has supplied a work that is not **SMALL** (v. 10a)

- ✓ When the returning Jews saw the footprint of the temple foundation, they wept with sorrow — the new temple did not compare favorably to Solomon’s (Hag. 2:3; Ezra 3:12-13).
- ✓ They believed it was insignificant. It was “nothing.” But they forgot at least two things:
 - *Little is much when God is in it.* We don’t see the whole picture of what God is doing in small things and in insignificant places (remember Jn. 6:9 — “what are these?”).
 - *What happens now is not the end of the story.* This temple was not the final temple, Zerubbabel was not the final governor, and the Jerusalem of 519 B.C. was not the last destination. There is another Messiah coming as the ultimate priest and king.
 - Whatever we are experiencing is not the end of the story. God is still working (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

CONCLUSION: We left our poor two intrepid goats out on a ledge and never heard the end of the story:

The goats were discovered on the ledge about 18 hours after they arrived there (by estimates). They needed a crane, but the only available crane was committed to another job. So the DOT brought in a bucket truck. The civil engineer who did the extraction, Steve McCarthy, said “It was my first goat extraction.”



“The initial plan was to try and separate the goats so we could grab the goat facing the wrong way and turn it around,” McCarthy says. But the white goat wasn't cooperating.

“I said, ‘I’m going for it,’” he recalls. “I grabbed the goat as tight as I could.” And he lifted it into the bucket.

The white goat was deposited on the bridge and handed over to its owner’s son. McCarthy then tapped the beam with a pole to encourage the brown goat to make its way back...

McCarthy is a happy man. “In this day and age, when things can go terribly wrong,” he says, “it was great to see things go right.” [NPR, [“So 2 Goats Were Stuck On A Beam Under A Bridge...”](#)]

If people, who are made in the image of God, can be that compassionate to an animal, what is the God who created the people like? How compassionate is He, and how well will he provide for them?

The vision of Zechariah 4 demonstrates that:

- *What Judah needed to complete the temple, God provided.*
- *What we need to complete our service of the Lord, God provides.* He gives us what we need for our ministries (teachers, disciplers, counselors), for our roles in life (husband/wife, parent/child, employee, citizen, neighbor...), for all our spiritual life (to grow in Christlikeness). If we have a need, He has provided (so that He is exalted through what He does in and through us).

We are never alone, we are never left powerless. He has called us to work for Him and He has given us all we need to accomplish those tasks.

BENEDICTION: [Jude 24-25](#)