

Zechariah 6:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me,
What are these, my lord?

Analysis

Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? Zechariah's humble question demonstrates proper response to divine revelation. The prophet doesn't presume to understand symbolic visions independently but seeks interpretation from the revealing angel. The address adoni (אֲדֹנִי, my lord) shows reverence—Zechariah recognizes the angel as God's authorized representative.

This pattern repeats throughout Zechariah's visions: God reveals mysterious symbols, the prophet asks for explanation, and the interpreting angel provides understanding. This pedagogical approach teaches that Scripture's meaning isn't always self-evident—divine revelation requires divine interpretation. Human wisdom cannot penetrate prophetic mysteries without God's illuminating Spirit.

Zechariah's question contrasts with presumptuous interpretation that imposes human categories on divine revelation. He waits for God's explanation rather than speculating. This models humility before Scripture—we should seek God's meaning, not impose our preconceptions. The Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture must also illuminate its meaning (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern prophecy often involved symbolic visions requiring interpretation. Daniel's visions followed similar patterns—mysterious symbols

explained by angelic interpreters (Daniel 7-12). This interpretive framework protected against misunderstanding while ensuring prophets grasped God's intended meaning.

Post-exilic prophecy increasingly featured angelic mediators, perhaps emphasizing God's transcendence after the exile. While pre-exilic prophets often heard God's voice directly, post-exilic prophets like Zechariah typically received revelation through angelic intermediaries. This doesn't diminish prophetic authority—the angels speak God's word—but highlights appropriate reverence before the Holy One.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Zechariah's humble inquiry for interpretation model the attitude you should bring to difficult biblical passages?
2. What does the pattern of vision-plus-interpretation teach about the necessity of relying on the Holy Spirit to understand Scripture?
3. When you encounter mysterious biblical symbols or prophecies, do you wait for God's illumination or rush to your own interpretations?

Interlinear Text

אֶלְهָ מֶה בָּרְאָתָּה
Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me What are these my lord
H6030 H413 H4397 H1696 H0 H4100 H428

אֶלְהָ מֶה בָּרְאָתָּה
with me What are these my lord
H113

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 1:9 (References Lord): 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.

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