

Rebuild the Ruined Temple!



Text: Zechariah 4:1-9
Korean Hope Presbyterian Church
Lord's Day Worship — April 19, 2026
Rev. Sung J. Kim

Scripture Reading: Zechariah 4:1-9 (ESV)

1. And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep.
2. 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.
3. And there are two olive trees by it. one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left."
4. And I said to the anael who talked with me. "What are these. mv lord?"
5. Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said. "No. mv lord."
6. Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by mv Spirit. sava the LORD of hosts.
7. 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. arace to it!'"
8. Then the word of the LORD came to me. savina.
9. "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."

<Introduction>

Hallelujah!

Following the order of our Reading Jesus series, today we come to a message about the period of exile, the captivity. Last Lord's Day, we looked at 1 Chronicles 29 and saw how King David, that great worshiper, with what kind of heart he prepared everything for the temple construction until the very last moments of his life — the temple he himself could not build because he had shed too much blood — so that his son Solomon could carry out the work.

He had three kinds of heart: **(1)** a joyful heart, **(2)** an upright *yashar* heart, and **(3)** a devoted *shalom* heart.

With such a precious worshiper's heart, David prepared everything for the temple according to God's blueprint, one by one. But sadly, after King Solomon actually completed the temple, perhaps thinking "it is all accomplished now," the temple remained only on the outside. Inside, David's precious heart could hardly be found, and even the posture of a true worshiper became difficult to see. Israel gradually fell into being a temple in name only.

Religious activities took place in the temple every day, yes — but when it came to the worshiper's heart and posture that God truly desired, the one David had shown, Israel was very far from it.

Then the one nation of Israel was split in two, into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Here and there, good kings like Josiah carried out major temple repairs, and God kept sending the prophets like Jeremiah saying, "Return to me!" But Israel, far from repenting, far from falling flat on the ground as true worshipers, moved in an entirely different direction from David and drifted further and further from God.

In the end, because of their sin, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was first destroyed by Assyria in 722 BC. Then the Southern Kingdom of Judah was also conquered by Babylon in 586 BC, and Solomon's once-magnificent temple was completely burned to the ground. They were taken as captives into exile — and this is what we call the exilic period, the period of captivity.

As I meditate on this scene — how the Jerusalem temple itself vanished in an instant because of their unbelief — I keep thinking that God pressed a kind of "Reset" button upon Israel.

You know, when you press the "Reset" button, everything goes back to the factory's original state.

That Jerusalem temple had drifted so far from David's original worshiper's heart, heading in all the wrong directions, only kept up on the outside. Even though a few good kings tried to reform it according to God's Word, true worship was never truly restored inside it. And so our God used Babylon as His instrument to wipe it all away, leaving nothing — so that His people could go back to the very beginning and start the true temple construction from scratch within themselves. That's why I say it looks like God pressed a "Reset" button.

But here is one crucial thing we must not misunderstand! This Reset was absolutely not God abandoning Israel and erasing everything. On the contrary, even during this exilic period, God's covenant was very much alive. Through Jeremiah 31, He even proclaimed the deeper promise: "I will make a new covenant with you." So this Reset was not merely a factory reset that sends you back to the past. Ultimately, it was God's sovereign grace — drawing His people one step closer to the greater, true temple: **Jesus Christ**, the true temple. Hallelujah!

In this way, 70 years of exile somehow passed, and finally the day came when they could return home and rebuild God's temple — a truly remarkable event unfolded before them.

Even mighty Babylon — well, worldly glory never lasts forever — was toppled by the rising superpower, the Medes and Persians, that is, Persia. And then Cyrus, king of Persia, issued this decree. Let's read Ezra 1:1-3 together:

"In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, (1) that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. (2) Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel — he is the God who is in Jerusalem.'" (Ezra 1:1-3)

⇒ **Rebuild the Ruined Temple!**

(1) You who have returned to Judah and Jerusalem by God's sovereign grace, His own people!

(2) Rebuild the ruined temple! (Restoration of faith! Restoration of the church! Restoration of worship!)

Look at verse (1): in all of this history, who is the true subject, who is the sovereign Lord of all — God proclaims this clearly even through the mouth of Cyrus, the most powerful pagan king of his day:

"that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled..."

King Cyrus of Persia is merely a channel through which the LORD works. God even stirred up Cyrus's heart so that he would issue a decree to the entire world!

Then verse (2): "Whoever is among you of all His people, let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel!"

The two points at the bottom:

(1) You who have returned to Judah and Jerusalem by God's sovereign grace, His own people!

(2) Rebuild the ruined temple!

The prophet who proclaimed God's word to these people of Judah — who had returned to their homeland of Jerusalem after 70 years with this precious purpose — is precisely the prophet of today's text, **Zechariah**, along with **Haggai**.

For us Christians today, when we hear "Rebuild the ruined temple!" — as we saw last Lord's Day — our true temple is first of all Jesus Christ, then His body the church, and then each believer who is a temple of the Holy Spirit. So this command means the restoration of our faith in Jesus Christ, the restoration of the church, and the restoration of worship!

Today, then, through Zechariah's message to the people of Judah who had returned from exile, let us meditate together on how the foundations of the ruined temple must be rebuilt within us as well. For by God's sovereign grace, He has called us too "His own people"! So may we, following the Word, be Reset today! May we be true worshipers — in whom faith in Jesus Christ the true temple is restored, in whom the church is restored, in whom the worship of God's people is truly restored. I pray this blessing upon you all.

Today we will look at two main points.

<Body>

1. Awake to the Chief End of the Saint! (Wake-Up Call)

The first point: "Awake to the chief end of the saint!" — this is a **Wake-Up Call**. Let's first read verses 1 through 3 together:

1. *And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. (Wake Up!)*
2. *And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold..."*
3. *"And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left."*
4. *And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?"*
5. *Then the angel answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord."*

So the passage opens with a Wake-Up Call scene: the angel God sent keeps waking up Zechariah, and Zechariah feels, "*like a man who is awakened out of his sleep.*" This, then, is God's Wake-Up Call: "Wake up! Rise from your sleep!"

It reminds me of when our Lord Jesus kept waking up the disciples who were fast asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane. In any case, Zechariah, now fully awake and alert, gazes at what the angel is showing him.

In verse 2, he sees a "**pure gold lampstand.**"

And in verse 3, next to that golden lampstand, he sees "**two olive trees.**"

So overall, Zechariah is gazing at a picture: a lampstand of pure gold in the center, with two olive trees standing on its right and left.

But!

Zechariah has no idea why God is showing him this vision, or what these images are supposed to mean.

Read verses 4-5 again: "What are these, my lord? What is all this?"

The angel turns around and asks him back: "Do you not know what these are? Do you really not know what these mean, what God is saying to you through them? Really?"

But Zechariah still doesn't know. "No, my lord, I do not know."

Later in verse 13, the exact same scene from verse 5 appears again — and there too, Zechariah still does not know.

When God, through the angel, asks twice, "*Do you not know what these are?*" — this is because there is something Zechariah should have known all along, but which he had somehow completely forgotten, as though living in deep sleep, not knowing, going about life having buried it all in forgetfulness. That's why God speaks this way.

God is calling Zechariah: "Wake up!"

This condition — forgetting what you should know and just going through life — is not only Zechariah's. If Zechariah the prophet is like this, then the entire returned people of Judah must be exactly this same Zechariah!

"What are these, my lord? My lord, I do not know."

So what is the pure gold lampstand? And what are the two olive trees? Why is God showing them to Zechariah now? Let's read 2 Chronicles 4:19-20 and Exodus 27:20:

"And Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of God: the golden altar, the tables for the bread of the Presence, the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold to burn before the inner sanctuary, as prescribed." (2 Chron. 4:19-20) — Restoration of the temple!

"You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn." (Ex. 27:20) — Restoration of the temple!

"In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: 'Thus says the LORD

of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.' Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, 'Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?'" (Hag. 1:1-4) — Restoration of faith! Restoration of the church! Restoration of worship!

The 2 Chronicles passage describes the scene when King Solomon first built and completed God's temple. And notice: right before the inner sanctuary (the Most Holy Place) stood this **pure gold lampstand**.

In fact, not just during Solomon's temple, but even back in the days of the Exodus, this pure gold lampstand was always placed right before the Most Holy Place inside the tabernacle. So when God keeps showing Zechariah this pure gold lampstand, He is speaking of the very thing they keep forgetting: the **restoration of the temple!**

And the oil used to keep the lamp constantly burning on that pure gold lampstand was not just any oil. It had to be "**pure beaten oil from olive trees.**"

The two olive trees in today's passage refer, in the first place, to Zerubbabel the leader of the returned Judeans and Joshua the high priest. But ultimately they represent the house of God that must be rebuilt through these two men. Once again, God is speaking of the restoration of the temple!

Later in Revelation 1 in the New Testament, when our Lord Jesus reveals to John the restoration of the church, He is pictured walking among the golden lampstands. So throughout the whole Bible, the representative image of "restoration of the temple, restoration of the church, restoration of worship" is precisely this **pure gold lampstand**.

But!

Even though God keeps showing this, "I do not know." If Israel — if a worshiper of God — should know anything, it should be this. This most important thing! Yet they had completely forgotten it, consumed after returning home with the grind of just getting by, having even forgotten why they came back in the first place, having forgotten their true purpose, going about life as though asleep. That is the picture of all the returned people of Judah, represented by Zechariah.

As we saw in the introduction: through King Cyrus, God gave them the clear purpose of **temple restoration** — "Let His people go up to Jerusalem and rebuild the house of the LORD." And by the time of Zechariah, that was already **18 years** ago.

For all those long years, the temple of God had not been rebuilt but remained ruined and desolate. It was at exactly this moment that, through Zechariah, God speaks His "Wake Up!

Rise from sleep! Come to your senses!" And through Haggai, active in the same period, He speaks the same "Wake Up!"

Let's read Haggai 1:1-4 above. What does "paneled house" mean? It refers to a fully built, covered house — walls and roof all properly set up, a "covered house" or "paneled house."

So while the temple of the LORD remained ruined, the people of Judah had first built their own houses fully paneled and covered. For 18 years, they pushed the temple, the restoration of worship, to the back of their minds, saying, "The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD."

To such people, just as in Zechariah's message, God gives this clear Wake-Up Call:

"Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?!"

This very Wake-Up Call of God is ringing today over us Christians as well!

What is the chief end of a saint? Why are you living here? For what purpose, toward what end, are you going through your days?

Our Reformed forefathers arranged the most basic questions and answers of our faith into a catechism — the Westminster Shorter Catechism. And the most important, very first question is about our life's **"true purpose."** Let's read it together:

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

(1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 11:36; Psalm 73:24-26; John 17:22-24)

⇒ **As children of God who truly know the chief end of our life, pressing forward in the restoration of faith, the church, and worship, always glorifying God and living out today in joy — that is the true worshiper!**

"To glorify God" means to give God the weight of glory, the center of gravity, and to live always as worshipers centered on Him.

"To enjoy Him forever" means to live in constant fellowship with God, holding fast to the Lord our eternal living hope, and living this life with joy.

So "whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" — a worshiper's life — is the chief end of God's children, the true purpose of the saint.

Why do we live here? Why did God create me? Why am I breathing and walking this earth right now? May ours never be a life that keeps forgetting this true purpose! May we not spend our days consumed only with earning our living and with building up our own paneled houses — only to stand before the Lord on the day He calls us and say, "I do not know!" — arriving before Him without a clue what our purpose was. God forbid such a foolish life!

Rather, let us respond properly to God's Wake-Up Call today!

As children of God who truly know the chief end of our life, pressing forward in the restoration of faith, the church, and worship, always glorifying God and living centered on Him with joy today — and then when our Lord calls us home, entering into eternal rest and life under the shadow of His wings — may we all be such true worshipers. I earnestly pray this blessing upon you.

2. Lay the Foundation of the Temple by the Lord's Spirit Alone! (Mission Call)

The second point: "Lay the foundation of the temple by the Lord's Spirit alone!" — this is a **Mission Call**, a calling to a mission! Let's read verses 6 and 9 together:

6. 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." (God's sovereignty alone)

9. "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it." (Through our hands)

⇒ **Trusting only in God's sovereignty, fixing our eyes on the Lord who still works through our weak hands, finally living out the time and place He has called us into — as an instrument of the Lord's restoration!**

This man Zerubbabel — sometimes identified with "Sheshbazzar" — was a descendant of the royal house of David still remaining in the Southern Kingdom, the governor of Judah who first led the exiled people back to Jerusalem. With the single purpose of "Rebuild the ruined temple!" he returned home and was now their leader, charged with shepherding the people of Judah somehow. To this Zerubbabel, the very first thing our God says is verse 6:

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit!"

"Not by your strength, not by human power — only by my Spirit."

When God says "my Spirit" here, this "Spirit" is the very same word "**ruach**" — the "breath," the "life-breath" — that God Himself breathed into the nostrils of man when He formed him from dust in Genesis.

So: God's creation, God's life, all of it comes only by God's sovereignty! All of this history is accomplished by the Lord's Spirit alone. This, I believe, is the clear word of God!

But!

Strangely, the way our God works out all these things by His sovereignty alone always looks like verse 9. Again, also a clear word of God. Verse 9:

"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it!"

Even though our almighty God, the one and only Sovereign, is the one who does everything by Himself — yet our God always chooses to work through our weak hands!

In the Old Testament, through the patriarchs, the prophets, His servants — and in the New Testament, through the disciples — He insists on working this way.

The reason? It is never because we are capable of doing this well that He has entrusted it to us. I still struggle; just when things seem to go well, I stumble and fall. We are always foolish and weak. But precisely through that, we come to experience the precious truth more deeply: "Ah, this is not me — it is our God who is doing all of this! Not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God!"

So as we carry out this mission He has entrusted, more than anything else, **I myself** am gradually being refined. He is training and shaping me more and more so that I may be used as a better instrument of God. This, beloved, is our Father's Mission Calling, His most gracious way of calling and commissioning His children. Hallelujah!

The mission Zerubbabel received was by no means easy. With the purpose and mission of "Rebuild the ruined temple!" he had to lead the people of Judah in Jerusalem, but there were many forces — both outside and inside — that obstructed this temple work:

(1) Outside the people of Judah, there were many Gentiles who, after the fall of the Southern Kingdom, had taken root in empty Jerusalem and lived there for 70 years as the established residents. Would they just stand by and watch? Of course, they would fight tooth and nail to obstruct the temple construction.

(2) And inside the people of Judah themselves, as we have already seen, for 18 years they were only consumed with their own livelihoods, busy building their paneled houses, having completely forgotten the purpose of temple restoration.

So in this difficult situation, both outside and inside, Zerubbabel the leader had to fulfill his calling — and it was constantly hard.

At first, Zerubbabel surely poured in quite a lot of his own strength and power. That's exactly why God says first of all, "Not by might, nor by power." Over those 18 years, he must have tried everything, expended all his strength and ability to get the people to rebuild the temple — persuading them, pushing them, attempting various strategies. But nothing worked.

Perhaps Zerubbabel himself had grown weary, and even within himself the heart for temple construction, for temple restoration, was gradually fading. "No matter how hard we try, it doesn't work. This seems impossible." Maybe he had fallen into resignation.

But precisely then! To this leader Zerubbabel, our God Himself speaks:

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit!"

"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it!"

"It is not by your strength, not by your power — by my Spirit alone, by my sovereignty, I will accomplish all of this! Yet I will surely work through your hands! Weak though you are, though you keep failing, I will work through you! Your hands laid the foundation of this house, and your hands will also complete the work! I have entrusted this home, this church to your hands, so through your hands I will finally bring about the restoration of this home, the restoration of this church!"

This, I am certain, is our Father's Mission Calling — calling us who are weak, entrusting mission to us, and breathing His own Spirit into us!

So before the Mission Calling He has placed in each of our own stations, remember these two words today:

(1) "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit!"

(2) "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it!"

I've said it before: it's absolutely not because I can do it well that God gave me the calling of being Deborah and Evan's father! It is because through this mission I am gradually being refined more beautifully! Because through this mission — since I cannot do it on my own — I come to cling to God all the more! That is why He has called me to this place.

So, trusting only in God's sovereignty, fixing your eyes on the Lord who still works through our weak hands, and finally living out the time and place He has called us into as an instrument of the Lord's restoration — may this be true of you and me. I earnestly pray this blessing upon all of you.

<Conclusion>

Today we looked at the message, "Rebuild the ruined temple!" Shall we summarize in two points?

• **Rebuild the Ruined Temple!**

1. Awake to the Chief End of the Saint! (Wake-Up Call)

→ As children of God who truly know the chief end of our life, pressing forward in the restoration of faith, the church, and worship, always glorifying God and living out today in joy — the true worshiper!

2. Lay the Foundation of the Temple by the Lord's Spirit Alone! (Mission Call)

→ Trusting only in God's sovereignty, fixing our eyes on the Lord who still works through our weak hands, finally living out the time and place He has called us into — an instrument of the Lord's restoration!

May you and I all be such true worshipers and people of mission. I earnestly pray this blessing upon you.

<Response Hymn: "The Grace of God">