

# Can I Get A Witness?

## *Zechariah's Fifth Night Vision*

- <sup>1</sup> And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep.
- <sup>2</sup> And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it.
- <sup>3</sup> And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left."
- <sup>4</sup> And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?"
- <sup>5</sup> Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord."
- <sup>6</sup> Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.
- <sup>7</sup> Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"
- <sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
- <sup>9</sup> "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.
- <sup>10</sup> For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. "These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth."
- <sup>11</sup> Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?"

<sup>12</sup> And a second time I answered and said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?"

<sup>13</sup> He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord."

<sup>14</sup> Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

### **Zechariah 4:1-14**

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## **Studying the Bible with Dispensationalists**

I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth ... And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire. And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

(Rev 11:3, 5-13)

FOR MANY YEARS, THE BEST BIBLE STUDY I ever had was on Tuesday afternoons after school during my senior year of high school. I would get in the car and drive six or seven miles over to a house in Lafayette, where one of the youth leaders in our youth group lived. It was just me and him and a man named **Clarence Larkin**.

Larkin was born in 1850 in Chester, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. He became a mechanical engineer by trade, and had a special gift for creating technical plans and drawings. He was converted at age nineteen in an Episcopal church, but remained in the business world until he was 32, when he left to become a Baptist minister. 35 years later he published the book that my friend and I would devour. It was his Dispensational commentary on Revelation.

The passage I quoted above comes from parts of Revelation 11. It is the two witnesses I want to focus on this morning. Larkin asks, “Who are these **‘TWO WITNESSES’**? They are **men**: not systems, or churches, or a body of witnesses, for they **prophecy** and are **clothed in sackcloth**, neither of which can be said of other than **persons**, and there are **TWO** of them ... [Since] they have power to **shut heaven that it rain not in the DAYS OF THEIR PROPHECY** ... And have power over **WATERS to TURN THEM TO BLOOD**, and to smite the earth with **ALL PLAGUES** ... It is very easy to identify them [emphasis original].”<sup>1</sup> Can you guess who he has in mind?

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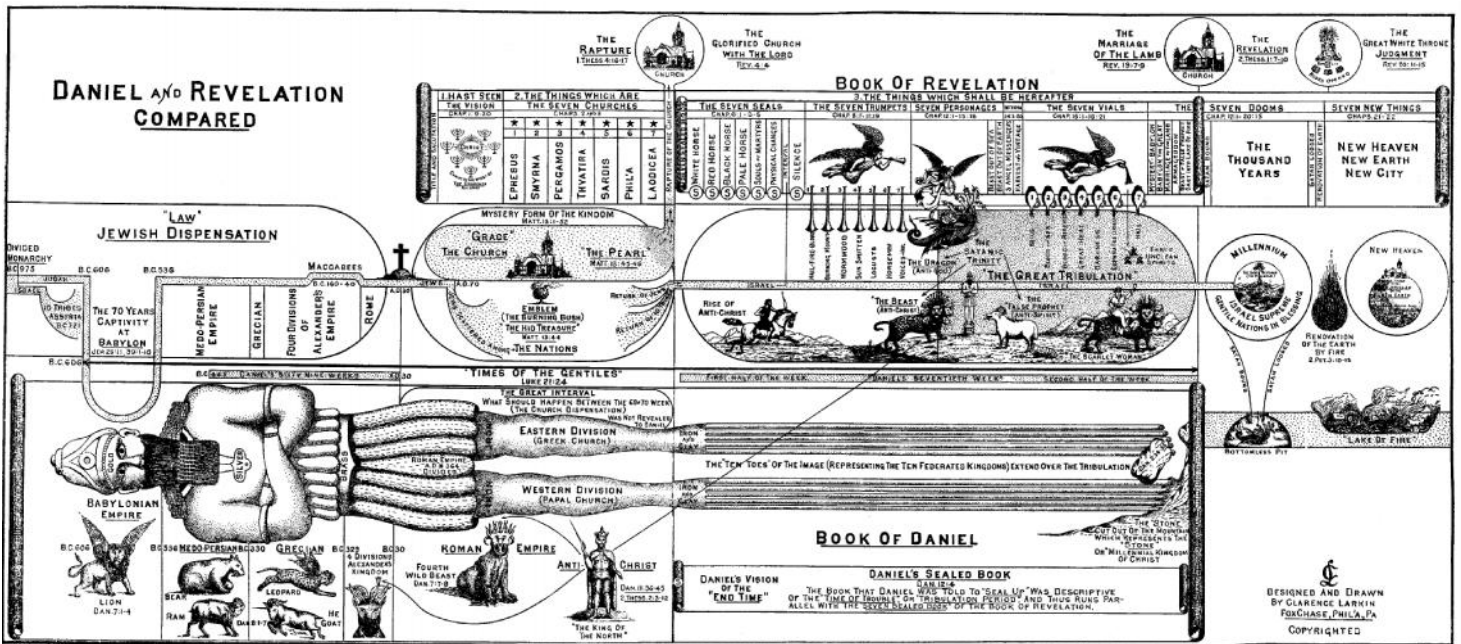
<sup>1</sup> **Clarence Larkin**, *The Book of Revelation: A Study of the Last Prophetic Book of Holy Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Rev. Clarence Larkin Estate, 1919), 84, 86.

In the *Left Behind* series which follows the classic Dispensational view of Revelation advanced by Larkin, Scofield, and others, 65,000,000 people (and that's just book sales, and does not include library loans, book borrowing, audio tapes, and movies) learned in the very first book that suddenly to the earth two men came and were viewed around the world on television as great and powerful prophets. In the books their names are **Eli** and **Moishe**, a not at all subtle renaming of Elijah and Moses.

If you follow the so-called "literal" reading of the passage, it doesn't take any imagination at all to see that here are two men, come down from heaven who have the ability to shoot fire out of their mouths, who re-perform on a global scale their own miracles of the OT, who are murdered by the Antichrist, are dead for three and a half days, who rise from the dead, and are seen by the whole world (again, on television), and who are then raptured (after the Rapture) up to heaven just when a huge earthquake hits Jerusalem, killing 7,000 people.

As I look back on it now, it was not the content of the book that was so beneficial for me, because I have actually changed my theology rather dramatically. Rather, it was the effect that his book had in causing me to dig into the

Bible like I never had before. And the charts didn't hurt either. Larkin is probably the #1 reason why when many people think of Dispensationalism, they think of complex, visual charts.



A Chart from Larkin's Book on Daniel

Two things are worth mentioning here. The first is that it is easy for people who have never been in these circles to laugh and mock this kind of interpretation (I rather liked the charts, but many people scoff at them). But this is not how we are to behave towards our enemies, let alone our brothers in Christ. "They mean well," as the expression goes, and to win them over, we must do so in love. But we must also do so in truth and conviction that things as they

see them are not at all how we see them, and for good reason. In other words, we have to know our Bibles.

## Two Witnesses

Today we are in Zechariah 4. It is the **fifth night vision** of the prophet, and what he sees relates directly to Revelation 11. In fact, John takes his images of the two witnesses directly from this chapter. The **context** of this vision is very important. After being in the Holy of Holies in vision four, Zechariah starts to make his way back out. On the way, he sees some **accessories** that usually belong in the Holy Place, and then his thoughts move more broadly to the temple that is being rebuilt in Jerusalem. In fact, it is the rebuilding of the temple in the Holy City that is the ultimate aim of this vision.

It is the last verse (**Zech 4:12**) that is the parallel to the two witnesses. “**Then he said, ‘These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.’**” The two “anointed ones” become the two “witnesses” in Revelation. This might seem strange. For what does an anointed one have to do with being a witness? Nevertheless, this is made clear by John himself in a verse that seems to conveniently pass the attention of many Dispensationalists. When we saw the passage earlier, **I left**

out a few verses. It actually begins with something Zechariah has seen a couple of times now: with a measuring staff (Rev 11:1). This is used to measure “the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there” (1). The temple is the same idea we find in Zechariah 4.

It is into the context of the temple being trampled that the two witnesses “prophesy” for the same period of time that the church nourished in the wilderness in the next chapter: 1,260 days (Rev 11:3) or “a time, and times, and half a time” (three and a half years; Rev 12:14).<sup>2</sup> Then he says that these two witnesses “are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth” (Rev 11:4). This is the language of Zechariah 4. So let’s look a little bit at our vision before returning to these two witnesses.

## The Sluggard Awakes

The vision begins, “And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep” (Zech 14:1). This is not something many of us would focus on, but Calvin did, and what he says is pastoral. “Let us learn, that except God awakens us by his

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<sup>2</sup> Also note the similarity between “three and a half years” (Rev 12:14) and “three and a half days” that the witnesses are “dead” (11:9).



Spirit, torpor [spiritual sluggishness] will so prevail over us, that we cannot raise our minds above. Since God then sees that we are so much tied down to the earth, he rouses us as it were from our lethargy. For if the Prophet had need of such help, how much more have we, who are far below him in faith? Nay, if he was earthly, are we not altogether earth and ashes? It must yet be observed, that the Prophet was not so overwhelmed with drowsiness as with astonishment; so that he was hardly himself, as it is the case with men in an ecstasy.”<sup>3</sup> This is one reason why we are here today, is it not? We spend a week in the world, our minds are preoccupied with the daily grind, our thoughts are not often on eternal things, so we come together to be stirred up again to spiritual realities, to be roused from our slumber, to awaken to our need for God’s Spirit to fill us with the light of Christ and the Glory of God anew. That is what I pray God does for us through this chapter.

A couple more times the prophet’s own spiritual dullness is apparent. “Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, ‘Do you not know what these are?’ I said, ‘No, my lord’” (5). And again, “He said to me,

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<sup>3</sup> John Calvin and John Owen, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 5 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 106.

‘Do you not know what these are?’ I said, ‘No, my lord’” (13). Even when he sees before his eyes profound spiritual realities, the prophet of God is at a loss. He does not understand. How much more would that be true of us? That is why we come together to be taught by the Word and the Spirit, not just with our heads, but with our hearts as well, so that together we might be built up into “a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1Pe 2:5). Ah, but I get ahead of myself. Let us return to the vision and see the glories that God has in store for his people.

## Lampstand and Olive Trees

After awaking Zechariah, the mysterious angel asks the now asks him, “What do you see?” (Zech 4:2). To point out the obvious, Zechariah is awake when he sees his vision. “I said, ‘I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it’” (2). Zechariah sees something like one of the items that belongs in the temple.



Representation of the Candlestick-Lampstand of the Tabernacle

Like the tabernacle lampstand, the one he sees is gleaming with pure gold. It probably has seven lamps. However, it also has “seven lips” on each of the lamps. These lips are for holding the oil that goes in each lamp. Some scholars think that the literal language “seven and seven” should be multiplied, so that you have a total of forty-nine lamps with lips, and they see significance to this in the year of Jubilee (the year after seven sevens).

Furthermore, unlike the tabernacle candlestick, this one has a bowl on top of it. This bowl holds the oil that then goes down through the lips and feeds the lights of the lampstand. Where does this oil come from? “And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the

other on its left” (Zech 4:3). In other words, the oil comes from the olives that are on the two olive trees.

A little later in the vision, Zechariah becomes curious. He doesn’t understand what he is seeing, since he is not seeing the normal temple candlestick. There were no olive trees inside the temple! He puts the question twice to the angel (who again may or may not be the Angel of the LORD). His two questions parallel one another. “Then I said to him, ‘What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?’ And a second time I answered and said to him, ‘What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?’” (4:11-12).

These questions add more to the description. Now he describes “two branches.” These two branches, one from each tree, somehow attach themselves to two “golden pipes.”<sup>4</sup> These pipes (*tsanteroth*) along with the lips (*mutseqeth*) seem to be some kind of a funneling system that gets the oil from the main bowl to the smaller lamps where

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<sup>4</sup> Kline notices that the word branches (*sibbolet*) is the same word used for running water in Psalm 69:3. This then becomes a wordplay on the branches and the river of flowing oil that goes into the lampstand. See Kline, *Glory*, 164. This is not the same word as the “branch” (*tsemach*) in the previous vision (Zech 3:8).

the wicks are located. Below are some artistic representations.<sup>5</sup>



Different depictions of Zechariah's lampstand.  
The first picture is from the Jewish Cervera Bible Spain circa 1299

So how does the oil get into the lamps. This is the \$64,000 question of our passage. The answer is that **the two witnesses put the oil there**. But as John said, the two witnesses are the olive trees themselves. So how can a tree be responsible for putting oil into a sacred lamp—or any lamp for that matter? The “literalism” of the Dispensationalist starts to fade away quickly here.

## **The Two Anointed Ones**

### *Joshua and Zerubbabel*

The key becomes how do we interpret Zechariah's equivalent of the two witnesses: **“The two anointed ones”**

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<sup>5</sup> The “golden oil” (vs. 12) could be interpreted supernaturally as we will see is probably true of the olive trees, but it also must realize olive oil is golden in appearance, and as such is a perfect kind of oil for the sacred golden lampstand.

(**Zech 4:14**)? Over the centuries, there have been not a few interpretations of this. In the immediate context, “Interpretations consistently have identified these two individuals as Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest.”<sup>6</sup> So one example says, “The two olive trees are referring to the high priest, Joshua, and the governor, Zerubbabel, who are spearheading the reconstruction of the temple” (see **Hag 1:14**).<sup>7</sup> Zerubbabel is actually in this vision, while Joshua was in the previous vision. Joshua is the high priest living in that day, and Zerubbabel is the governor from the line of David.

Obviously, Zechariah’s visions would have been known by these two men and the people of that day. In fact, one verse is even directed to Zerubbabel, “**This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel**” (**Zech 4:6**). It goes on to say, “**Whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel**” (10). “**And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”**” (7). This vision

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<sup>6</sup> Mark J. Boda, “Oil, Crowns and Thrones: Prophet, Priest and King in Zechariah 1:7–6:15,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures: Volume 3* 3, no. 10 (2000–2001): 12.

<sup>7</sup> Bryan R. Gregory, *Longing for God in an Age of Discouragement: The Gospel according to Zechariah*, ed. Tremper Longman III, *The Gospel according to the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 88.

would have served to strengthen the hopes that God really was in this to help them. In a world as dejected as the one the Israelites were returning to, this would have been a great encouragement to them. As a point of fact of history, Zerubbabel and Joshua together with Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah and all the people were able to build a new temple in Jerusalem. The line was plumbed, the stone was set, the temple was completed. God had returned, just as he promised to do.

It is this fulfillment of historic promises that lays the foundation for other parts of the vision, however, which seem to [point beyond the immediate future](#), even in places where Zerubbabel is discussed. “[Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain](#)” (7). The language reminds us of Daniel’s Messianic prophecy, “[Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth](#)” ([Dan 2:35](#)). And its fulfillment, “[In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed,](#)

nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand” (Dan 2:44-45). In Matthew, the Lord Jesus speaks of this fulfillment, “And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him” (Matt 21:44). He was speaking about himself. Zechariah’s mountain here is probably not Messiah, as most have seen it as one of the world empires of the past, such as Rome. Nevertheless, the language is similar.

It also reminds us of Isaiah, “Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isa 40:4-5). This is quoted in Luke 3:5-6 when John the Baptist began preaching about the Lord Jesus. Does Zechariah have something like this in mind too?

Another part of Zechariah’s vision says, “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you” (Zech 4:9). “Then you



will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you” is the same language used in the previous chapter of the Angel of the LORD speaking about his own coming in the future (2:9, 11), a coming that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ being born of human flesh. I think this is very important to the interpretation.

Finally, “These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth” (Zech 4:10). The “whole earth” is language that does not make sense merely of the second temple. It goes beyond that. Also, this language recalls the previous chapter with its seven eyes engraved on a stone (3:9). There we saw that it was speaking about the Holy Spirit. This is exactly how the explanation to Zerubbabel begins in that well known and quoted passage, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts” (Zech 4:6). As we saw in chapters 2 and 3, the main sphere of Holy Spirit is the temple. He empowers people to build it, he indwells inside it, he beautifies and brings glory to it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> A friend pointed out to me this comment by John Owen as we were studying parallel passages, but didn't know it until later. “When the *same* thing is, at the *same* time, ascribed *jointly* and yet *distinctly* to all the persons in the Deity, and *respectively* to each of them. So are grace and peace, Rev. 1:4, 5, ‘Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness’ etc. The seven Spirits before the throne, are the Holy

Yes, the words of these parts of the message to Zerubbabel in our vision point **beyond the men** in ways that remind us of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Priest and Governor point forward to something more. And notice one more thing. When the angel gives the interpretation, he does not say that Zerubbabel is the fulfillment, he speaks to Zerubbabel *about* the fulfillment. There is a difference. Zerubbabel himself was to know that something beyond him was in mind.

### *Non-Messianic Interpretations*

Therefore, since ancient times, interpreters have suggested other candidates for these witnesses. One suggestion is that they refer to **Aaron and Moses**, “**whose righteousness makes it possible for Israel to be redeemed.**”<sup>9</sup> Said **Rabbi Levi**, “This is to teach that God went about seeking for some good ground for redeeming Israel, but

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Spirit of God, considered as the perfect fountain of every perfect gift and dispensation. All are here joined together, and yet all mentioned as distinguished in their communication of grace and peace unto the saints. ‘Grace and peace be unto you, from the Father, and from’ etc.” (John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold, vol. 2 [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, n.d.], 15).

<sup>9</sup> **Craig A. Evans**, “The Two Sons of Oil”: Early Evidence of Messianic Interpretation of Zechariah 4:14 in 4Q254 4 2,” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls : technological innovations, new texts, and reformulated issues*, ed. Donald W Parry; Eugene Charles Ulrich (Leiden : Brill, 1998), 566 [566-75].

did not find one until he came upon the merits of Moses and Aaron.”<sup>10</sup> That sounds very rabbinical.

Another suggestion is the **Palestinian priesthood and scholars** of Zechariah’s day and onward.<sup>11</sup> At least one Rabbi didn’t like that, so in the second century **Rabbi Judah ben Ilai** said in response that, “Should one suppose that Aaron and his sons require the oil of anointing in the time to come? Scripture says, ‘This is the anointing of Aaron and his sons’ [Leviticus 7:35]. Then how shall I explain the verse, ‘These are the two sons of oil who stand by the Lord of the whole earth’ [Zechariah 4:14]? This refers to **Aaron and David**.”<sup>12</sup> Aaron and Moses. Aaron and David. Will they be coming back in the future? Apparently, yes. They answer, “**One seeks to recover his**

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<sup>10</sup> Exod. Rab. 15:3 on Exodus 12:1. Cited in Evans, 567, n. 2.

<sup>11</sup> See *b. San.* 24a.

<sup>12</sup> Sifra §97 [on Leviticus 7:35-38]. Cited in Evans, 566. Another is, “You might think that Aaron and his sons will require the oil of anointing in the hereafter ... How, then, am I to explain, ‘These are the two anointed ones etc. ...’ It refers to Aaron and to David.” Sifra Tzav 18 (to Leviticus 7:35). Cited in **Irving Jacobs**, *The midrashic process : tradition and interpretation in rabbinic Judaism* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 110. I found this rabbinical source in **Kevin J. Cathcart**, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara, eds., *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, trans. Kevin J. Cathcart and Robert P. Gordon, vol. 14 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990).

priesthood and the other his kingdom.”<sup>13</sup> These Jewish interpretations bears striking similarity to the “literalness” of the Dispensational view of Moses and Elijah.

### *Messianic Interpretations*

This is in contrast to other views that saw the two Messianically, even in Judaism. One first-second century Kairaites tradition of rabbinical Judaism identified them as Elijah and “Messiah ben David.”<sup>14</sup> An anonymous teacher wrote, “This refers to Aaron and to the Messiah. Yet I do not know which of them is the more beloved [in the eyes of God] However, since it is stated [in Psalm 110:4] [the LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, you are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek], you may infer that the King Messiah is more beloved than the Priest of Righteousness.”<sup>15</sup> Too bad this Rabbi didn’t believe in Jesus.

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<sup>13</sup> (Num. Rab. 14:13 [on Numbers 7:84]; cf. Num. Rab. 18:16 [on Numbers 16:1]; Lam. Rab. 1:16 §51, cited in Evans, *ibid.* Nevertheless one scholar who reads this says, “there will be no reanointing of the high priest in the messianic age.” Jacobs, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Wieder, “Doctrine of the Two Messiahs among the Kairaites”, cited in G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Cited in Jacobs, 109.

The church didn't have a lot to say about this particular passage in its early stages. But there was an interpretation by **Methodius** (d. 311), Bishop of Olympus who said, “**the two ... are the law and the prophets.**” This might seem a very different kind of interpretation, until you see how he finishes the thought, “**... around, as it were, the lot of the inheritance, of which Christ and the Holy Spirit are the authors.**” (*Banquet of the Ten Virgins* 10.6). So his interpretation is also Messianic, but also has some flavor of the Holy Spirit as well.

The **Dead Sea Scrolls**, though fragmentary here, also seem to point to a Messianic interpretation. And this is important, because they were written before Jesus came. Surrounding a whole section of interpretation on Judah and the Messiah from Genesis 50, the fragment quotes our verse, thereby probably making some kind of a connection to the “two branch” (which are messianic) and the two anointed ones.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, there is one more curious interpretation found in the Targum. Rather than “two anointed ones” or something more literal like “sons of oil,” it reads, “**two sons of the great ones.**” The scholars are united in their

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<sup>16</sup> See Evans.

view that this refers back to the language used of the sons of God in **Genesis 6:2**.<sup>17</sup> The idea seems come from the fact that they are standing “**beside the LORD of the whole earth**.” This is a phrase used of the heavenly beings in the prophet Micaiah’s divine council vision (**1Kg 22:19**), and it is the only other time in the Bible that the phrase is used.<sup>18</sup> In other words, this is a privilege that does not belong to ordinary humans, no matter how exalted they are. Remember, Zechariah is having divine council visions as well.

Each of these Messianic ideas seem to flow very well with what we have seen about the future of this vision and its relationship to Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I suggest that while on the immediate level of the prophecy, Zerubbabel and Joshua serve some kind of temporary, yet real and important fulfillment. At the end of the day, the

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<sup>17</sup> Kevin J. Cathcart, Martin McNamara, and Michael Maher, “Editors’ Foreword,” in *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, ed. Kevin J. Cathcart, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara, trans. Kevin J. Cathcart and Robert P. Gordon, vol. 14 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), Zec 4:13–14, n. 24; also Evans, 567; Boda, 12–13; Wolter H Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel : messianic expectations in the early postexilic period* (Sheffield : Sheffield Acad. Press, c2000), 202–206.

<sup>18</sup> See Mark J. Boda, “Oil, Crowns and Thrones: Prophet, Priest and King in Zechariah 1:7–6:15,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures: Volume 3* 3, no. 10 (2000–2001): 12–13. Wolter H Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel : messianic expectations in the early postexilic period* (Sheffield : Sheffield Acad. Press, c2000).

only thing that can truly fulfill this vision of the two anointed ones is God himself. Calvin isn't clear, but he is curious in this regard. He says that they are "two continual flowings from [God]." Is this Messianic too? He doesn't say. But amazingly, in the NT, God comes to earth in special ways through Two of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Taking John's language of the witnesses again, Jesus said, "I ... bear witness about myself" (John 5:31); "The witness that I receive is from man" (5:34 NAS); "The witness which I have is greater than *that of John*" (5:36 NAS); "My witness is true." (8:14 NAS). Of the Spirit he says, "When the Advocate [NET] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me" (15:26 NAS). This is fulfilled in Acts. "God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us" (Act 15:8). "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:16).

Yes, there are other witnesses in the Bible, and the Father is even among them. But in the context of Zechariah's future Messianic vision, I believe these are the

two anointed ones who stand by the LORD of the whole earth.<sup>19</sup> If this is right, then **Zechariah 4:14** is an explicitly Trinitarian verse, for you have Two Persons of the Holy Trinity standing by the Third Person who is Lord of the whole earth.

## Two Witnesses Filling the Church

These two witnesses are therefore the olive trees of Zechariah's vision. They are therefore the two branches that pour golden oil into the lampstand. They are the dispensers of God's grace. So how does all of this effect us today? Beloved, **the lampstand is Christ's church**. John could not be any clearer about this. **"As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches"** (**Rev 1:20**).

Therefore, when John prophesies that **"I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth"** (**Rev 11:4**), he is talking about Christ and His Spirit's presence overshadowing, encompassing,

<sup>19</sup> This is also the view of Kline, 166.



protecting, guiding, testifying, filling, flowing, light-bringing witness to the world that these people are theirs, and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it. They will not leave the church during the church age.

No matter how bad things get, they will be there to supply their every need.<sup>20</sup> The olive trees are supplying oil for the church in the NT temple. Who else can give me “oil in my lamp and keep it burning, burning, burning” but Christ and his Spirit? When I am empty, they fill me up. This is not a work done by men. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” The Spirit has been sent by Christ to build his church into a holy temple made of living stones. This is the temple that has been in mind throughout Zechariah’s visions and it continues in this chapter. He is the Light of the Lampstand, and Witness of the truths we find in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of the prophetic visions, the mountain that grows, the stone that causes men to

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<sup>20</sup> John changes it a bit so that the two olive trees are two lampstands, and that is different from Zechariah. As Beale says (not taking the position that the two witnesses are the Son and Spirit), “As such, the witnesses as ‘lampstands’ are viewed as conducting their luminescent ministry in the spiritual holy place of the invisible temple, since that is where the lampstands were positioned in the OT temple.” G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 1119.

stumble, the cap-stone who causes shouts of, “Grace, Grace to it.”

You see, when you understand what God is doing in the NT as the beginning of the fulfillment of all things, then we can know with certainty what the Angel says, “Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.” And isn’t that what we all yearn for? To know that what we believe is really true? So close your physical eyes and begin to see with the eyes of faith that all Zechariah predicted is coming true now. The Witnesses are speaking. The Lamps are burning. The Oil is flowing. Grace is being supplied through the Word of God. Wake up from your sleep. The night is almost spent. The Day is quickly approaching. Do not despise the day of small things, inconsequential things, foolish things. The eyes of the LORD range through the whole earth, and they are a flame of light to give light to all that find their life in the oil of Christ.