

Zechariah 4:8-10

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Zechariah learns that Zerubbabel, who laid the temple foundation, will complete it because the LORD watches over all the events of the world.

In the previous section, Zechariah saw a golden lampstand with two olive trees on each side. Through the vision, the interpreting angel told the prophet that the LORD would enable His Spirit to empower Zerubbabel to complete the temple rebuilding. In our section, Zechariah received a second message that reinforced his vision. He confirmed the source and truthfulness of the revelation when he stated, *Also the word of the LORD came to me* (vs 8).

The *word of the LORD* refers to God's revelation (1 Kings 6:11; Jonah 1:1; 3:1; Hosea 1:1, etc.). This formula gives credibility to the prophet's message. It tells us that he received a revelation from *the LORD* either by hearing His voice (Isa. 6:8) or seeing a vision (Amos 7:1).

Zechariah received a message in which the angel informed him that *the hands of Zerubbabel laid the foundation of this house, and his hands would finish it* (vs 9).

The man named *Zerubbabel* was the governor of Judah and the last member of the line of David (Haggai 1:1). The term *house* stands for the temple of Jerusalem. The laying of the *foundation* refers to the events of 538–537 BC when the returning exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, began restoring the temple of Solomon, which the Babylonians had destroyed in 586 BC (Ezra 3:8–11).

The Judeans intended to complete the building project. However, they stopped working on it for about sixteen years because of the hostile intrigues of their foes (Ezra 4:4). But while they left the house of God unfinished, they were busy building paneled homes for their families.

Consequently, in 520 BC, the LORD raised Haggai to minister to the people, urging them to reconsider their attitude toward life, and rebuild the temple so that God might restore their fortunes. The people took the warning to heart and resumed the building project “on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king” (Haggai 1:15).

While the people were working on the project, the LORD raised the prophet Zechariah to reassure them of its completion. When this project comes to pass, the prophet added, *Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you* (vs 9). The fulfillment of this prophecy would authenticate the prophet's commission as the LORD's emissary.

Zechariah now asked: *For who has despised the day of small things?* (vs 10). The Hebrew verb translated as *despised* means to reject something or treat it with contempt. The phrase *day of small things* refers to the time when the returning exiles of Judah could not make much progress toward the temple restoration after laying its foundation.

Since the second building was merely a pale reflection of the former temple, many people, especially the elders, expressed dissatisfaction and discouragement. The book of Ezra tells us that

“...many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ *households*, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes.”

(Ezra 3:12)

But the LORD did not want His covenant people to lose heart, so He used one of His angels to give the message to Zechariah. He declared, *But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel* (vs 10).

The words *these seven* likely refer to the seven lamps of the previous section (v. 2). They symbolize God’s continual presence among His covenant people through His Spirit (vs 6).

The LORD sees everything because His Spirit is everywhere (Psalm 139:7–8). The interpreting *angel* confirmed this truth when he wrote that the seven lamps *are the eyes of the LORD, which range to and fro throughout the earth* (vs 10). This indicates that the seven lamps represent God’s Spirit.

The *plumb line* is a translation of the Hebrew word “eben.” This word appears nine times in Zechariah, and is variously translated:

- Stone(s) (Zechariah 3:9, 5:4, 9:15-16, 12:3)
- Top stone (Zechariah 4:7) (in other translations, capstone or headstone)
- Plumb line (Zechariah 4:10)
- Weight (Zechariah 5:8)

The word “eben” (*plumb line*) in other verses refers to stones in a crown (vs 9:16) and stones to shoot from a sling (vs 9:15). So the meaning of “eben” depends on the context.

In this case, the *plumb line* represents a tool used by Zerubbabel in the construction of the temple. A *plumb line* is a weight (perhaps a stone) tied to a string or a cord used by builders to ascertain that walls are vertically straight.

So, once the people of Judah saw the *plumb line* in Zerubbabel’s hands, they would rejoice that the rebuilding project was going well. Zerubbabel would use the *plumb line* to supervise the construction and ensure that it was going well.

This means that the obstacle to reconstruction has been removed by God’s Spirit, and the project has recommenced under Zerubbabel’s able administration.

The *eyes of the LORD* depict His careful watch (Psalm 11:4). Zechariah 3:9 refers to “seven eyes” being on “one stone” that likely refers to the Messiah. This indicates that the Messiah is omnipresent, being God, as well as God’s Spirit being omnipresent.

In the Bible, the number *seven* often stands for completeness or perfection. Thus, when the text says that God has *seven eyes*, it means He sees everything. There is no escape from Him. Simply put, the LORD would watch over all the events of the world to ensure everything is done according to His will and for His glory.

Biblical Text

⁸ Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁹ “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish *it*. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. ¹⁰ For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—*these are* the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.”