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# **Zerubbabel: A Type of Christ**

**(Part 2)**

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**Series: Little Known Legends**



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**INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO**

# Zerubbabel: A Type of Christ

## (Part 2)

From out of the shadows, he came. A nation in distress was in need of a faithful man whose convictions were uncompromising and whose courage would leave an indelible imprint on the pages of Scripture. As always, when the moment of truth arrived, God had such a man. Often they are not the most visible heroes of their day. Often their names do not go down in the annals of history as men and women who changed the world, but they should. For it is the inner strength in the lives of these little-known legends which usually makes the difference when the spiritual warfare reaches a fevered pitch.

We are, you recall, in the midst of a study of one such man. His name is Zerubbabel. More than 150 years before his birth, God prophesied through the prophet Isaiah that an unbelieving king named Cyrus would be raised up to set God's people free to return to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon, rebuild their temple, and begin again to worship their God in their own country.

The key man in God's plan, however, wasn't Cyrus. He was to be the vessel He used to set them free and set them on their way. The man He chose to lead them out of Babylon, and to lead them in the rebuilding of the altar of God, and finally the temple of God was a man named Zerubbabel.

At last the time arrived. An entire nation was free to go home. Those who chose not to go were to give generously to help support those who would leave. And so by the thousands, the Jews gathered up their children, their belongings, and their dreams, and they set out on the journey back to the land that Jehovah, their God, had given them to inhabit. For 70 years they had been a displaced people. Now they were going home.

King Cyrus, whose heart was definitely in the hand of the real King, turned over to Zerubbabel and Jeshua the Priest, more than 5,000 articles from the temple in Jerusalem that had been stolen by King Nebuchadnezzar a generation before. Laden with

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these treasures of worship, they proceeded not only to return to their homeland, but to first rebuild the altar of God, and then to rebuild the temple itself.

Once in the land, the people, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, rebuilt the altar and began to celebrate the feasts once again. Then they proceeded to lay the foundation for the temple itself. A combination of weeping mixed with rejoicing filled the air as the nation fell down before God, singing, “He is good; His love to Israel endures forever.”

Their celebrations, however, were short-lived. For their enemies, upon hearing that the nation was once again in the land and rebuilding the temple, began a program of intervention, lest the nation rise to its former power. They tried to participate in the project, but Zerubbabel refused. Then they began to harass the Israelites who were working on the temple. They even hired paid agitators to frustrate the work.

With the work already at a virtual standstill, Artaxerxes came into power, and these enemies of Israel lodged a formal complaint against the Jews, accusing them of rebuilding the temple so they could become independent and cease paying taxes. The new king bought the lie, and by a governmental decree, the work was officially called to a halt. The dream had ended. The forces of man appeared to have stopped the plans of God. If only we could remember, that whenever that appears to be true, God is only waiting for the perfect moment to move on stage and glorify His Name.

It was at this time in history that two prophets of God, Haggai and Zechariah, rose up and prophesied that this man Zerubbabel, empowered by his God, would finish what he started. The temple would be rebuilt. The Jews would once again worship God as they were meant to do. He reminded Zechariah to remind Zerubbabel that it would be “not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit” that it would be done. The mountains of adversity that stood between the Jew and God’s will would melt into nothingness at the word of God. He concluded like this,

Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.

(Zechariah 4:10 NIV)

It is there that we resume our story. The “mountains” that God would level apparently referred not only to the problem Israel

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faced in the rebuilding of the temple, but also pointed to the day when the building of the Kingdom of God and the work of the church would be hindered by Satan through the ways and the works of the world. The “day of small things” refers to the work that must go on that seems so slow and unproductive, and yet must take place if the day of great rejoicing is to follow. The literal meaning of the passage as it ties in with the preceding one is “you must not ever make light of the days in which only small things seem to come to pass.”

The laying of each brick and the smoothing of each stone were essential to the ultimate completion of the task assigned to them. In like manner, speaking of the kingdom which was to come, every task that every believer is called upon to perform is essential to the completion of the finished work of the kingdom, just as on a personal level, every thought you think, and every decision you make goes into the finished product of your life. You cannot despise the small things, and you cannot ignore the small things. They make up the fabric upon which the story of your life is woven.

Then Zechariah adds, “Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.” The men of Israel would rejoice when they were assured that work on the temple was being resumed at last. But beyond that, Jesus, our Zerubbabel, would one day come to earth and begin the task on earth of building God’s family, the church. And men would rejoice, indeed.

The verses to follow refer to an earlier part of the vision Zechariah experienced when the angel appeared to him and told him of a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights. There were also two olive trees by it, one on the right and one on the left. In verse eleven Zechariah poses a question for the angelic being before him,

Then I asked the angel, “What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?”

Again I asked him, “What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?”

He replied, “Do you not know what these are?” “No, my lord,” I said.

So he said, “These are the two who are anointed to serve the LORD of all the earth.”

(Zechariah 4:11-14 NIV)

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What had been pictured for the prophet was a picture of God's provision for Israel, and His ultimate provision for the church. The lampstand with seven lamps, each with seven channels running to them, signify the complete provision of God to pour His Spirit upon the nation and ultimately upon each temple (each believer), with all of His fullness. The oil represents God's Spirit, and the number "seven" represents that which is complete or finished. The two olive trees represent, according to the angel, the two men whom God had raised up to be the agents of His Spirit in that generation to accomplish His work: namely, Zerubbabel and Jeshua. One represented the working of His Spirit through the priesthood, the other the outworking of His Spirit through the nation. In the church, those two olive trees would possibly represent the person of Christ whose finished work made possible the presence of the Spirit and the Spirit Himself.

In either case, Zerubbabel was pictured as one of the olive trees from which or through which the oil of God's Spirit would flow bringing about God's purposes at last. So the message to this little-known legend was clear: Don't give up the work you have been called upon to do. God will finish it, and He plans to finish it through you. In fact, you are one of the two chosen vessels He has raised up just for that purpose.

Can you imagine the awe that Zerubbabel must have felt at that moment? The Living God had appeared to His prophets and visually demonstrated that His Spirit would finish what He started, and that Zerubbabel would be one of the olive trees planted alongside the golden bowls from whom the power would flow to accomplish the task. Can you imagine how humbled, and yet how grateful he must have felt? You can? Then look into your own heart and see if that kind of awe and that kind of gratitude is present in your life, because your God has lovingly appeared to you through His Word and guaranteed that He will also finish the work He has begun in you. Not only that, He has anointed you to be one of the vessels through which His Spirit will flow to accomplish the task of building His Kingdom on earth. He has placed His Spirit in you and His hand upon you, and the job He has appointed you to do is no less important than the task appointed to Zerubbabel. The task appointed to Zerubbabel was to go on until it was complete. Back in Ezra, chapter five, the story goes on,

Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a

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descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.

Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

At that time Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates went to them and asked, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore it (this structure)?”

They also asked, “What are the names of the men constructing this building?”

But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.

(Ezra 5:1-5 NIV)

At God’s command, the work on the temple began again. With boldness and faith, Zerubbabel authorized the priests and those others who were willing to once again begin laying the stones and raising the walls to God’s house. The governor was dismayed and questioned them about the authority under which they were working, but he knew that until he contacted the king, he could not stop the work. So another letter was written, this time from the governor to the king, and this is what he wrote:

To King Darius: Cordial greetings,

The king should know that we went to the district of Judah, to the temple of the great God. The people are building it with large stones and placing the timbers in the walls. The work is being carried on with diligence and is making rapid progress under their direction.

We questioned the elders and asked them, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?”

We also asked them their names, so that we could write down the names of their leaders for your information.

This is the answer they gave us: “We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, one that a great king of Israel built and finished.

But because our fathers angered the God of heaven, he handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, king of Babylon, who destroyed this temple and deported the people

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to Babylon.

However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God.

He even removed from the temple of Babylon the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to the temple in Babylon. Then King Cyrus gave them to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor,

And he told him, 'Take these articles and go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem. And rebuild the house of God on its site.'

So this Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem. From that day to the present it has been under construction but is not yet finished.

Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his decision in this matter."

(Ezra 5:7-17 NIV)

Well, here we go with our "Let's check the archives" again. The king goes to his branch of the Library of Congress and digs up the decrees of King Cyrus, and guess what? Sure enough, according to Ezra 6 we read,

A scroll was found in the citadel of Ecbatana in the province of Media, and this was written on it: Memorandum:

In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem: Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. It is to be ninety feet high and ninety feet wide,

with three courses of large stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid by the royal treasury.

Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; they are to be deposited in the house of God.

Now then, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and you, their fellow officials of that province, stay away from there.

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Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site.

Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God: The expenses of these men are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop.

Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—must be given them daily without fail,

So that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.

Furthermore, I decree that if anyone changes this edict, a beam is to be pulled from his house and he is to be lifted up and impaled on it. And for this crime his house is to be made a pile of rubble.

May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem. I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence. (Ezra 6:2-12 NIV)

Don't you just love it? Zerubbabel didn't need to lead a crash course in civil disobedience. He only appealed to the authority over him and left the results to God. And sure enough, God in eternity past had arranged for the king, whose heart ultimately rested in His Divine Hand, to find the decree that God had caused Cyrus to write. And isn't God great? When He does something, He does it right, and if it pleases Him, He'll use the very enemies that are attacking you as instruments to bless you.

Look at what Zerubbabel's enemies were told:

1- By law, they could not interfere with the building of the house of God. The law, which the governor was trying to invoke to prevent God's will, God turned and used to protect God's people.

2- The very governmental authorities opposing the work were commanded to pay for it. Oh, the irony of God's ways. The costs were to be paid out of the Trans-Euphrates treasury. It would be like the State of Texas opposing a Christian program, appealing to Washington to stop it, and having the Supreme Court order the ministry to continue and the State Treasurer to pay the bill. You say that will never happen. That's what Tattenai thought,



too. But, he underestimated Jehovah God.

3- The state was also to keep a list of supplies that the Jews might need on a daily basis and be responsible for providing them. Everything down to the salt and oil were to be found and delivered in state-owned delivery wagons to the site of this temple project.

4- This edict was unchangeable. There was no danger of a new administration or judge coming along and reinterpreting the law.

5- If anyone were to try to ignore or overrule this law, a beam was to be pulled from their house and they were to be murdered and hung on that beam as a testimony that what they did was against the law. In addition, his whole house was to be torn down and his family left homeless.

6- Darius prayed that should any king or government official try to change this law, that the God of Israel for whose glory it was written would overthrow that government.

7- Darius then gave his reason for so strongly supporting this project, “that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and that they may pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.”

Do you get the picture? Darius wanted to uphold the law, but more than that, he wanted the favor of the God of Israel. He had read the scrolls of history and knew that whoever had defended Israel had been blessed, and whoever had defied the Jews, had perished. Wise man that he was, he decreed that this task be finished so that the Jews would have a place to worship, so they could ask their God to bless him and his family.

God is not concerned with the mixed motives of unbelievers He chooses to use. He simply places in their hearts a resolve to do something that will accomplish His purposes. Since they do not possess the Holy Spirit, they cannot have pure motives, but they can be instruments of a sovereign God to bring His will to pass. And here is another example of how He does so,

They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.

The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

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Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy.  
(Ezra 6:14b-16 NIV)

Oh, the miracle of the sovereignty of God! What He decrees will come to pass. What He has promised He is also able to perform. And what a divine picture book He painted for us of the Messiah who was to come. The palette of colors the Holy Spirit used to gently blend the hues into a backdrop that spelled “Jesus” was the story of a most unusual man named “Zerubbabel.”

The portraits are many. As is so often the case, God was allowing a drama to be enacted in the physical realm in order to demonstrate a prophetic drawing of spiritual truths. Such is the case here. We all need to learn to more diligently seek to see those “shadows” or “types” of Christ in the Old Testament, that we might be more cognizant of the fact that every word of the Scriptures is a word about Jesus. Look at some of them in Zerubbabel’s story:

1- The goal of Zerubbabel was to lead his people home. The goal of Jesus was the same. One was a physical kingdom where they would no longer be in exile, in bondage, separated from their homeland. The other was a spiritual kingdom where men were in bondage and in slavery, as well, separated from fellowship with their creator God.

2- A new temple was Zerubbabel’s aim. That, too, was true of Jesus. In the Messiah’s case, He came to rebuild the temple of God in the hearts of redeemed man. We became the temple. Our builder and maker is God.

3- Once the process had begun, Zerubbabel encountered warfare. At first glance, the trek home was to be without conflict. But soon the enemy reared his ugly head, and once the altar was built and worship reestablished, the very ones who had claimed to want to help in the process turned against him. So it was with Jesus. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.” Likewise, as He begins to build the temple in us, there comes a time when the honeymoon ends, and the warfare begins. That is not the end; that is the beginning of victory. It was for Zerubbabel. It was for Jesus. It is for Jesus in us.

4- When all looked hopeless, God sent His Word to Zerubbabel, and the tide turned. Jesus in the wilderness, being tempted of

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Satan, faced the same situation. But soon God's Word came forth, and the very mouth of God caused the enemy to flee.

5- God's word to Zerubbabel was, "I will finish what I started." As Jesus cried, "It is finished" we saw that indeed it was. And as He promised to "complete His work in us" we see the picture fulfilled.

6- The very forces in the world that attempted Zerubbabel's downfall, God used to bring His will to pass. And those storm clouds that so hang over the Mideastern nations in our age and so threaten to bring fear to the hearts of men will be the very clouds that will swoop down upon society and make the way for Christ to return. These things are neither accidental nor incidental, but providential.

7- The house God promised was finished indeed. In like manner, Jesus, our Zerubbabel, has gone to prepare a place for us, and He will come for us and take us to dwell there forever.

8- Zerubbabel's story has a happy ending. God's people are found gathered together worshipping and praising God. And King Jesus has fashioned an ending to His story (which is what his-story is all about), and though pain and the sorrow abound, crushing the very life out of man, the day will come soon when the veil will be lifted, the Son of God's Light will shine upon us at last, and we shall gather round His throne and spend all eternity worshipping Him as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And so the life of another little-known legend comes to a close. Many who have been in Bible classes for years have never even heard his name. But what a living legend he was. He possessed the courage to face enemies from without and within because he had a word from His God. He possessed faithfulness because when the going got rough he kept on going. He possessed discernment because when the unbelievers about him offered to help him finish the task, he chose the absolutes of God over the apparent easy road of circumstance.

He possessed a heart for God's Word, because when the prophets told him to go back to work, even though the circumstances had not changed, he promptly did so. He possessed humility, because when the very government that was poised to destroy his work was used of God to finish that work, he didn't flaunt his success and taunt his adversaries. He just finished the course with joy.

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He possessed a deep desire to worship, because his whole life was spent making it possible for God's people to do just that; and the greater the obstacles, the more faith he seemed to possess. He possessed all of that, because he was demonstrating by his very life, the life of the living God. And so are you.

*Oh, dear blessed God, our Savior,*

*Thank you for the life of Zerubbabel for through it we see You. And through his story we know how our story will end.*

*Truly, Yours is the kingdom, and Yours is the power, and Yours is the glory, forever and forever.*

*Amen.*

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