

High Priest, who had to do with the spiritual. Zechariah, it is believed, spent a portion of his time in Babylon. You know how ready the mind of the Orient is to occupy itself with forms of instruction that take the shape of figure and definition, and there seems some reason to think that Zechariah had this peculiar oriental habit of mind; and it is God's way, when He is speaking to His people, to adapt His communications to their nature, and to address them in such a way that they can understand Him, and that circumstance perhaps explains the number and peculiarity of the visions through which the word of God was revealed to this prophet, and through him to his other servants whom he wished to encourage in the difficult work that they had in hand.

You notice the character of the vision as it is described in the early part of the chapter. The golden candlestick of the temple and the seven lamps were indications of the sources whence the spiritual light was to come, and it is not difficult to see the appropriateness of this symbolic imagery or the teaching of the great lesson that it was intended to impress upon the mind particularly of Zerubbabel. That lesson was to the effect that his reliance was not to be upon mere human agency, not to be upon political influence, not to be upon the power of numbers, not to be in the strength of an army—“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.”

Ministers who are here will agree with me that this is a lesson for all time, a lesson that we need to learn and keep in our thoughts when we are trying to do spiritual work in the Lord's name, and to the glory of Jesus our King. You will notice what a bold metaphor is brought into the next verse, for the impression of the idea that was to be impressed upon Zerubbabel's mind. “Who art thou, O great mountain?” You can imagine yourself travelling a plain on foot or on the back of a camel, alone or with a company, and all at once there rises up unexpectedly before you a steep precipice, a hill, a mountain, and you don't see how you are to advance. That is the way in which the difficulties are presented symbolically, and then, as if to show with what comparative readiness such difficulties can be rolled out of the way, the question is put, “Who art thou, what art thou, O thou great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.” You could imagine how you would feel if, under the circumstances indicated, you suddenly saw the mountain subside, and a plain path for your feet before you. Well, that is the idea that is intended to be conveyed to the Lord's servant here, and it is the idea that we need many times in our lives to have brought to our thoughts. Whatever the barriers may be that stand in our way when we are walking where God will have us advance, He can sweep them out of our path, the great mountain can become a plain; and so it was to be, says the prophet, with this worker of the Lord in the great undertaking that he had in hand, until it should be completed and the top-stone brought forth amid the joyful acclamations of a grateful people, “Grace, grace unto it!” Now most of you know very well that this prophecy itself, and its substantial fulfilment, are regarded by Christian people as being a foreshadowing of the building up of a still greater temple, the spiritual edifice made up of living stones, the church of the Lord God redeemed by the blood of Jesus and sanctified by His quickening and comforting Spirit, and the passage naturally suggests that there will be difficulties in the way of the building of that spiritual temple. Jesus is Prophet and Priest and King. He has all the responsibility—if we may venture to apply that word in the circumstances—but there will be difficulties in the way with those who are working with Him and under Him, and they need encouragement in the face of these difficulties. Their confidence is not to be in human resources. It is not to be in the material aid that they can obtain from this or that created hand. Their confidence is to be in the Word of Him who has commissioned them, in the grace of Him who has redeemed them, and in the power that is behind them, which power can take all barriers out of their way and carry them