

Zechariah 4:1-14

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[0 : 0 0] even in the midst of all that has taken place or not taking place during this strange year 2020 we are still able to gather before a screen or in a church building like we are here in one accord and we do so with grateful hearts in fact the word of god tells us in first thessalonians be joyful always pray continually give thanks in all circumstances for this is god's will for you in christ jesus sometimes we moan about our circumstances when we have little right to do so and one event that we give thanks for the give thanks for this year and always as the coming of jesus the coming of messiah the one who came to heal and to save and indeed give thanks for the wonderful promise that he is coming again oh yes maybe soon the old hymn says and some of you may remember it coming again coming again maybe morning maybe noon maybe evening maybe soon jesus is coming again that's a rousing hymn that fishing villages on the coast where i've been ministering have been saying for years while much of our observations for his birth are from the gospels uh that's where we find the birth narratives nevertheless we find much in the prophecies regarding the messiah coming to save his people and many of these prophecies are from the old testament of course like micah five and two who told us that the messiah would be born in bethlehem isaiah revealed that he would be born of a virgin and that his name would be emmanuel god with us and i say a nine we read that the people in darkness had been people had been walking in darkness and they would see a great light in the land of zebulun and naphtali and that's the very area north and east of the sea of galilee that jesus ministered in jesus the light of the world bringing light into the darkness darkness and he would dispel the darkness in people's lives through them repenting from their sins and this is a theme that we find in the old testament prophecies turn turn turn a little over a week ago hanukkah which is briefly mentioned in the gospel of john was celebrated by the jewish people john 10 and 22 says then came the feast of dedication at jerusalem it was winter and jesus was in the temple courts walking in solomon's colonnade now i'm sure most of you have seen the the seven branched menorah candle that the jews use but there's a hanukkah candle that has nine branches it's got two extra branches and the central one is known as the shamash it's a servant candle basically because it's the one that's used for lighting all the others and just as the shamash lights all the all the different candles the other eight candles so jesus christ came to be the light of the world it was revealed to the prophet isaiah that a messenger would go before messiah that the glory of the lord might be revealed it was revealed to the prophet isaiah isaiah and that messenger would be john the baptist i say i said in the desert prepare the way for the lord make straight in the wilderness a highway for our god and the glory of the lord will be revealed and all mankind together will see it so we can see that the life of jesus the messiah his birth his life and his death are there for us in the writings of the prophets i was reading an article just just in the last few days that elisha's house has been found in northern israel and that's that it's only or what they think is elisha's house that's only seven miles away from his birthplace as well an inscription being found there with his name on it uh the name there was another with the name nimshi elisha commissioned one of his disciples to go unordained jeshu jehu grandson of nish as king in second kings nine and the article began by saying biblical prophets are difficult to demonstrate through archaeology they often were of humble origins typically did not hold governmental offices did not build cities and more often than not the ruling classes hated them authorities were more willing to be rid of them and their evidence yet their biblical their their their preserved biblical text live on as some of the most precious writings that we have in the context of the story that we have before us today the jews were returning from exile and there the prophets are also feature the prophets were the forerunners of the messiah they were teaching and preaching repentance calling people back to god calling people to turn away from their sins as john the baptist the last of the prophets had also been doing so this morning we turn to the message of

the prophet who speaks about god's love for the people and for the land of israel and that god wanted to redeem and bless his people israel despised despite how she had treated him in the past therefore tell the people this is what the lord almighty says return to me declares the lord almighty and i will return to you and as we continue reading through this short prophecy we will discover that he sees not only into his own day but right into the days in which we live and beyond god's message through zahariah the prophet is one of a desire for israel and the nations to repent before him and to come into a right relationship with him this message still resounds return to me and i will return to you because of israel's rejection israel and judah of course of god in this way judah fell in 586 and the captives were taken to babble and among them was daniel the prophet for 70 years the jews lived there and they raised families and as we know from daniel's story many of them prospered there zahariah was one such he was born to a levitical family in babylon now babylon itself if you remember the history was conquered by the persians uh persians in 539 bc and within two years cyrus who was a king agrees that 50 000 or so jews would be able to return to israel and he allows them to build a temple there in the city sadly due to much opposition to their work the the building work ceased and it's here that really the the the story of zahariah begins in 520 bc work in the temple had been at a standstill for something like 16 years so the lord had uh haggai and zahariah sent to jerusalem to encourage the people in a bit of spiritual renewal and motting them motivating them to to rebuild the temple by revealing to them his plans for israel's future such was the encouragement from haggai in zahariah in 515 bc that the reconstruction of the temple was completed in 520. how we need encouragers in our own day in our own generation to encourage the people of god that he is still looking for a people who will follow and serve him in this world of ours after the last months where many have been able to gather together we need people to inspire and encourage the church again as we go into a new year to be willing to be used of god to rebuild his church and to make it more effective across the land and across the world zahariah encourages the jews to forsake their ancestors ways in that they the ancestors had not given heed to god in the way they should and that reminds me of a devastating statement that jesus made after the healing at the pool of bethesda on the sabbath the healing troubled so many of the jewish leaders on that day because it was on the sabbath and they wanted to be rid of jesus and he said to them these were people learned in the scriptures you search the scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life and these are they which testify of me the scriptures they had of course was the old testament as we call it but this is the devastating verse but you are not willing to come to me to have life you are not willing to come to me that you may have life would we have such people today who are not willing to come to jesus people may be well read in their scriptures they may have many of the answers that the scripture provides but they don't have that personal relationship with the lord jesus christ are you willing to come to jesus today to have life the people of jerusalem and judah in that time wanted to do as they pleased as a human condition it's called sin and god wanted to step in between the people and their sin as he does today through jesus christ and his righteousness now god uses a variety of ways to reach people in every generation and today people are turning to god through through messages aired on satellite on tv and radio through the internet many many in the muslim lands are hearing the gospel being preached week by week and day by day over satellite and many are coming to faith in christ jesus praise be to god in zahariah's day it was very different of course messages came from god through visions and in fact in this chapter he's he's given eight prophetic visions for israel and in each one there's a description of the things seen and zahariah is asking what do they mean this follows is followed by an explanation by an angel god's anger had risen against the nation for he says in chapter 1 and verse 14 i am very jealous for jerusalem and zion i am very angry with the nations that feel secure i was only a little angry but they went too far with the punishment even with jerusalem's walls still broken and unrepaired the lord is promising to gather his people from the nations he's promising to be their personal protector shout and be glad daughter of sion in chapter 2 for i am coming and i will live among you declares the lord we see here in these verses the depth of the love of god for his people and let me tell you this his love for his people is not diminished one iota and god is calling our people today from every tribe and tongue and nation across the world including the jewish people the apple of his eye and the lord has lost none of those he loves and he's still bringing people into a relationship with himself the jewish people in the world because of the jewish people in the world because of their because they are still the apple of his eye but how that people have suffered because of their rejection of him in fact many nations in the world are

suffering today because of their turning away from god and god today afresh is calling humanity to himself are you hearing his call maybe at one time it was a distant call but that call is getting closer to you and you want to find out more about god your ears are being made more attentive maybe when you hear the word of god being read and explained and preached you're more attentive to it more willing to listen maybe it's because of the experiences you have had in life but life experiences can drive us to god can make us stronger so as we move on in the story we will move from outside of the city into the temple courts where we see joshua as high priest joshua here represents the people of israel and he is here being accused by satan of sin that's satan saying to israel you're sin you're you don't deserve anything that is depicted by his filthy clothes here and here joshua has given clean clothes fine garments to wear once forgiven and cleansed the angel instructs joshua and starts the nation of israel if you walk in obedience to me and my and keep my requirements then you will govern my house and i've charged my courts and i will give you a place among the standing here israel his people were to remain clean

they were to guard the temple from idolatry and from religious defilement before having access into his nearer present and all of this was symbolic of the things to come but because he says then i'm going to bring my servant the branch i wonder who this was the stone and i will remove the sin of this land in a single day that branch of course is a promise of messiah who will reinstate the throne of david in the future days and acts 15 in the new testament quotes amos 9 11 and 12 after this i will return and i will rebuild the tabernacle of david which has fallen down i will rebuild his ruins i will set it up so that the rest of mankind may seek the lord even all the gentiles who are called by my name says the lord who does all these things the stone is symbolic of the messiah's rule rule rule as judge against gentile nations who continue to disobey him but there's a promise of prosperity and peace for the gentiles as well in chapter 3 and verse 10 it says in that day each of you will invite your neighbor and sit under your vine and fig tree declares the lord almighty so we see here the branch and the stone and the temple all point beyond zechariah's own day then in chapter 4 we see that strange vision which we read earlier on it's a lampstand it's made of solid gold and its light is provided by oil fed from two olive trees on either side and puzzled so i asked the angel the meaning of the vision and instead of answering his question directly the angels ask zechariah if he knew what they were and we see here there's a heightening of attention for for for hezekiah it's as if it's zechariah's responsibility to search out the meaning he's expect as if he's expected as if he's expected to work for it in this dialogue between zechariah and the angel we see the importance god gives to the human process we see throughout this prophecy how our actions our prayers and even our measure of understanding all works to go towards towards what we do in and for the lord's kingdom in a sense zechariah's failure to understand gives encouragement to people like ourselves when we're unable to figure things out when we read the word of god and then the angel comes to him with the answer words that many of us will know and have repeated but do they really under do we really understand what they mean and even though we have used them so he said to me this is the word of the god to his serenity is not by power but by my spirit says the lord almighty what this really means is quite simply this serenity was not to put his hope in the political or military might of persia nor in the financial power of his own people this was not the the way forward for the lord's people the challenges they face can only be overcome with the lord's help actually through the power of the holy spirit who has always been active

[20 : 17] for the lord's people had the spirit of god not led them out of egypt into the promised land and now out of babylon is it not he who is building the church of jesus christ today is it not he who gives new rebirth and newness of life is it not he he gives success to to people and for people to come to him alone as they look to him for help and resources and today we need to be comforted in many ways from the seemingly impossible situations in which we find ourselves in and here in this case they couldn't see how jerusalem because of opposition could be rebuilt the psalmist says in psalm 127 unless the lord builds a house the laborer builds in vain serubal serubal people will find that the threats of the enemies are nullified by the power of the lord god almighty and while the temple is being built by human hands it's rebuilding is ultimately the work of the lord of hosts the lord's church the lord's church after the pandemic ultimately it will be in and through god working in and through us are we game are we willing to to be his workers and verse 10 says who dares despise the day of small things we may be learning a lot about ourselves in this in this time of crisis through the nations and we see it as a day of small things in the church and god says who dares despise the day of small things since the seven eyes of the lord that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of when he sees his church being built in in

in this context here those who despise the day of small things describes those who are doubtful that the temple and the walls of jerusalem could ever be brought into use the phrase the day of small things probably reflects the slow progress of the rebuilding of the temple and the city and the community of course we we hear the the phrase rome wasn't built in a day and neither was the temple or the city of jerusalem so what was happening and saharai's day was was was very small in comparison to what would happen happen in the future in the building of the temple of god's people you and me think of think of the church of jesus christ today throughout the world think of all that has been done all the many millions countless millions worshiping him this morning those who have said and who are saying that the finish the church is finished will be proved wrong why because the lord himself is building his church and even the gates of hell will not prevail against it

there had been a despondency amongst the returned community eternity when they considered the enormity of the task that was before them in that day they wanted to see it done but how on earth could they finish it they had failed to grasp that this was the work of the lord and that the project could be successfully completed and about ourselves we're maybe in a similar position the church isn't a difficult place today but with the lord's help in the days to come the church of the lord jesus christ will flourish and then finally just very briefly then zachariah wanted to find out about the olive trees in verse 11 then i asked the angel what are these two olive trees on the right on the left of the lampstand again i asked him what are these two olive trees all the branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil and the answer that he was given was that the two who have been anointed refers to joshua and serubbabel the priest and the king and this is representing the role of the messiah who is priest and king of israel and he would supply in the one person the light to the nation i am the light of the world jesus said so the message of chapter 4 is that amidst all the difficulties of rebuilding the community and the temple and the walls in jerusalem the lord was there in the midst to sustain his people through spirit and through spirit-filled leaders like joshua and serubbabel and do you not think and know that the lord is within his church here today and he is in the process of building it for a better tomorrow so this message was relevant to israel way back then some two and a half thousand years ago or so it is specific to the church and relevant to the church in general as the church continues to function in a culture of prayers and a greater encouragement for all may we be encouraged that as the lord was with uh zachariah and serubbabel and joshua that he is with us too in these days and that with his help his church will continue to be rebuilt here in the city throughout the nation and through the world amen and may the lord bless to us these thoughts from his holy word this morning i want to sing in close you