

## \* The Sunday School \*

### BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Third Quarter.

POWER THROUGH THE SPIRIT.

Lesson XII.—Sept. 17. Zechariah 4:1-14.

Read the Chapter.

Compare Ezra 6:14-22. Commit Va. 8-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, Zech. 4:6.

EXPLANATORY.

THE PROPHET ZECHARIAH AND HIS MISSION.—Zechariah ("the Lord remembers") was the son of Barachiah and grandson of Iddo, who was one of the heads of the twelve courses of priests (Neh. 12:4, 7), and whose successor Zechariah became (Neh. 12:16). He was therefore a priest as well as a prophet, the head of one of the Davidic courses of priests. He was probably born in Babylon, and went to Jerusalem when quite young with Zerubbabel and Joshua. He began to prophesy about two months after Haggai (Zech. 1:1; Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Hag. 1:1), in the second year of Darius Hystaspas, and continued to prophesy for two years (7:1).

Zechariah's mission was to awaken and encourage the Jews in their great work of rebuilding the temple and renewing the religious life of the people. But there was much to discourage their hearts and dampen their ardor.

The people were few and poor. Their enemies were persistent and cruel. They were trying to bring the whole power of the empire against these few people and their feeble enterprise. Drought and mildew had ruined their crops. Even God seemed to be against them.

THE VISION OF THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK.—Vs. 1-3. This vision was to give courage and hope to the people by the assurance that they, feeble and poor as they were, were yet like God's precious golden candlestick, whose work was to illumine the world with the divine light and life. How? By being the willing, obedient instruments of God, filled with the Spirit, living his life, upholding his truth.

1. THE ANGEL, who had explained the other visions, just as Dante represents himself as accompanied by the spirit of Virgil and of Beatrice. AND WAKED ME. He had slept after the first series of visions. This was the beginning of a new series, during the same eventful night.

2. BEHOLD A CANDLESTICK ALL OF GOLD. Like the seven-branched candlestick of Solomon's temple (Ex. 25:31-37). The best idea of this candlestick is derived from the Arch of Titus in Rome, which commemorates the victory of Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A. D. 70. On the inside of the arch is sculptured a train of men bearing the spoils of the temple, among which was the golden candlestick. "All of gold." Precious, pure, indestructible. WITH A BOWL UPON THE TOP. For a reservoir of oil to supply the lamps.

3. AND TWO OLIVE TREES. The oil usually burned in the lamps was olive oil, pressed from the fruit of the olive tree. These were the living, perennial sources of oil; so that the lamps would never go out.

5. KNOWEST THOU NOT? This implies surprise that the prophet did not see through these plain symbols. The meaning was written all over them. The people to whom the prophet revealed the vision would need the angel's authority as to the meaning, which would thus make a deeper impression upon them. Parts of the vision were so familiar to them that no explanation need be given; but for ourselves we need to gather the meaning from their familiar ritual.

First. The Jewish nation was God's candlestick, which should uphold the light for the whole world. Its business was to shed abroad the light of God. "There was only one lamp-stand, denoting the unity of God's people; but it had various branches and lamps, denoting their multiplicity in unity; and the number was seven, the symbol of their completeness." The Christian church is Christ's golden candlestick (Rev. 1:20).

The business of Christians is to hold up the true light, to be as a lamp set upon its stand (Matt. 5:14-16), to let the light shine over the world, to kindle other souls that they may shine too, till the whole world is flooded with the light of heaven.

Second. The Holy Spirit is symbolized by the sacred oil which keeps the lamps burning and shining.

Governor Zerubbabel and the high priest, as well as the people, were doubtless discouraged. They had to make "bricks without straw." They had no Aladdin's lamp that could build cities by magic. The task before them was almost

as impossible as to remove a mountain or create a world. Hence God's message. NOT BY MIGHT. Not by any governmental power, or power of numbers, or of wealth, or valor. And not BY POWER: as contrasted with "might," not by physical or bodily strength. The work cannot be done in this way. It was not expected of them. Not by the lamp, whether it be of gold or of clay, but by the oil in the lamp. Zerubbabel was only the lamp, God would supply the oil. BUT BY MY SPIRIT. "As that candlestick gave forth its light in silent, ceaseless splendor, unfed and untended by human agencies, so the work in which he was engaged would be accomplished by the Spirit of God." God can put new life and energy into the people. He can change the heart. He can renew one's strength "like the eagle." He can guide by his providence. He can control enemies and compel them to aid his cause. History is full of examples of how a few persons, filled with courage and perseverance, can overthrow the most stupendous evils, can work the most marvelous changes.

7. WHO ART THOU, O GREAT MOUNTAIN? A figure representing the vastness of the work to be done, the immense difficulties in the way, Satan of the previous vision, the Persian Empire, the bitter opposition of the Samaritans. THOU SHALT BECOME A PLAIN. Be wholly removed. At that very time God was influencing Darius to refuse the desires of the Samaritans, and give his favor to Jerusalem (Ezra 6). He inspired the people with patriotism and zeal and energy.

7. AND HE SHALL BRING FORTH THE HEAD-TONE of the temple. The crowning grace that completed the building. His work should succeed. WITH SHOUTINGS, CRYING, GRACE, GRACE UNTO IT. With great rejoicing and acclamations should the temple be completed. The temple would be so glorious that the people should shout its gracious beauty, and pray that God might grant his grace, his favor to alide upon it, with blessings inconceivable as before promised by the prophets.

9. ZERUBBABEL . . . HIS HANDS SHALL ALSO FINISH IT. It is quite probable that the people were dissatisfied with Zerubbabel in some way. He belonged to the day of small things. He did not appear like Solomon in all his glory. He appeared like a common man rather than like a great ruler.

10. FOR WHO HATH DESPISED THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS? Small beginnings, a small people, a small kingdom, small wealth. THEY . . . SHALL SEE THE PLUMMET. The symbol of the architect or head builder. He shall complete the building, for with him are THOSE SEVEN; THEY ARE THE EYES OF THE LORD. Referring back to 3:9. The people should rejoice, because the providence of God, reaching everywhere in the world, is with their leader.

"Where the vanguard rests today,  
The rear shall rest tomorrow"

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An Appetite For Bible Study.

During the past five years fifteen thousand people have entered upon the work of the Bible study course of the American Institute of Sacred Literature (Chicago, Ill.). Of this number several thousand have received certificates for one or more years' work. It should be stated that the plan of study involves work for fifteen minutes each day during the months from October to June. In four years the following subjects are covered: "The Life of Christ," "The Foreshadowings of the Christ," "The Founding of the Christian Church," and "The Work of the Old Testament Ages." These are large subjects covering a large part of the Bible, but it is surprising how fully they come into the possession of those who work away at them slowly but surely day after day. Perhaps the largest benefit, however, is in the taste for more which is acquired. There is so great a demand from those who have completed the four years' course, and wish something more, that this year a fifth course is contemplated. Should it be prepared it will take up the subject of the priestly element in Israelitish history under the heads "Priest Codes," "Priest History," and "Priest Psalms." The courses are prepared by President William R. Harper (Old Testament), and Professor Ernest D. Burton (New Testament).

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Ten Thousand People to Study the Founding of the Christian Church.

The Outline Bible Club Course of the American Institute of Sacred Literature (Chicago, Ill.) will take for its subject this coming year the Founding of the Christian Church, a study of the Acts with the Epistles and the Revelation introduced in their probable historical relation. It is expected that fully ten thousand people will enter upon the study of this subject during the months from October to June. If the record of the past ten years is kept up there will be representatives of every evangelical denomination, the Unitarians, Universalists, Jews, and Roman Catholics as well. In a few Women's Clubs where the work has been pursued all these elements have been present in the same club. The work begins properly with October, but clubs may be organized now so as to be ready promptly.

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