

The Minor Profits

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

- [0 : 0 0] But before we get underway with our Zechariah study, and we'll be looking at the two trees in Zechariah, which is pretty fascinating content, I want to share an article with you that Don brought in this morning, clipped it from some of it.
- It was written by a lady by the name of Rosemary Johnson. I don't know a thing about her. But I want you to listen carefully to this article because it is indicative of where so very many people are today, particularly those of the younger set. This article is just describing what much of America has morphed into over the last 20 years.
- It's called Embrace Science, Let Go of Myths. The article says, Well, I would just stop right there and say, in many respects, that is true.
- In fact, many of the teachings that have been in place for thousands of years have no basis in reality. Many of them. And they have been adopted by different cults and isms.
- And you read the Bible, in the Old Testament particularly, and you come into the gods of Chemosh and Dagon and Ishtar and Baal, and all of these were false gods.
- [2 : 0 1] They existed way back in the Old Testament. So there's some article, there's some truth to what has been stated so far. But let's move on. With so much scientific knowledge now available, many of us have had to let go of those secure meanings.
- Studying how the universe evolved and the evolutionary process over these past 13 billion years have caused innumerable people to no longer believe in a life hereafter and a judgmental God.
- People are challenged to reach for factual information based on scientific knowledge that now exists.
- Authoritative proclamations, absolute rules regarding morality made by the Catholic Church or other churches should no longer suppress creative thinking based on knowledge available at this time in history.
- And this is, I am confident, a prevailing opinion among a lot of people in our culture today. And I can easily understand how they arrive at that conclusion because there is a consensus out there among this same crowd that what this boils down to is that modern man, through technology, science, innovation, etc., we have finally come to the place where we have outgrown, humanity has outgrown any need for God.
- [3 : 4 8] And this is precisely what a lot of people are embracing. And I want you to understand, because it's important to realize, the practical implications of that kind of thinking.
- For one thing, well, let's just start with something that we're dealing with in a major way in proportions that we've never had to deal with before, and that is suicide.
- It is incredible the number of suicides that are taking place now. And we know many of these are from the military, from guys with PTSD and things like that, and they have not worked through it and have not been able to get on top of it.
- And if you are of the persuasion that there either is no God or there probably is no God, suicide is not that big a deal.

I mean, all you're doing is removing yourself from some present pain and difficulty that you no longer want to cope with. So why not reduce yourself to what is believed to be absolute nothingness?

[5 : 01] It could be pretty attractive. And other things that are going on in our culture, like, for instance, the gender blending, where male or female, you can be whatever it is you declare yourself to be, that too takes on new meaning and new possibilities.

If there is no creator who originally made us male and female and established humanity that way, what's the big deal? And what's the big deal about abortion?

If there is no God who has created life, sustained life, and desires to protect life, what's the big deal about abortion?

It isn't a big deal. And same-sex marriage, what's wrong with that? You see, all of the morals and standards go right out the window when the moral lawgiver no longer exists.

We make our own laws. And this is precisely what's taking place in our culture now. And, you know, the Apostle Paul dealt with this 2,000 years ago when he said that the gospel, when the gospel is preached, it sounds like foolishness to the Greeks, and it's a stumbling block to the Jews.

[6 : 26] And he tells us also there in 1 Corinthians that unregenerate man does not and cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.

They just make no sense at all. And, frankly, this is where we are with much of our culture today. And nobody is saying, well, science is to blame.

But I'll tell you what, a science that is worshipped is to blame. And I'm not anti-science. I'm pro-science. I think we ought to make all of the advancements and all the discovery and all the improvements that we can.

True science is one of humanity's best friends. But if you want to get a real good handle on science, just pick up a textbook on science that was written 10 or 20 years ago.

And you'll find that a number of the positions in that have been repudiated since because we're ever learning. And so this is what we're dealing with in our culture today. And it ought not to surprise us that people take the kind of positions that they do that allows this lady to write this article that she did.

[7 : 43] And be reminded, guys, these people, of course, if you disregard the idea of God, then along with that, you have to, of course, disregard the idea of a devil, of Satan.

Because there certainly can't be a Satan if there is no God. And we are told that Satan blinds the minds. 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 4, that Satan blinds the thinking ability, the cognitive awareness of the unregenerate so that they do not understand and will not receive the gospel.

He blinds the minds of those that believe not. And we need to keep in mind that these people who hold these positions and worship at the altar of science and so on, we need to remind ourselves, as I've often said, they are not the enemy.

They are the captives of the enemy. And they don't even know it. They don't even know it. They haven't got a clue. And they consider us, Christians, they consider us captives to myths and unfounded traditions and superstitions.

And that's where we're coming from as far as they're concerned. So it's something that has existed for a couple of thousand years. And, you know, I've made mention in time past about in our fallenness, that began with our first parents, in our fallenness, their thinking properties and thinking assets were fallen also.

[9 : 31] So that ever since Adam and Eve, we think and reason with a warped intellect. And that allows us to reach some really harebrained conclusions about all kinds of things.

And do you know, keep in mind, the best example of that is in Acts chapter 17, where the Apostle Paul went into the town of Athens, Greece, which was the hotbed of the intelligentsia of Greece.

I mean, this was the territory that produced great minds, Plato's and Aristotle's and men of that thinking caliber and capacity.

And yet they had a statue of a false deity on almost every corner in town. gods that they worshipped. How could people who were that intelligent believe something like that?

Well, it isn't hard when you've got a fallen, warped intellect to reason with. And that's exactly what they had, and it goes all the way back to the Old Testament. And the Jew, the Jew from the beginning had the inside track on reality because they had a revelation from the true God and they were looked upon as an oddity by all of their neighbors because they only had one God.

[11 : 01] They only had one God. Can you imagine that? Poor, stupid, backward people only had one God. And here, their heathen that surrounded them had all of these multiple deities and the goddess of fertility and the god of this and the god of that and all the rest of it.

So, this kind of a dichotomy has existed from time immemorial. We ought not to be surprised. We ought to even expect articles like this.

It should not shock us. It should just remind us this is the kind of product that many modern minds today are turning out. And these people, frankly, are to be pitied.

And they are to be recipients of our compassion because we need to remind ourselves before we came to faith in Christ, we were of the same ilk as they were.

So, okay, before we open that up for discussion which would take the rest of the morning, let's go to Zechariah, if we may please. Zechariah, we're not making much progress.

[12 : 05] We've had a couple of sessions where we didn't even get into the text, but we are now going to be looking at Zechariah chapter 4.

And I want to remind you that this is one of the most prolific books on biblical prophecy. And we will see how it plays out with a number of things in the book of the Revelation when we get a little further along because it is absolutely overflowing with items that will be coming upon this earth in time to come.

So, in Zechariah chapter 4, we read about the golden lampstand and the olive trees. On the surface, it just seems like, what is this? It's very significant, very important, and very prophetic, and we'll try to make the case for it.

Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me as a man who is awakened from his sleep. And he said to me, what do you see?

Now this is a result, this question, of course, is a result of a multitude of visions that Zechariah is given, and they are all regarding the future.

[13 : 27] each of these visions have something of real importance to communicate. However, you need to keep in mind that the vision is something that is seen when the individual is wide awake.

This is not a dream. That's sleeping. The vision is wide awake. It's kind of like the vision that Peter had on the housetop when he saw the sheet let down from heaven. That too was a vision.

This is a vision. And he says, what do you see? And Zechariah says, and I said, I see, and behold, a lampstand, all of gold, with its bowl on the top of it.

Now that's an oddity right there. Because in the typical Jewish menorah that has seven lamps on it, but there is no bowl on the top.

So this is an oddity, if you will. And the bowl on the top we will see is a kind of reservoir. Let's move on now. The lampstand, all of gold, with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it, with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it.

[14 : 51] Now can you vision this in your mind's eye? A lampstand, and by the way, some translations render these candlesticks. They are not candles. These are not candles, and it's too bad that some translations render candles or candlesticks.

These are lamps, and each lamp contained a supply of oil. And the wick, the wick would be inserted into the lamp, and the wick would be lit, and then the wick would draw oil from the reservoir in that lamp.

And there were seven of these lamps with a bowl on the top. Mark? Yeah. So what is the bowl? The bowl is not the reservoir. Well, the bowl is a reservoir.

The bowl is going to feed oil to each of these lamps. There are going to be branches going out from it. And the beauty of it is there are going to be two olive trees that will surface very shortly.

And the olive trees, of course, represent the original supply of oil because we're talking about olive oil. We're not talking about motor oil.

[16 : 09] Okay? This is olive oil. And the olive oil is produced by the olives that grow on the tree. But of course, they have to be processed and the oil pressed out.

But the picture that is being given here literally is that of an endless supply. That's the picture that is being portrayed.

So let's move on. Verse 3. Also, two olive trees. And as I just mentioned, these are the primary source. These are the point of origin for the oils in these trees.

One on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side. Then I answered and said to the angel who was speaking with me, What are these, my Lord?

And I want you to notice the way the word Lord is spelled. It is not assigning deity to this being. It is just recognizing superiority but not deity which would begin with a capital L and this is just a small I here.

[17 : 14] What are these, my Lord? He's recognizing his superiority. And then he answered and said to me, Do you not know what these are? And I said, No, my Lord.

Now he's engaging in conversation here and he is trying to he is trying to really educate Zechariah so they've got a back and forth kind of communication that is going on.

And he answered and said to me, verse 6, This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, Not by might nor by power but by my spirit says the Lord of hosts.

Now this is in conjunction with the responsibility that these two men have and we've already seen earlier in chapter 3, the preceding chapter which is I think the commentary that will set this up that Joshua is the high priest and he represents the spiritual or religious authority of Israel at the time.

And bear in mind guys, this is after the Babylonian captivity. People have returned to land. They're back in the land of Israel now. And the task that is before them for Nehemiah is rebuilding the wall.

[18 : 37] But for Zerubbabel he is instituted, he is installed not as a king because they don't have a king. The last king was Zedekiah, remember? Zerubbabel is installed as the governor.

He's going to represent the political and the civic authority of the land and Joshua the high priest not to be confused with the Joshua that followed Moses, he's dead and off the sea a long time ago.

This Joshua is the high priest is of course a direct descendant of Aaron and he represents the religious authority. And these two constitute the trees that are being pictured here.

They are the trees and one is represented the tree is also representing Judah and Israel and some scholars disagree with this and I don't know that there's any way to prove it but I think these two olive trees are working in concert with Judah and Israel.

This is a divided kingdom remember and the north has already been carried off into Assyria the south has been carried off into Babylon and the northern ten tribes they never did return and by the way they even to this day in the minds of some people are referred to as the lost ten tribes but they are not actually lost they just did not have the return that those had from Babylon and principally the big reason they did and they had to return was because of Jerusalem and the temple and you and I have no idea how significant that is to the nation of Israel and they are told in in Hosea chapter 3 that Israel is going to abide many days without an altar without a sacrifice without a prince all of those things and that's what they are experiencing right now they have none of those things now the time is coming when they will and this is talking about restoring those items in verse 6 he answered and said to me this is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying not by might nor by power but by my spirit says the Lord so what is what is the issue here in the whole context that is being talked about and what it is is simply this it's the rebuilding of the Jewish temple and the reason that that is so significant is because it is the intended dwelling place of deity in the midst of his people you'll recall that originally that was established in the tabernacle but the tabernacle was just a temporary apparatus and they had to break it down carry it through the wilderness and when they got to the land of Israel and were established in Jerusalem then Solomon built the permanent structure which was the temple and that outstripped everything that had ever been built anywhere in the world at that time it was a magnificent structure so that took the place of the tabernacle and then that temple was completely sacked ruined destroyed when Nebuchadnezzar and his troops invaded in 586 and carried them off into captivity they leveled the temple now they are returning after the 70 year captivity some of them about 50,000 of them are returning back to

[22 : 16] Jerusalem and Israel and the temple is in ruins and the wall is in ruins and Nehemiah is charged with the responsibility of rebuilding the walls and the gates and Zerubbabel is charged with the responsibility of rebuilding the temple and the reason that is so significant is because God had already established that it is in the temple and at the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was kept and the mercy seat with the overarching cherubim situated on top of it constituted the lid of the Ark and God said there between the overarching cherubim I will dwell and meet with my people and that was the area into which the high priest went once a year sprinkled blood on the mercy seat went in not without blood for himself and sprinkled the blood and so on and that was

Yom Kippur the day of atonement but Israel is without all of that now they have no temple and God is not dwelling in the midst of them and this is one reason why it was a priority item to get that temple rebuilt because the time of chastening and punishment is over for Israel they've served their time 70 years in Babylon now they're coming back with a fresh start and it is going to be imperative that they get that temple built and that the Lord be there at the center of it and when he says not by might nor by power but by my spirit says the Lord of hosts this is exactly what he's talking about it has to do with the rebuilding of the temple and of the the lights that will be there keep your place in Zechariah and come back if you will to Isaiah 59 for just a moment Isaiah chapter 59 and I'm talking about verse 21 and as for me this is my covenant with them says the Lord my spirit which is upon you and my words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth nor from the mouth of your offspring nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring says the Lord from now and forever and what this has to do with of course is the covenant that God established with Abraham

Isaac and Jacob this was to be permanently ingrained in the minds and the hearts of the children of Israel and when Mary received the angels message announcing the birth of the Messiah she called to mind that God was fulfilling the oath and the covenant that he gave to his ancient people and Zechariah is doing the same thing this is the prophet Zechariah in John's gospel when the angel appeared to Zechariah and said that his wife Elizabeth was going to have a child and that he would be the one who would prepare the way of the Lord and so on and he too referred back to God fulfilling the original covenant that he made with Israel and fellas I just don't think there is any way that we can overemphasize the absolute critical importance of these people the Jewish people and the nation of Israel and I think it is very significant and it is just like God it is just like God to do this to take a real minority of people and accomplish something of enormous significance with them and one reason that he has chosen such a minority with which to do it is that the majority may sit in amazement and ask themselves how can this be these people comprise two tenths of one percent of the world's population they are a bunch of numerical nobodies and that is the whole point it is not by might nor by power but by my spirit saith the Lord this is a

Israel guys Israel is a God thing don't ever forget that Israel is a God thing and the very heart and core and soul of Israel is Israel's Messiah Yeshua Hamashiach that is he is the ultimate the ultimate God thing and he is coming through the vehicle of this disenfranchised people from the world persecuted people from the world going to produce the savior of the world and that is just mind boggling when you stop to think of it let's get back to Zechariah now then we'll open up for some Q&A; verse 7 what are you O great mountain before Zerubbabel you will become a plain and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of grace grace to it and the word of the Lord came to me saying the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house of course they're talking about the temple being rebuilt and his hands will finish it then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you this will be a four year project from the time they begin rebuilding the temple until the time that it's actually built and rededicated it's going to occupy a period of four years and I don't know to what extent to what extent the people in the in the north

Sanballat and his crew who are a thorn in the side of Nehemiah and try to discourage him from building the wall and so on I don't know to what extent they may have been involved in the building of the temple or the discouraging of it but it stands to reason that they probably they probably were for who has devised who has despised the day of small things and the small things that he's talking about here is also going to surface a little later and it's going to be it's going to be plumb bob the plumb bob is simply a weight on a string that is designed to show the straightness of a wall or the lean of the wall or however it is it is it is it is a guide it is something that is used for masons for brick layers cement layers etc to make sure that they are keeping the wall straight the plumb bob is hung and that's going to surface a little bit later so this is the small thing but these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel and that means oh boy things are getting underway we're getting started and people are going to get excited because the plumb line comes out and that only means one thing that the building is going up these are the eyes of the

[30 : 11] Lord which range to and fro throughout the earth then I answered and said to him what are these two olive trees on the right of the lamp stand and on its left and I answered the second time and said to him what are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes which empty the golden oil from themselves so we've got the tree that produces the olives and we've got a conduit that runs from the trees the two golden pipes and they go over and fill this bowl on the top and then the bowl on the top is a reservoir and it fills each of the lamp stands and this of course is providing the adequacy for the supply of oil and what is being talked about here more than anything else he is using a picture of physical light light but he's not illustrating or talking about physical light what's he talking about yeah spiritual light he's talking about the spiritual light that will be provided by who by Israel

God says that he raised up Israel to be a light to the Gentiles and fellas there is nothing in the world that is more important than spiritual light I once was blind but now I see and we're not talking about physical light we're talking about spiritual light nothing is more important than spiritual light because it is that which leads to regeneration when we you've heard the old song I saw the light praise the Lord I saw the light that's exactly what is being talked about here and Israel is to provide this spiritual light for the entire world the problem is and has been almost from the beginning Israel is not that interested Israel is not that involved but the time is coming when they will be and that's what this is all about that's what makes this prophecy it is talking about

Israel being a light to the Gentiles and that's still well in many respects it has come to pass if you're talking about light of different kinds and actually it was the nation of Israel that gave us the Messiah and when he came on the scene who else can you think of who would have the ability to pronounce himself the light of the world I mean good heavens that's quite a statement isn't it I mean it ranks right up there with I am the water of life and he who drinks of the water that I give him shall never thirst again this is all spiritual stuff and even though Israel as a nation is not disseminating spiritual light they provided a Messiah who really does and the time is coming and this is what is going to be so exciting about about the

Jew and about Israel as we move further through Zechariah that Israel is going to get on board and they will be the remnant that will be the blessed of the Lord they will be they will be those of whom Paul is speaking when he says and so all Israel shall be saved it doesn't mean every Jew who's ever lived is going to be saved but it means that that remnant that Zechariah will describe later on in the later chapters of it that remnant will be the ones who will actually witness the coming of the Messiah and when he comes that remnant that I believe will be there in Petra will look upon him whom their ancestors pierced and they will mourn it will be a time of incredible repentance on the part of

Israel that will exist at that time it will be the remnant of Israel and they are those of whom Paul is speaking when he says and so all Israel will be saved and all of those Jews all of the Israelites at the return of Christ will enter the kingdom that Christ will come to establish and that's a little later on that's coming up so when he says in verse 14 that these are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth and they are I believe the context would be Joshua and Zerubbabel they are the principal ones who are heading up this rebuilding and reestablishing of the temple and of Jerusalem in this day so let's open it now for questions comments that you may have Dan where was the ark of the covenant when all this was going on I don't know where it was yeah well I don't know there there are a couple of theories

[36 : 00] I don't know if you've ever heard this one or not but if you want to do some interesting research get on your computer and you can google the ark of the covenant there's something very mysterious and I don't I'm not saying this is where it is I'm not saying that this is the ark but I am saying that there are a lot of people who believe it and I'm talking about Ethiopia and Addis Ababa Ethiopia which of course is located in North Africa I don't know if you are aware of it or not but this is the area by the way from which the Queen of Sheba came originally and it's the area from which the Ethiopian eunuch came when Philip came onto his chariot and led him to Christ he was the treasurer of Ethiopia and there is a facility there is a building in Ethiopia that claims and anybody can make a claim that claims that this building houses the original

Ark of the Covenant and the way it got there is because the Israelites realized that the Babylonians were coming and that they were invading and they snuck the Ark out by night and carried it all the way to Ethiopia where there were descendants of Candace and the Ethiopians and the Queen of Sheba descendants of hers she had been involved with Solomon and I don't know about the story about that but at any rate the idea is that they took the Ark of the Covenant there in Ethiopia for safe keeping and it remains there to this day so it is supposedly situated in a building there that has one man whose responsibility it is to oversee and guard the Ark of the

Covenant he never leaves the building for his entire life he never leaves the building and when he dies he is replaced by another man who assumes the same responsibility and the difficulty the only difficulty that I have with it is that they will not allow anyone any investigator in to examine the Ark to look at the Ark to authenticate the Ark and yet they insist that this is the real thing and we've got it and we're not going to share it or show it to anybody and one would wonder if it is not true what possible motive would they have in doing that nobody knows I'm not saying that it is the real Ark and that it is there there are reports that it has been in other places but we just don't know so anyway it's a fascinating concept so they didn't take it when Nehemiah rebuilt the temple they didn't bring it back no they didn't have it to bring back if what we say is true now it's very likely that it was spirited away

Babylonians defeated Jerusalem they looted the temple and they took all of the gold the lampstands the table of showbread all of those things they didn't take the Ark of the Covenant because it wasn't there but they took all of those things and carried them to Babylon and they put them on display there because this was to the victors belong the spoil and they showed off those things so and what they intended all of those things to prove was the god of the Babylonians is bigger and stronger than the god of the Hebrews and that's why we beat them because our god is bigger than their god that was their thinking and by the way if you look at in and you can see this by the way you can get a picture of it I'm sure you could just there is a ball relief of individuals carrying items that are depicted up on the face of that huge ark that goes over there and what it is depicting is men who are carrying items of furniture from the

Jewish ark where they looted it after Titus the Roman general sacked Jerusalem burned the city and everything they took all of those items carried them off to Rome and they put a picture of them up there and you can see them today you can see them online and the ark of course is still there and the items are there and you can see people carrying things in there the items of furniture and so on so it's a fascinating thing thing other concluded and next week we'll take up the four chariots in chapter six