

**Hope For A New Day<sup>1</sup>**  
**How Do We Hold Onto Hope In Difficult Circumstances ?**  
**Lesson Text: Haggai 2:23; Zechariah 4:1-14**  
*Black History Article Below Daily Bible Reading*

**Aim for Change**

We will **ACKNOWLEDGE** the connection between God’s promises to Israel for rebuilding the Temple and the Israelites’ obedience to Him, **APPRECIATE** the community’s restoration of the Temple and God’s restoration of the people, and **ARTICULATE** our thankfulness to God for the blessings bestowed upon us for our obedience.



**Keep In Mind**

*Then he answered and spoke unto me, saying, “This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ saith the Lord of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:6 21CKJV)*

<sup>1</sup> Banks, Melvin, Precepts for Living: Principles for Living in an Unhinged World (2025-2026) UMI (Urban Ministries, Inc.).

## **In Focus**

Selena had just moved to a new town. She had a great job, but hadn't made any friends yet. Every day as she drove to work, she passed the county jail. After a few weeks, she felt like God wanted her to go to the jail to visit the inmates. This was way out of her comfort zone, but she wanted to obey God. Finally, she got up the courage to fill out the application to volunteer”

Shortly after, she nervously arrived at the jail, Bible in hand, for her first visit with the female inmates. As she prayed to God for courage, she noticed another group of women enter with their Bibles. She knew it was just the confirmation she needed. She introduced herself and found that the other women had been coming to the jail for months to conduct Bible study sessions. The women welcomed Selena. As they ministered together over the next couple of weeks, Selena not only made new friends, but discovered unexpected joy and hope in sharing with others.

*Obedience to God brings blessing. In today's lesson, we will learn how God enables us and works on our behalf to help us accomplish what He wants us to do.*

## **Lesson Text**

### **Haggai 2:23; Zechariah 4:1-14**

<sup>23</sup> In that day,' saith the Lord of hosts, 'will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel,' saith the Lord, 'and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee,' saith the Lord of hosts.”

**1 And the angel who talked with me came again and waked me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep,**

**2** and said unto me, “What seest thou?” And I said, “I have looked and behold, a candlestick all of gold with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps which are upon the top thereof.

**3 and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.”**

**4** So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, “What are these, my lord?”

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

6 Then he answered and spoke unto me, saying, “This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ saith the Lord of hosts.

**7 Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, ‘Grace, grace unto it!’”**

8 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

**9 “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it. And thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.**

10 For who hath despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven. They are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.”

**11 Then answered I and said unto him, “What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?”**

12 And I answered again and said unto him, “What be these two olive branches, which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?”

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

14 Then said he, “These are the two anointed ones, who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

### **The People, Places, and Times**

**Zechariah:** A prophet (Zechariah 1:1) and a priest (Nehemiah 12:10–16) who was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai. Zechariah was born in Babylonia during the exilic period. He was one of the estimated fifty thousand exiles who returned to Judah under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua in 538 B.C. During his ministry to God’s people, Zechariah’s primary purpose was to encourage the people in their work to rebuild the Temple and continually remind them of God’s promise that He would take care of them and bless them if they returned to Him.

**Zerubbabel:** Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel from the line of Judah; his name means “seed or offspring of Babylon.” His Babylonian name was Sheshbazzar, and he was recognized as a prince in captivity. He was believed to be a man of great influence in

direct service to King Cyrus. He led the first wave of exiles from Babylonian captivity. The king gave Zerubbabel favor to rebuild the second Temple and reestablish worship in Jerusalem.

### **Background**

Apparently, some of the Israelites chose not to leave Babylon at the end of the seventy year exile. But “everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem” (from Ezra 1:5, NIV). They returned with joy and purpose, bringing gifts of livestock, gold, and silver bestowed upon them by the people of Babylon.

After settling in their towns, the people came together to begin the joyful but daunting project of rebuilding the Temple that had been destroyed seventy years earlier. Their first step was to rebuild the altar to reestablish the offering of sacrifices as required of God’s people (Ezra 3:1–6). The people then began offering to pay for the materials and labor needed to build the Temple’s foundation.

Approximately two years after returning to Judah, God’s people finished building the Temple’s foundation. The people sang and praised God, accompanied by the priests and Levites. They shouted and wept joyfully, and the celebration was so loud it could be heard from far away (Ezra 3:10–13).

Unfortunately, Zerubbabel and his builders soon faced opposition from their enemies, primarily inhabitants of nearby Samaria. These enemies purposely “set out to discourage God’s people from rebuilding the Temple, even going so far as to hire people to work against them (Ezra 4:4–5). Sadly, the rebuilding of the Temple was halted for seventeen years.

### **In Depth**

**1. God’s Promise (Haggai 2:23):** All work on rebuilding the Temple had been halted for seventeen years, and God’s people had lost hope of ever finishing what they had started. But then the Word of the Lord came to the prophet Haggai. God instructed him to tell Zerubbabel that He would literally move heaven and earth (Haggai 2:21–22) to accomplish His plan. God’s plan was that the Temple would be rebuilt and that Zerubbabel would be honored. God says He would make Zerubbabel like a signet ring on His finger. In biblical times, a signet ring was used as one’s signature and symbolized a pledge, a guarantee of payment or fulfilling one’s promise. God promised to honor

Zerubbabel and tell His people that He would fulfill His promises. It was time for His people to return to Him and the work once again He had called them to.

**2. God's Servants (Zechariah 4:1–7):** Along with the promise given to Zerubbabel through the prophet Haggai, God also gave Zechariah a vision concerning the completion of the Temple. In 4:1–3, Zechariah saw an angel who showed him a golden lampstand with two olive trees, one on either side. The trees represented the offices of the priest and king. Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the leader of God's people and a descendant of the royal house of David, were to lead God's people forward to the Temple's completion. However, neither the people nor their leaders could accomplish anything alone. In verse 6, the Lord says, "It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies" (NLT).

Only by the power of the Spirit would Zerubbabel be enabled to finish the rebuilding. The angel assured and encouraged him through Zechariah that even though there was a "mountain" of opposition and discouragement in his way, nothing could stand before God's power working through His servant. Zerubbabel would see God's plan accomplished amidst much rejoicing.

**3. God's Sovereignty (Zechariah 4:8–14):** "God then reminded His people that Zerubbabel had already laid the foundation for the Temple. He promised that He would use Zerubbabel to complete the rebuilding, and when this was done, everyone would know that it was God who had accomplished this great deed.

Some people apparently thought that rebuilding the Temple wasn't worth it or that what had already been accomplished was insignificant. However, God said that no one should discount what had already been done. Even though it seemed to be a small beginning, God would bring it to a glorious conclusion. And when God accomplished His plan, everyone would rejoice.

Finally, Zechariah asked for clarification about the olive trees and branches he saw in the vision. The angel clarified that Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the descendant of David, were the ones chosen for God's purpose in His plan to rebuild the Temple. The oil that was poured out of the olive branches and used to anoint the leaders signified the Holy Spirit. The symbolism of both the king and priest points to the Messianic fulfillment in Jesus, who also descended from the royal line of David and is now our King and Priest, the "LORD of all the earth" (v. 14, NLT). God's sovereign plan governs

Zerubbabel, the exiles, and believers through the ages. He will do what needs to be done to accomplish His purposes and give us what we need to obey Him.

### **Liberating Lesson**

God promised the people of Israel that He would restore them to their land and instruct them to rebuild His Temple. He did not leave them to their own devices; He provided favor, materials, and the power of the Spirit to enable them to obey what He asked. We often resist obeying God because what He asks seems too complex or demanding, yet He will bless us when we obey.

### **Application for Activation**

“Obedience to God brings great reward. One way to learn to be obedient is to read His Word regularly. God’s Word contains everything we need to know about how to treat others, handle our money, and be good employees, parents, or spouses. When we read God’s Word and apply it to our lives, we please Him.

### **Take Aways**

### **Closing Prayer**

**Christian Season: LENT**  
**Season Color: PURPLE**



**Daily Bible Reading**

**Monday: Ezekiel 21-22, Psalm 78:9-16**

**Tuesday: Ezekiel 23-24, Psalm 78:17-24**

**Wednesday: Ezekiel 25-27, Psalm 78:25-31**

**Thursday: Ezekiel 28-30, Psalm 78:32-39**

**Friday: Ezekiel 31-33, Psalm 78:40-49**

**Saturday: Ezekiel 34-36, Psalm 78:50-64**

**Sunday: Ezekiel 37-39, Psalm 78:65-72**

**FOR OUR ENLIGHTENMENT  
NOT PART OF THE LESSON**  
**Nelson Mandela**



**Born Rolihlahla Mandela; 18 July 1918 – 5 December 2013**

*An anti-apartheid and political activist from South Africa and was the first president of South Africa for 5 years. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for fighting against institutionalize racism in South Africa.*

**Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela** Xhosa; born **Rolihlahla Mandela**; was a South African [anti-apartheid](#) activist and statesman who was the first [president of South Africa](#) from 1994 to 1999. He was the country's first [Black](#) head of state and the first elected in a [fully representative](#) democratic election. [His administration](#) focused on dismantling the legacy of [apartheid](#) by fostering racial [reconciliation](#), a [national peace accord](#) and eventual [multiracial democracy](#). Ideologically an [African](#)

[nationalist](#) and [socialist](#), he served as the president of the [African National Congress](#) (ANC) party from 1991 to 1997.

Mandela was born into the [Thembu](#) royal family in [Mvezo](#), South Africa. He studied law at the [University of Fort Hare](#) and the [University of Witwatersrand](#) before working as a lawyer in [Johannesburg](#). There he became involved in [anti-colonial](#) and African nationalist politics, joining the ANC in 1943 and co-founding its [Youth League](#) in 1944. After the [National Party's white-only government](#) established apartheid, a system of [racial segregation](#) that privileged [whites](#), Mandela and the ANC committed themselves to its overthrow. He was appointed president of the ANC's [Transvaal](#) branch, rising to prominence for his involvement in the 1952 [Defiance Campaign](#) and the 1955 [Congress of the People](#). He was repeatedly arrested for [seditious](#) activities and was unsuccessfully prosecuted in the [1956 Treason Trial](#). Influenced by [Marxism](#), he secretly joined the banned [South African Communist Party](#) (SACP). Although initially committed to non-violent protest, in association with the SACP he co-founded the militant [uMkhonto we Sizwe](#) in 1961 that led a [sabotage](#) campaign against the apartheid government. He was arrested and imprisoned in 1962, and, following the [Rivonia Trial](#), was sentenced to life imprisonment for conspiring to overthrow the state. Mandela served 27 years in prison. Amid growing domestic and international pressure and fears of racial civil war, President [F. W. de Klerk](#) released him in 1990. Mandela and de Klerk led efforts to negotiate an end to apartheid, which resulted in the [1994 multiracial general election](#) in which Mandela led the ANC to victory and became president. Leading a [broad coalition government](#) which promulgated a [new constitution](#), Mandela emphasized reconciliation between the country's racial groups and created the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) to investigate past [human rights](#) abuses.

Mandela was a controversial figure for much of his life. Although critics on right denounced him as a [communist terrorist](#) and those on the [far left](#) deemed him too eager to negotiate and reconcile with apartheid's supporters, he gained international acclaim for his activism. Globally regarded as an icon of [moral leadership](#), [peace](#), democracy and [social justice](#), he received [more than 250 honors](#), including the [Nobel Peace Prize](#). He is held in deep respect within South Africa, where he is often referred to by his Thembu [clan name](#), Madiba, and described as the "[Father of the Nation](#)". Mandela is widely considered one of the [greatest](#) and most [admired figures](#) of the 20th century.