

# **A Tale of Two Prophets, A Priest and A King**

Ezra 6:14; Haggai 2:2-7; Zechariah 3:1; Zechariah 4:6

I love a great story. I am reminded as I read the Gospels, our Lord loved to use stories to teach. From time to time, I will meet people who heard me decades ago and they will say, "I heard you preach many years ago; I don't remember your text, but I remember this story you told." It is not unusual for me to receive a phone call from a preacher that goes something like this: "I am preaching on this certain subject and I heard you give a story; it went something like this (and he would tell me what he remembered). Could you tell me that story and go slow--I'm taking notes." Charles Spurgeon said, "Illustrations are the windows in the sermon through which we see the truth."

There is a beautiful story that unfolds in Scripture involving two prophets: Haggai and Zechariah; a high priest: Jonathan and a king: Zerubbabel. Let's allow God to speak to our hearts in this fascinating story.

## **I. THE PROLOGUE TO OUR STORY**

Approximately 150 years before the Persian King Cyrus was born God, through Isaiah, gave forth the prophecy, calling him (Cyrus) by name (Ezra 1:1-3, 7, 8; Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-11). God shows forth His mighty sovereignty by stating that through Cyrus, a heathen king, He can make "crooked places straight" (Isaiah 45:2). God is not a distant God merely observing the events of the earth with little interruptions from His part. Au contraire! God is orchestrating in the unseen realms before our times unfold, while our time is realized and yes, even beyond our times into the future (Isaiah 45:2-11).

## **II. THE PROPHETS CALL US TO CONSIDER**

In Haggai 1:3-13 there is a command to consider our ways. As Ezra is heading up the construction of the rebuilding of the Temple, the people have become slack. We are reminded that 267 years before Haggai was giving the warning to consider our ways, the prophet Amos had said it was this kind of attitude that led Israel into captivity to begin with (Amos 6:1-6).

In Haggai 2:15-19 we are told to consider that our decisions of today will influence (within God's plan) our tomorrows. Haggai says, "Consider from this day and upward..." (Haggai 2:15a; 2:18a). "Is the seed yet in the barn?..." (Haggai 2:19a). This is a reminder that when the seeds that have been stored are planted, the product will follow. In the 1960s something remarkable happened. Archaeologists unearthed a jar of date palm seeds that were found in the remains of Masada. These seeds were found in the storage rooms of the fortress. Having the knowledge of the ancient fortress of Masada was under siege in 73 AD by the Romans and by radiocarbon, it was estimated that these seeds were over 2,000 years old! For the next forty years, they gathered dust in a drawer at Tel Aviv's Bar-Ilan University. Nobody thought they were much use for anything. To experiment, in 2008 three of the seeds were fertilized and planted. Then one of the seeds began to sprout and by the summer of 2010, this

date palm had grown to a height of 6.5 feet! In nature God reminds us of the great possibility that lies in the seed thoughts that He desires to place in the hearts of His people.

Eighty years before Ezra, Haggai and Zechariah returned to build the temple, Jeremiah prophesied the benefit of receiving God's thoughts (Jeremiah 29:10-14). Isaiah 55:9: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Let us therefore, lift up our heads and dream God's dreams, think God's thoughts and do God's will (Psalm 3:3; Psalm 121:1; John 4:35; Luke 10:2, 3).

### III. THE PRIEST IN NEED OF REVIVAL

Zechariah 3:1-7

#### A. Confrontation

Zechariah 3:1, 2 reminds us that we are in serious spiritual warfare. Although the Devil is resisting us, take heart--the Lord is for us. Romans 8:31: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

#### B. Cleansing

Zechariah 3:3-5. Psalm 24:3-5: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Hezekiah realized that holiness cannot coexist with ungodliness. This is why he commanded the priest in II Chronicles 29:5, "And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place."

#### C. Course

In Zechariah 3:6, 7 God was telling the high priest Jonathan (and us through him) that if we walk in God's way, He will allow us to walk in ministry in His chosen course for us. Compare: Ephesians 2:2; Acts 13:25; Acts 20:24; II Timothy 4:7.

### IV. THE POWERS THAT BE IN NEED OF GOD'S POWER

Zechariah 4:6-10. Romans 13:1 commands us, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." In I Kings 2:1-4, the dying king David is now telling the next king, his son Solomon, that if he submits to the power of the Living God, God will empower him to do what needs to be done and the blessing of God will, in turn, come to those who also walk before Him in truth. This promise of power is given to Zerubbabel in Zechariah 4:7, which reflects the message of Matthew 17:20: "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

### V. THE TWO PROPHETS IN PROPHECY

Zechariah 4:1-5, 11-14.

Revelation 11 is the fulfillment of this prophecy. We see these are two witnesses with very similar giftings of Elijah and Moses (Revelation 11:6, 7). The next event we look forward to in prophecy is the rapture of the Church (Revelation 3:10, 11). God will deliver the Church from this hour of trial, which will last for seven years (Daniel 9:24-27). The abomination of desolation will take place and the man of sin will be revealed (II Thessalonians 2:3-12). These two mighty prophets will begin to prophesy and do miracles soon after the man of sin is revealed (Revelation 11:3). After the death and resurrection of these two prophets, the Lord will return in glory as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 11:13-15; Revelation 19:11-16).

These final prophets give us the reminder that our times are in God's hands. Psalm 31:15: "My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me." Therefore let us say with Paul, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

-Pastor Pope-