

# The One Who Does it All

David H. Roper

---

In this series, we are studying the postexilic prophets--Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi and are in the midst of the eight visions that Zechariah saw, which were given to encourage the exiles. Most of the people to whom these words were addressed had been in Babylon, and later in Persia, for fifty to seventy years, and they had had a very difficult time. The Hebrew word for "exile" comes from a root which means "to strip naked". This was the normal practice of these ancient people--when a nation conquered another nation, they would often strip the captives naked, rope them together, and take them into exile. But beyond this there is the concept of a figurative stripping. They lost everything; they lost their homes, many were separated from their families, they lost their wealth, the leaders lost their position in the nation. In the words of the parable of the prodigal son, they were "reduced to themselves." This, as we saw, was the redemptive, loving judgment of God. And he will do the same for us. If we turn away from the truth, he will bring us to the end of ourselves, just as he did this nation.

But now they are back in the land. About forty thousand of them have returned to rebuild the temple and the city, and their lot is difficult. There may be many among us who find themselves in the same place, and are in the process of rebuilding a life from which everything has been stripped away. If this is true of you, then these ought to be words of encouragement to you, for these are words to rebuild by. These are Zechariah's words to those who have come out of exile.

As we saw in our last study, Zechariah's message is presented to him in the form of eight visions, one after another, given on the same evening. It was God's normal procedure, at least during Old Testament times, to reveal truth to the prophets in this way. They saw things that other people did not see. That is why at times they are called "seers." They received truth in visual form. They saw things that it would have been impossible for them to know apart from the activity of God in their lives. If you or I had visions of this nature, we would probably consider giving up catsup on our pizza before bedtime! But these visions were something very real; these were not nightmares, although they have a strange, almost bizarre quality about them. But these were visions that came from God to the prophets. Now, it appears that God is not revealing himself in this way any longer. In the book of Hebrews the writer says in the first verse, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets [that is, he spoke to them through visions, through dreams, through auditory experiences]; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son..." So the final, complete revelation of God is in the person of Christ, and he is not speaking to us, it appears, in the same ways that he did formerly. But this was the normal experience of the prophets in Zechariah's day.

We saw the first four of his visions last time. He begins with a vision of the four apocalyptic horsemen, much like the horsemen in the book of the Revelation. The purpose of this particular vision is to underscore the fact of God's sovereignty in history. Things are not always as they appear to be. Beyond what is obvious, God is at work behind the scenes, dealing with various social agencies as he deems fit. It is a good reminder to God's people, of all times, that our destiny is in God's hand.

Some years ago I heard David Hubbard talking about a professional baseball player he knew. He had asked this young man what it meant to him as a professional baseball player to be a Christian. This athlete referred to an incident which had occurred the night before. It was the last of the ninth inning, two outs, with men on second and third. His team was ahead by one run, and he was pitching. The batter had run the count to three and two. As he was winding up, the thought occurred to this young man that he was glad his destiny was not riding on his next pitch! Are you glad your destiny is not riding on the decisions you have to make this week about your job, or your physical well-being, or the state of your children? Those decisions ultimately rest in God's hands. Our destiny is

secure in him.

The second vision is of horns, and of smiths who smash the horns--both representing prophetically the nations that oppressed Israel. It is a difficult vision to interpret, but it is intended to convey to Israel that God is at work to deal with their enemies.

The third is a vision of Jerusalem without walls. Though the returned exiles were called to rebuild the walls, Zechariah sees that ultimately Jerusalem will be built without walls--there will be no limits to its expansion. This is a picture of unlimited capability. There are no limits to what God is going to do in the lives of his people. This is what the New Testament calls "hope". God is at work in our lives to produce in us the character of Jesus Christ. And there is no limit to that work. We grow to ceilings in practically every area of life. Certainly we do physically and mentally and socially. There are limits beyond which we cannot rise. But there is one area of life where there is no ceiling--our relationship to God. We can "grow in grace", as Peter says, and keep right on growing. There is no limit to what God is going to do in your life and mine as we walk with him.

The fourth vision is a picture of Joshua the high priest, who represents the nation. His garments are spattered with filth, and Satan is accusing him. We all have gone through that experience. "Now look! You did it again! You said that you were never going to do it, but you did!" That is what we hear time and time again from Satan, who is the accuser of the brethren. In the vision, the angel of the Lord takes off Joshua's filthy garments, and replaces them with pure white garments. The miter is placed on his head with the words, "Holy to the Lord". So Joshua is established again, and we have the great words: "You, Joshua, and all those with you, now have free access to God."

These four symbols parallel Paul's statement in Romans 5: "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The war is over! God is in charge of our affairs now, and he is fighting our battles for us, not against us. "We have access to grace," and "because we are justified, we are forgiven." This is what these visions are intended to say--to remind God's people again of their exalted, accepted, purified position before the God of all the earth.

Now we come to the fifth vision, in chapter 4. Let's read the first portion, and then I will comment on it:

**Then the angel who was speaking with me returned, and roused me as a man who is awakened from his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side." Then I answered and said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?"**

I am sure that is the same question we would ask. If we tried to draw this lampstand, we would come up with some Rube Goldberg contraption, for that is precisely what it looked like. At the time Zechariah wrote, the Jewish Menorah did not look like the seven-pronged candlestick we are familiar with. In Zechariah's day it looked like a tree trunk. It had a large, cylindrical center column, which could be almost any height, with a bowl at the top. Then there was a ring of seven lamps which extended from the base, encircling the center column. We know this because they have been found at various locations by archeologists. This is what Zechariah sees, this large lampstand--not a candlestick but a lampstand with lamps that burned olive oil.

Then, draped over the top of the lampstand are two olive trees, creating a picture of perpetual supply. The olive trees grow to maturity, the olives ripen, the olive oil then drops into the bowl on top and flows through channels to each of the individual lamps--necessitating a good deal of plumbing--all this intended to convey the idea of unlimited resource: the oil keeps flowing, the lamp keeps burning.

Now, when Zechariah asks, "What are these?" he is not talking about the lamps; he is talking about the olive trees. Zechariah knew precisely what the lamp symbolized. The lamp occurs a number of times throughout the history of Israel, and it is always a picture of the nation itself. Israel was intended to be a lamp, a light to the nations--a

task she failed to perform. Israel was chosen for this purpose. God did not choose Israel because they were particularly attractive or powerful or influential; they happened to be a very small, oppressed people throughout much of their history. I do not know why he chose them, but he chose them out of his sovereignty. He could have chosen us, and we would not have done any better. They did not have any natural tendency toward faithfulness. As a matter of fact, it was just the opposite. If anything, throughout their history they inclined toward apostasy. They were just like us --prone to wander. That is the story of our lives! Nevertheless, God chose them to be his instrument to get light out to the world.

Ted Wise made a very astute observation in his teaching on Ecclesiastes last Sunday night. He said that the fundamental difference between light and darkness is that it is brighter where there is light! That may seem obvious, but I thought it very profound, for he is exactly right, you see; that is what light does. It sheds light on things, shows things as they really are, and enables us to see reality. I have an office in a little shed in back of my house. Last night I went out to my office, but did not turn on the floodlights. And I fell right over my son's tricycle. After addressing a few unkind words to the tricycle, it occurred to me that I should have turned on the light. That is what lights are for -to show things as they really are. That is what Israel was intended to be, and that is what we are intended to be. Jesus said, "You are the light of the word"-to go into darkened places and to express the character of God.

So that is the purpose of the nation. And Zechariah knew this, so there is no question in his mind as to what the Menorah, the candlestick, signifies. His question is, "What are these?"-referring to the olive trees. He asks this question three times, and finally gets an answer in verses 13 and 14:

**So he answered me saying, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."  
Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones, who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth."**

You notice that by verse 12 his question has been refined to: "What are the two olive branches, the olive clusters? What do they signify?" At any given time there were only two people in all of Israel who were anointed ones--the king, and the priest. In this case the king would be Zerubbabel, the political leader appointed by the Persian empire, but who was also in the line of succession of the Davidic kings. Had God not cut off the line with Jehoiachin, he could have been the king. He had every right to be on the throne, and therefore was in the messianic line. So Zerubbabel is represented by one of the olive branches--not the tree, but the cluster. On the other side was another cluster of olives, representing Joshua, the high priest, the religious leader. These were "the two anointed ones, who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth."

So we can see now something of the picture. The oil is produced by the tree, flowing through the branches down into the lamps, and the light is given off. Consistently throughout Scripture, oil is used to refer to the ministry of the Holy Spirit working powerfully through us. Thus this is a picture of the power of the Holy Spirit, flowing through Zerubbabel and Joshua out to the people, so that the people then can become what they are intended to be. What a beautiful picture of the Spirit-filled life! As a matter of fact, these two men are called "sons of fresh oil"-that is the translation of the word "anointed" in the margin of the New American Standard Version. That is, they are those who are full of oil, who are filled with the Spirit and thus are able to have this sort of ministry to those in need around them, so that light is produced where it was beginning to flicker and die. What a beautiful picture of the ministry of the Spirit of God in our life! There is no end to what he can do; there is no limit to the resources available. The tree never fails to produce fruit, so there is always an adequate supply of oil.

This means that tomorrow when you wake up, you cannot say, "I just can't face the world!" "I just can't live with my husband (or my wife) another day!" "I can't stand those kids one hour longer!" "I can't endure my employer another day!" You see, we cannot say that! Because the whole point of this symbol is to remind us of the truth which is stated over and over again in Scripture, and right here in verse 6:

**"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit", says the Lord of hosts.**

That is the principle he wants to underscore. It is not by might--not by military might, nor by personal strength.

Neither corporately nor individually do we have what it takes. "But it is by my Spirit," says the Lord. Then he says to Zerubbabel, "What are you, O great mountain!" He is referring to the huge pile of rubble that was strewn over the temple area. When it had burned, the temple had caved in and become a great mound of rubble. It seemed to be insurmountable. How could they clean all this rubble and rebuild the temple? Well, Zechariah is told to say to Zerubbabel, "Before you this great mountain will become a plain." How is this to be accomplished? "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord. God's strength, his resources, would be adequate.

"And these seven [referring to the seven eyes of God, a picture of the omniscience of God--God sees everything, knows everything] will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel." A plumb line is used to find true vertical. This is a reference to Zerubbabel's ministry of encouraging the people to rebuild the temple. The seven eyes of God will be upon Zerubbabel, and he will rebuild the temple. And when he puts the capstone on the top of the temple, everyone will cry, literally, "Grace, grace to Him!" To whom? Grace to God, because he is the One who made it possible. This says to us that God is at work in our life, and a building process is going on. There is a plumb line in our hand, and we are going to build a house--not a literal house, but our own relationship to God, building and cultivating the relationship we have with him, making room for him in our lives. And it will be accomplished. The top stone will be put in place, and we will say, "Grace, grace to Him!" All this is possible, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit."

On my way to church this morning, I picked up from the gutter out front what seems to be a bulletin from another church. Now, I do not in any way mean to be critical, because I do not even know what church it came from. But as I read it, it struck me that this is precisely what we are not talking about. It says,

If all the lazy folks will get up, and all the sleeping folks will wake up, and all the discouraged folks will cheer up, and all the gossiping folks will shut up, and all the mad folks will make up, and all the dry bones will shake up, and all the sanctified folks will show up, and all the leading folks will live up, and all the owing folks will pay up, and all the true soldiers will stand up, and all the hypocrites will repent up, and all the unclean folks will clean up, then we could have a good church.

That is great advice: the problem is, how do you do that? Just try a little harder? But that does not work I have gone that route, and you have gone that route, and we know it simply does not work. So how do you get it done? "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord--by the power of the Spirit of God resident in us, flowing through us, empowering us, reaching out to others. This is what God wanted Zechariah to know through the fifth vision.

The next vision is found in chapter 5:

**Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, there was a flying scroll. And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I answered, "I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits." Then he said to me, "this is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land; surely everyone who steals will be [here I am going to change the reading] cleansed according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be cleansed according to the writing on the other side. I will make it go forth", declares the Lord of hosts, "and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones."**

The term translated "purged away" in the NASV, and "cut off" in the RSV, basically means "to cleanse". It is the same word found in Psalm 19, where David says, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

This vision that Zechariah sees is just as problematic as the others have been. He sees a scroll unrolled, flying about in the air. It is about fifteen feet by thirty feet, and moving quite rapidly. It appears that the ten commandments were written on it--five on one side and five on the other. The interpreting angel highlights two of these commandments specifically one from each of the tables of the law. Each is the third, or central, commandment of its group of five. One is the third commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy

God in vain." I am sure you know that this is not a prohibition against profanity but against perjuring yourself--swearing in God's name, and doing so falsely, in order to profit yourself. The other is the eighth commandment, which is the third of the second group of the ten commandments: "Thou shalt not steal" The scroll, of course, represents the activity of the law in Israel. It is described as a curse which is cleansing or purifying the nation. It will enter the house of one who swears and one who steals, and it will consume the house.

Now, how could this be any incentive to people who need encouragement to build? This appears to be a very harsh, condemning word--to remind the people again that the law is going to go forth and is going to do its work. But Zechariah has just given a beautiful and vivid picture of grace. The two preceding visions have to do with forgiveness and power--which is grace. And now the law is brought into the picture. Why? Because law and grace operate hand-in-hand! They are not opposing principles; they go together. You see, it is the law that drives us to grace. Law is nothing more nor less than the expression of the character of God. The statement, "Be holy, for I am holy," is the sum and substance of the law. Of course, the law as it was given to Israel does not pertain to us today. We are not under that law--the specific dietary regulations, and the provisions for the theocracy. But we are under the law, in the sense that we must listen to and obey specific statements of the character of God. And these are embodied just as much in the imperatives of the New Testament as of the Old.

But there is no power in the law. The law itself cannot lift us; it is weak and inadequate. All it can do is tell us what we ought to be. And when we fail to walk in the Spirit, as we all do, then the law keeps reminding us of how far short we fall from the character of God. And it forces us back to grace, forces us to lay hold of the truth symbolized by the Menorah. That is the way the law operates. It is complementary to grace. It is intended to drive us back to the Lord who provides. This is exactly what Romans 8:4 tells us: "...that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Yes, "the just requirement of the law", because the law is holy and righteous and good. There is nothing wrong with the law. It is intended to confront us with the truth about God's character.

How do we react when we see statements in the New Testament that say, "Be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you"? That is law, the expression of the character of God. It tells me that I should forgive, and be tenderhearted and kind, just as Jesus was. And I cannot ignore that. I cannot get away from it. It is like this scroll that gets into my house and starts eating away. When I am bitter and resentful, and I begin walking in the flesh, the law runs me out of my own house and will not let me live there. I am forced out of my security, and the only place left for me is to go back to the Lord, and say, "Lord, you'll have to forgive me, I'm terribly cynical and bitter in spirit, and you must deal with that, for I cannot. Through your grace, you can set me free, and give me the power to be loving and gracious."

So, the law and God's grace are not contrary to one another. They are not antithetical; they are complementary. You can see this principle all the way through the Old Testament. It has always struck me, in studying Exodus 20 through 24, that after the giving of the law--the ten commandments and the commentary on them--Moses took the law to the people, held it up, and said, "This is the law!" The people said, "All right, just hang it up there on the wall, and we'll obey it!" And Moses built an altar, sacrificed an animal, and sprinkled the blood all over the people and all over the book of the covenant. Whenever you see blood being sprinkled in the Old Testament, it is a picture of forgiveness. Do you see what Moses is saying? He gives them the law. They say, "We'll do it!" And Moses, knowing they can't help but fail, says, "All right. You're already forgiven. Before you even start out, you're forgiven."

You see, the law was necessary. They needed to hear the law. We all need to hear the law. But all the law can do is drive us to the resources of Jesus Christ. And when you read the New Testament, and God speaks to you out of it, that is the law. That is God's character being revealed. But our reaction to that must be to respond in faith, and say, "Lord, that's what I want. Make me like that. You provide the power for me to be what you intend me to be." The law cannot do that. The law cannot empower you, nor can keeping the law make you more acceptable to God. I hope we all understand this. You are accepted whether you keep the law or not. You are accepted in the Beloved One. Your sins--past, present, and future have been forgiven. So, observing some command in the New Testament is not going to make you more acceptable. Nor have you lost your favor with God if you have fallen away and

have disobeyed. You are still loved and accepted in the Beloved One.

The law cannot make you more acceptable to God, and the law cannot make you more powerful. The law is, as Paul says in Romans, "weak through the flesh". When I was in high school, I went to a Young Life conference at Star Ranch in Colorado. Some of you may remember Goldbrick, the cook. They held a big barbecue, and he was barbecuing chicken. That chicken had been cooked for so long that the meat was literally falling off the bones. He pushed a fork into the pieces to turn them over, but the meat was so tender that the fork would tear right out of the flesh. And I thought of Paul's statement. The law is like that fork which tried to lift, but the flesh could not respond, and the fork tore right through it. The law does have a legitimate function-to remind us of what we ought to be. But we cannot respond in the flesh. We can respond only in dependence upon the Spirit of God. And that is why these two are placed side by side.

In the next vision, which we will not take time to go into in detail, Zechariah sees a bushel basket, an ephah, which is about five gallons in capacity, and which had a lead cover. He takes the lead top off, and out pops a woman! He is surprised, and the angel says, "This is the wickedness"--wickedness incarnate. Now, I hope none of you women will be upset, because in the very next verse two other women do something very redemptive. But this particular woman stands for evil-apostate religion, basically, which came from Babylon. She is evidently enormous, and the angel presses her back down into the basket and clamps the lid on. Then two women, who appear to have wings like storks, and who are divine agents, spirits who are at work to carry out God's will, pick up the ephah, carry it off to Babylon, to the land of Shinar, where the tower of Babylon was built, and place it there on its pedestal, for the angel says that there is where it belongs. It does not belong in the midst of God's people.

This is a picture of the final and irrevocable removal of the principle of evil from God's people. In our life it corresponds to the death of the flesh. The symbol of the law condemning sins shows how the law deals with the outworkings of the principle of sin, i.e., with specific sins that we commit. But the woman in the ephah is a picture of the principle of sin itself --the flesh, as Paul calls it, which rules us and dominates us, before Christ, and which is still resident in the flesh. It has not yet been taken back to Babylon where it belongs. But it has been judged, it has been condemned, and it can no longer have power over us.

Do you see what all this is? Zechariah is given, in this series of visions, a number of truths related to what the New Testament calls our "sanctification"--how we are set apart for God. And I see here a series of levels of truth, almost like a layer cake, or a sandwich--four principles which carry all the way through the Scriptures, from beginning to end. The first is the principle of law. God says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy," and he has never rescinded that command. It is true that we are not under the specific statements given to Israel; we need to be clear about that. We do not have to keep the sabbath literally, although we do keep it in its spiritual sense now--the sabbath rest. We do not need to abstain from eating an ossifrage any longer. You can eat one if you can find out what it is! We are not under that specific law; but we are under law to God, in the sense that his character is still there. He has not removed that. We are to be holy because he is holy, and this principle runs right through the Scriptures.

Right under that is the next layer, the repeated statements of the resources of God, the power that is available In Christ. How do you respond to the law? You lay hold of Christ. This is shown in the symbol of the lamp stand. Grace is extended to us at any time. Whatever the requirement, there is always an adequacy in Christ.

Then, underneath that, there is this picture of the principle of sin itself having been dealt with. This too is found all through the Scriptures. "Sin shall not have dominion over you.' You have been set free from the dominion of the flesh--the habits and the old way of doing things which have dominated your life for so long.

And underneath that, going back to the picture of Joshua the high priest, is the astounding forgiveness of God. Even when you have failed in everything--when you look at the law and turn your back on it, or look at the law and try to keep it in your own flesh and you fail--beneath everything else is this wonderful forgiveness of God. He picks you up, brushes you off, says, "Let's have another go at it, but let's do it the right way this time." All these truths are evident repeatedly throughout Scripture.

Where does all this originate? This is made clear in the final scene, toward the end of chapter 6. Let's begin reading with verse 9:

**The word of the Lord also came to me saying, "Take an offering from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah; and you go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon. And take silver and gold, make an ornate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, and high priest. Then say to him, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices."'"**

This is saying that for the first time in history, there will be a King and a Priest on the throne at the same time. For the first time in history it has been sanctioned by God that a Priest/King will rule. And the crown, which is taken from the exiles, is to be placed on his head. He is to be the King among God's people, and he is called the Branch. If you go back to the other prophets in the Old Testament-Isaiah, Jeremiah-you find that the Branch is Messiah, the Lord Jesus himself. He is the One who makes it possible. He does it all, when we are willing to crown him as King, and to keep that crown in the temple. You notice that the crown is to remain in the temple as a memorial to the exiles. And it is to remain in our lives as a memorial of the time when we crowned Jesus Christ as Lord in our lives. If we have never done that, then these truths are not available to us. But if we have, if we have genuinely made him King and Lord of our life, then all of the resources portrayed for us in this visual way are ours.

Father, thank you that we don't have to try harder. Though you have given us impossible demands, you have given us your very Self to fulfill all the requirements of the law. We thank you that those righteous demands are fulfilled in us who walk not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Teach us to be sensitive to your Spirit, to fall back on him in times of stress, and to learn in a personal way the truths of this passage. We ask these things in Christ's name, Amen.

---

Title: The One Who Does it All  
By: David H. Roper  
Series: The Truth for Reconstruction  
Scripture: Zechariah 4 - 6  
Message No: 3 of 6  
Catalog No: 3423  
Date: May 4, 1975  
Updated September 8, 2000.

[Back to home Page](#)

---

Copyright © 1995 [Discovery Publishing](#), a ministry of [Peninsula Bible Church](#). This data file is the sole property of Discovery Publishing, a ministry of Peninsula Bible Church. It may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this data file must contain the above copyright notice. This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Discovery Publishing. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Discovery Publishing, 3505 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, CA. 94306-3695.