

Zechariah 4:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

Analysis

And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be?—The angel's mild rebuke: *hālō' yāda'tā māl-'ēlleh* (הֲלֹא יָדַעְתָּ מַה־עֲלֵי, 'Do you not know what these are?'). The question implies Zechariah should have discerned the symbolism from previous revelation or the vision's internal logic. Yet there's no harshness—the angel proceeds to explain. This gentle correction teaches that while God reveals truth, He also expects us to meditate on revelation, connecting scriptural dots rather than demanding instant explanations for everything.

And I said, No, my lord—Zechariah's humble honesty: *lō' 'ādōnī* (לֹא אֲדֹנָי, 'No, my lord'). He doesn't pretend comprehension but admits need for instruction. The address 'my lord' ('*ādōnī*') shows respect for the interpreting angel as God's authorized spokesman. This models proper response to Scripture: earnest inquiry, willingness to admit ignorance, and submission to revealed explanation rather than imposing our interpretations. The exchange demonstrates the balance between human responsibility to study Scripture carefully and humble dependence on divine illumination. 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God' (James 1:5)—but asking requires first admitting we don't know. Zechariah's 'No, my lord' is more spiritual than false confidence.

Historical Context

Apocalyptic visions like Zechariah's (and Daniel's, Ezekiel's, and John's Revelation) intentionally use symbolism requiring interpretation. The visions aren't self-evident

but demand both meditation and divine explanation. This forces dependence on God while also stimulating careful thought. The pattern continues in Jesus's parables—obscure enough to require seeking, clear enough to reward the seeker (Matthew 13:10-17).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. When has admitting 'I don't know' led to deeper spiritual understanding than pretending comprehension?
2. How do you balance careful study of Scripture with humble dependence on the Spirit's illumination?
3. Why might God sometimes expect us to discern meaning ('Knowest thou not?') before providing direct explanation?

Interlinear Text

וַאֲמַר ר	אֵלַי	וַאֲמַר ר	הֲלֹא	יָדָעְתָּ	מָה	אֵלֶּה
And he answered	H413	And he answered	H3808	Knowest	H4100	H428
H559		H559		H3045		
וַאֲמַר ר	לֹא	אֲדָנִי:				
And he answered	H3808	No my lord				
H559		H113				

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 4:5 (References Lord): Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

