

Zechariah 4:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me,
as a man that is wakened out of his sleep,

Analysis

And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. This verse marks the transition to Zechariah's fifth vision—the golden lampstand with olive trees. The phrase *vayashav hamal'akh haddover bi* (וַיָּשָׁב הַמַּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי, "and returned the angel who was speaking with me") indicates the interpreting angel's return, suggesting a pause between the fourth vision (Joshua's cleansing, chapter 3) and this one. The angel's action—**waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep** (*vaye'ireni ke-ish asher ye'or mishnatho*, וַיַּעֲרֵנִי כְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-יָעוֹר מִשְׁנָתוֹ)—doesn't necessarily mean Zechariah was physically asleep but that he needed spiritual awakening or renewed attentiveness for what would follow.

The verb *ur* (עוֹר, to awake, rouse) appears throughout Scripture describing both physical waking and spiritual awakening. The comparison "as a man wakened out of his sleep" emphasizes the prophet's need for divine enablement to perceive spiritual realities. Natural human faculties cannot apprehend divine revelation without God's awakening work. This parallels Paul's teaching that spiritual truths require spiritual discernment: "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The angel's role as awakener demonstrates that revelation requires both divine initiative (the vision) and divine enablement (awakening to understand). This principle extends to all Scripture reading: unless the Spirit opens eyes to see, the Word remains closed (Luke 24:45; 2 Corinthians 3:14-16). The verse reminds us

that prophetic vision—and by extension, all understanding of God's Word—depends entirely on God's gracious work to awaken spiritually dull hearts.

Historical Context

This vision came during the post-exilic period (520 BC) when returned exiles struggled with discouragement over the temple rebuilding. The series of eight night visions (Zechariah 1-6) provided supernatural encouragement, assuring the community that God was actively working to accomplish His purposes despite visible obstacles. The visions came over a single night or short period, requiring the prophet to maintain spiritual alertness across multiple revelatory experiences.

The image of being awakened recalls other prophetic experiences where God roused prophets to attentiveness. Isaiah received his commission after a vision that awakened him to God's holiness and his own sinfulness (Isaiah 6:1-8). Ezekiel experienced the Spirit lifting and moving him to receive visions (Ezekiel 3:12-14). Daniel required angelic strengthening to endure his visions (Daniel 10:8-19). These patterns establish that receiving divine revelation is not passive entertainment but requires active, Spirit-enabled engagement.

The early church understood spiritual awakening as essential for Christian life. Paul commanded: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14). The Reformation's emphasis on illumination—the Spirit's work making Scripture clear and effective—built on this principle. Puritan preachers stressed the necessity of prayer for spiritual awakening before Scripture reading, recognizing human inability to understand divine truth without God's awakening grace.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What practices help you cultivate spiritual wakefulness and attentiveness to God's Word rather than reading Scripture in a spiritually drowsy state?
2. How does recognizing that the angel had to 'wake' Zechariah humble your approach to Bible study and dependence on the Spirit's illumination?
3. In what areas of your spiritual life do you need God to awaken you from sleepy complacency or dullness to His purposes?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּשָׁב	הַמַּלְאָךְ	הַדֹּבֵר	בִּי	יָעַר	כְּאִישׁ
with me came again	And the angel	that talked	H0	and waked	me as a man
H7725	H4397	H1696		H5782	H376
אֲשֶׁר	יָעַר	מִשְׁנֵתוֹ:			
H834	and waked	out of his sleep			
	H5782	H8142			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 31:26 (Parallel theme): Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

Zechariah 1:9 (Parallel theme): Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.

Daniel 8:18 (Parallel theme): Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.

Zechariah 1:13 (Parallel theme): And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.

Zechariah 1:19 (Parallel theme): And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

Luke 9:32 (Parallel theme): But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

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