

# Zechariah 4:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

## Analysis

**Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.** The angel's counter-question halo yada'ta mah-hennah elleh (הֲלוֹא תִּדְעַת מַה-הִנֵּה אֶלְهָ, "do you not know what these are?") might seem to rebuke ignorance, but more likely serves pedagogical purposes—heightening anticipation before the explanation and emphasizing the vision's importance. The question format "do you not know?" doesn't assume Zechariah should already know but underscores how crucial the following revelation will be.

Zechariah's honest response—**No, my lord** (lo adoni, לא אַדְנִי)—demonstrates humility and teachability. He doesn't pretend understanding or offer speculative guesses. This models appropriate response when confronted with spiritual realities beyond natural comprehension. Jesus commended such humility: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25). God reveals truth to the humble who acknowledge their need, not to the proud who presume knowledge (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

The exchange also demonstrates that revelation is gift, not achievement. Zechariah cannot deduce the vision's meaning through natural intelligence or prophetic experience—he requires divine explanation. This establishes a crucial principle: understanding God's Word depends on God's gracious self-disclosure, not human intellectual capacity. Paul writes that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1

Corinthians 1:25) and that spiritual wisdom comes through the Spirit's teaching, not worldly wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6-13). No amount of study substitutes for the Spirit's illumination.

## Historical Context

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The dialogue between prophet and angel appears frequently in post-exilic prophecy (Zechariah, Daniel) and apocalyptic literature. This pedagogical method—vision followed by question and answer—ensured accurate transmission of divine revelation. The angel's role as interpreter prevented Zechariah from misunderstanding or misrepresenting the vision's meaning to the people.

In the immediate historical context, the returned exiles needed clear divine guidance. They faced opposition, discouragement, and questions about whether God's purposes would prevail. Zechariah couldn't lead based on ambiguous symbols—he needed explicit interpretation. God's provision of the interpreting angel demonstrated His commitment to clear communication with His people, ensuring they understood His plans for the temple and the community.

Christian tradition has valued the humility modeled here. Augustine's famous principle "faith seeking understanding" emphasized that believers begin with humble faith, not prideful claims to comprehension. The medieval scholastics' *quaestio* method (question and answer) drew from this pattern. Reformed catechisms used question-answer format to teach doctrine systematically. The practice acknowledges that learning divine truth requires both divine revelation (God speaking through Scripture) and divine illumination (the Spirit teaching our hearts).

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. When confronted with confusing Scripture passages, do you respond with Zechariah's humble 'No, my lord' or with presumptuous speculation?
2. How does recognizing that understanding spiritual truth is God's gift rather than human achievement shape your approach to Bible study and prayer?
3. What might it look like practically to cultivate the teachable humility that Jesus commends as childlike faith?

## Interlinear Text

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בְּלֹא אָלָי יָאמֵר רַבִּי  
with me answered Then the angel that talked and said  
H6030 H4397 H1696 H0 H559 H413 H3808

לֹא יָאמֵר רַבִּי אָדָני  
unto me Knowest and said No my lord  
H3045 H4100 H1992 H428 H559 H3808 H113

## Additional Cross-References

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**Zechariah 4:13** (References Lord): And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

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