

A lesson on Zechariah's request for understanding.

In verse 4, Zechariah spoke up. Even though he was a prophet, he did not understand. So he asked the interpreting angel for an explanation (4:4), and, in return, was himself asked a question: **‘Do you not know what these are?’** He quickly answered, **‘No my Lord’** (4:5); but even then he did not finally get his answer until verse 14.

God desires that we should ask him about things we do not understand. We cannot all have brilliant intellects or a university education. James tells us, ‘If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given him’ (James 1:5). Do not say, ‘We can’t believe because we can’t understand.’ Turn to God and say, ‘What do these things mean, Lord?’ He is the best one to interpret our problem and give us the solution to it.

Zechariah had to keep on asking the angel to explain the meaning of the vision. How often do we ask God about things we do not understand? How foolish it is to fret, fume and puzzle over things when, so often, God is waiting to answer our prayer—if only we will persist with our requests. God sometimes tests our faith and our determination by keeping us waiting for his answer; but he does regard our persistence and answer us when we need it.¹

More Information on the Olive Trees

Zechariah asks twice more about the olive trees. He is finally told, **“These are the two sons of richness who stand beside the Lord of all the earth.”** They represent the two powers or functions held by the two men, Zerubbabel (political leadership) and Joshua the high priest (sacerdotal leadership).²

¹ Michael Bentley, [*Building for God's Glory: Haggai and Zechariah Simply Explained*](#), Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1989), 134.

² Jack Norman Sparks, [*The Orthodox Study Bible: Notes*](#) (Thomas Nelson, 2008), 1043.

The chapter can be structured as follows:

- 4:1–5 The vision report
- 4:1 Introduction
- 4:2–3 The vision of the menorah, bowl, lamps, pipes and olive trees
- 4:4 Question: Zechariah to the angel about the vision
- 4:5a Counter-question: the angel to Zechariah
- 4:5b Zechariah's reply
- 4:6–10 Two words of Yahweh explaining the overall vision
- 4:6–7 A word of Yahweh from the angel to Zechariah for Zerubbabel
- 4:8–10 A word of Yahweh to Zechariah for the community
- 4:11–14 Further details of the vision identified
- 4:11 Question: Zechariah to the angel about the olive trees
- 4:12 Question: Zechariah to the angel about the streams of the olive trees
- 4:13 Counter-question: the angel to Zechariah
- 4:14 Answer: the angel to Zechariah about the two sons of oil³

3 Anthony R. Petterson, [*Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*](#), ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 25, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (Nottingham, England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2015), 150–151.

