

Zechariah 4:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?

Analysis

And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?—Zechariah's second question probes deeper. Not satisfied with understanding the trees generally, he asks specifically about the shibbolē hazzētīm (שִׁבּוֹלֵי הַזַּיִתִּים, 'olive branches/clusters'), the fruit-bearing portions. The shənē tsantērōt hazzāhāb (שְׁנֵי צִנְתָּרוֹת הַזָּהָב, 'two golden pipes/spouts') channel oil from branches directly to lampstand.

The verb hamerikīm mē'ālēhem et-hazzāhāb (הִמְרִיקִים מֵעֲלֵיהֶם אֶת־הַזָּהָב, 'emptying from themselves the golden [oil]') depicts active pouring out—the branches don't hoard oil but continuously dispense it. 'Golden oil' emphasizes purity and value. The vision's mechanics matter: not just that oil exists, but HOW it flows—directly from source (olive trees) through channels (golden pipes) to receiver (lampstand). This pictures how God's Spirit flows through anointed servants (Joshua and Zerubbabel, then ultimately Christ the Priest-King) to empower God's people for light-bearing witness. The self-emptying branches foreshadow Christ who 'emptied himself' (Philippians 2:7, ekenōsen) to supply life to His body the Church. Ministry requires self-expenditure, pouring out anointing to others.

Historical Context

The vision encouraged the post-exilic community that God had provided Spirit-anointed leaders (Joshua and Zerubbabel) through whom divine enablement flowed. They weren't resourceless orphans but recipients of golden oil channeled through God's appointed servants. The Church continues to receive Spirit-anointing through Christ and His under-shepherds who expend themselves in service (2 Corinthians 12:15).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does the 'emptying' of golden oil from the branches teach about servant leadership?
2. How do the 'golden pipes' represent the means and channels God uses to supply His Spirit to His people?
3. In what ways are you called to be a 'golden pipe' channeling God's anointing to others rather than a reservoir?

Interlinear Text

וַאֲנִי עָנָה	שֵׁנִי יֵת	וַאֲמַר	אֵלַי	מֵה	שְׁנֵי	שֻׁבֵּלֵי	הַזֵּיתִים
And I answered	again	and said	H413	H4100	the two	branches	olive
H6030	H8145	H559			H8147	H7641	H2132
אֲשֶׁר	בִּדְ	שְׁנֵי	צְנִתָּר	וְהָזָבִ:	הַמְּרִיקִים	מְעֵלִיָּהֶם	
H834	which through	the two	pipes	golden	empty		H5921
	H3027	H8147	H6804	H2091	H7324		

וְהָזָבִ:

golden

H2091

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 11:4 (Parallel theme): These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

Matthew 20:23 (Parallel theme): And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.