

## **I Will Make You Like My Signet Ring**

Small things are really big with God. For example, have you heard about what scientists call “the God particle”? For decades, physicists speculated that there was a subatomic particle that basically held everything in the universe together. Technically, it’s known as the Higgs boson but it’s trade name is “the God particle.”

Well, in 2012 its existence was dramatically announced by scientists in Europe who had the proof. Without this particle that you can’t even see, atoms would have no integrity, so there would be no chemical bonding, no stable structures – no solids, no liquids, no physicists! Small things are, apparently, really big with God. <sup>1</sup>

As we come to the end of our study of Ezra, how does this story end? It’s really quite remarkable, actually. It seems as if the final lesson God wants us to see is that each of our lives, yours and mine, has much more significance than we might ever imagine. No matter what role we are given by God to play in this life, if we will play it God’s way, each of us has a critical part in holding the Spiritual Universe together. Do you believe that? Let’s see if God can convince you. First, we must see how...

### **I. Small Things Become a Big Thing with God**

First, we need to trace Zerubbabel’s family tree. Zerubbabel was the grandson of Judah’s last king, Jehoiakim. In other words, Jehoiakim was the king when Babylon overran Judah and took them into captivity. At that time, God rejected Jehoiakim for his disobedience by saying:

**“As I live,” says the LORD, “though... Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off.”** (Jer. 22:24 NKJV)

Can you imagine living with a greater shame than knowing that your grandfather was cursed by God? Zerubbabel, to his great credit, had done a remarkable job of living an honorable life in spite of this family history. Going with the first wave of exiles back to Jerusalem, he directed the cleanup and rebuilding of the Temple area and eventually the Temple itself. As remarkable as that was, how would you feel, if after you did all that work, the old-timers who remembered Solomon’s Temple, looked at the temple you built and started weeping? That’d be pretty tough to take, wouldn’t it? You pour yourself into providing the nation with a place to worship and when it’s done, half the people weep when they see it! [It’d be worse than the Yard Goat Stadium debacle in Hartford!]

But before Zerubbabel died, God gave him a different perspective. He gave him His perspective. Now, stay with me on this, because what God says first, doesn’t sound like much of a compliment. God says to the prophet Haggai: (Hag. 2:21, 22)

**“Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I will shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms....”**

My guess is that Zerubbabel probably didn’t think he had done anything to shake the world. At this point, his city didn’t even have a wall to defend itself. What had he accomplished that had accounted for much? If anything, his contribution to the kingdom of God must have seemed pretty small and insignificant. The temple he built made half the people cry!

So, what's God's point in saying what He said to the governor? What God is saying is this, "Your contribution won't seem so small when I'm done with it! Your small piece, your seemingly invisible particle, is a major connecting piece in My much larger master plan."

God said the same thing to the people through the prophet Zechariah, when He said: **"Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel."** (Zech. 4:10)

This, of course, is referring to when Zerubbabel began to build the temple. Why was that such a big deal? It was a turning point in the history of the world because it re-established the practice of temple worship for Israel. When Jesus came, 500 years after Zerubbabel, where had it been prophesied that He would teach? In the temple! Where would Jesus perform many of His miracles? In the temple! What is the central action that we celebrate today that pictures for us His death and Resurrection, by which we may be saved? The communion meal that Jesus redefined for us because He was celebrating the temple feast of Passover. Zerubbabel's rebuilding of the temple was setting the stage for God to "...shake the heavens and the earth... and overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms." His small piece was building the stage for the Messiah.

So, what's your life's contribution? What great thing have you done to advance the Kingdom of God? Don't answer too fast. In fact, don't answer at all! Let God answer because you may actually be blind to your real "life's contribution." For example, if you asked the apostle Paul, while he was in prison in Rome, what his contribution to God's Kingdom was, he would've probably pointed to the churches he had planted throughout the Roman provinces. And yes, in his day, those were great accomplishments of God through the faithfulness of Paul. But think about it for a minute... All those churches are gone now. They lasted maybe one or two hundred years, but they aren't building the Kingdom of God today, are they?

But what about the letters he wrote to those churches while he was in prison? For thousands of years, those letters have been used by God to build His church. Paul couldn't wait to get out of prison! He wrote about that constantly. But God couldn't wait to put him IN prison because it was there that his greatest contribution would be made.

So, what "prison" have you been begging God to get you out of? Your school, your "dead-end" job, your parenting of little kids who can't even read yet? Or how about your retirement "prison"? You used to have real influence in the world, now all you can do is... read to the grandkids or pray! What prison does God have you in? "*Who despises the day of small things?*" Not God! God knows that what looks small to us is often something really big to Him.

My guess is that you've never heard of Edward Kimball. But have you heard of D. L. Moody or Moody Bible Institute or Moody Press? Edward Kimball is the "no-name" Christian who told D. L. Moody about Christ's love for him in the stock room of a shoe store in Boston and led young Moody to Jesus. Moody became a pastor and evangelist who, it's estimated was used by God to lead over a million people to Christ in his lifetime and tens of millions more after his death through the ministries of his school and his publishing house. It all started from a five-minute conversation in a stock room. Five minutes! What seems small to us is often something very big to God. Don't despise your day of small things.

Secondly, in Zechariah's last chapter, we need to see...

## **II. The Promised Impact of Your Faithful Efforts**

As I mentioned last week, chapters 12 through 14 of Zechariah are pure prophecy. They are not about current events or any events before the Great Tribulation and the Return of Jesus. The phrase that is repeated frequently in these chapters is "Day of the LORD" which is referring

that period of history. To be clear, the Great Tribulation has a very distinct beginning point. It begins when the antichrist, a political world ruler completely controlled by Satan, signs a peace treaty between Israel and all her neighbors. The world will literally worship him for solving such a seemingly unsolvable problem. But three and a half years later, he will break that treaty which will eventuate in a coordinated attack on Israel and specifically Jerusalem. This is the famous Battle of Armageddon and it is described here in Zechariah 14:

**A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. (Zech. 14:1, 2)**

Now, as I said, this takeover of Jerusalem will not happen until the very end of the seven years of Tribulation. The only Christians who will be on earth at this time will be those who have become Christians since the Peace Treaty was signed, because the rapture of the church will take all other Christians to be with Jesus before that happens. I know some of you disagree with me about that, so why do I believe it? I believe it because Jesus said it. In Rev. 2 and 3, Jesus is talking to Christians in various churches. In Rev. 3:10 He says:

**Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.**

Will we go through any persecution? Yes, of course, Jesus promised that, but I believe He's saying here that we won't go through the Great Tribulation which will be the "wrath of God" poured out on the earth. Jesus never tells believers that we will have to experience the "wrath of God." That's what we are saved from.

Now, back to Zechariah's prophecy. After Jerusalem is sacked and all seems to be lost and the antichrist thinks he's won, something spectacular happens. Beginning at verse 3:

**Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. (Zech. 14:3)**

Some liberal denominations paint a picture of Jesus as the ultimate pacifist who would never use violence to address evil. They have a false view of Jesus. Jesus does not use violence mindlessly, but on THIS day, the Day of the LORD, He's going to war to defeat evil. And He will use violence and force to win and win decisively!! Then it says:

**On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. (Zech. 14:4)**

Some have said, "This must be symbolic! How could a mountain be split in two?" Well, it's not symbolic, it will literally happen. Geologists have already determined that there is a fault line that runs down the middle of the Mount of Olives. That fault line makes up what is known as the Rift Valley which actually goes from northern Israel all the way down into central Africa. This mountain will divide! Then he says: (Zech. 14:5, 8)

**You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him...**

**On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea (Dead Sea) and half to the western sea, (Mediterranean Sea) in summer and in winter.**

It goes on to describe a huge topographical change whereby not only does Jerusalem have sea access, but the land south of Jerusalem will become a fertile plain. What's this all about?

Why would God, besides defeating the antichrist, do this major landscaping around the city of Jerusalem?

Here's the deal: Jesus is preparing Jerusalem to become the political, economic and spiritual capital of the world where He will reign as king for 1,000 years. That's what's being described here in Zechariah 14. But it isn't only described here! This millennial kingdom of Jesus is also described in Isaiah, Daniel, Psalms, Micah, and Revelation. Listen to this description of the principal characteristics of the Millennium:

The millennium will be a time of both political and spiritual rule. Politically, it will be universal (Dan. 2:35), authoritative (Is. 11:4), and characterized by righteousness and justice, with assurances for the poor (Is. 11:3-5) and admonition and judgment for the violators of Messiah's rule (Ps. 2:10-12).<sup>2</sup>

You may ask, "Violators? How could there be 'violators' of Jesus' rule if it's only Christians who are on earth at the time?" Well, it will only be Christians at the beginning, but the Christians who were on earth when Jesus returned will still be able to have children and those children will be just like us, capable of sinning. This is why some people will join with Satan for one final uprising against Jesus, as predicted at the end of the millennium in Revelation.

But do you see what an incredible experience this thousand-year reign will be? And you will be there! Rev. 20, verse 6 assures that. Isaiah lists even more attributes of this time:

Joy (Is. 9:3-4), glory (Is. 24:23), justice (Is. 9:7), full knowledge (Is. 11:1, 2), instruction and learning (Is. 2:2-3), the removal of the curse on the earth and the elimination of sickness (Is. 11:6-9), 33:24), longevity of life (Is. 65:20), prosperity in work (Is. 4:1; 35:1-2; 62:8-9), harmony in the animal kingdom (Is. 11:6-9; 65:25).

Can you believe this? It's going to be better than what Bernie Sanders promises! And this is really going to happen!! When will it happen? No one knows the day or the hour. That's what Jesus said (Mk. 13:32). But let me show you something I came across this week.

Remember all the talk last year about it being a Shemitah year, the year of canceling debts in the Jewish economic cycle? Well, Conservative Jewish scholars are saying that this year is a Jubilee year, the year of feasting, rest and judgment – feasting and rest for the faithful and judgment for the unfaithful. And besides that, this is the 40th Jubilee year since Jesus' resurrection. The number 40 is emblematic in Scripture of times of testing – Jesus was tempted for 40 days, when Noah was on the ark it rained for 40 days. Besides that, this is the 70th Jubilee year since they first began in the Promised Land. 70 is a number of fullness or completion in the Bible as in, something is coming to an end.

So, what does this mean? Do I think Jesus is returning in 2016? I don't know, but I do know this: there's nothing prophetically that needs to take place before He comes again. Which to me means, it could be this week! So, what does this have to do with you and me and our little "God particle contribution to Jesus' Kingdom work?"

Remember back at the beginning what God said to Zerubbabel through Haggai? First, he described this second coming of Jesus where He's not coming as the Prince of Peace but as a Warrior-General of a mighty army. He says:

**"...I will shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother."** (Haggai 2:21, 22)

Then He says:

**“ ‘On that day,’ declares the LORD Almighty, ‘I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel... and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD Almighty.’” (Haggai 2:23)**

The signet ring of a king was like his signature. It was what released his power and authority by making its mark in soft wax on an official document. What was the wax worth? Pennies, right? But with the Mark of the King’s ring in the wax, it was priceless.

If you were truly convinced that Jesus was coming any day, would the way you spend your time change at all? Instead of spending an hour a night just reading entries of your Facebook friends, would you consider spending an hour a week praying for all of them? Instead of attending three Bible Studies a week, would you cut it back to one so you’d have time to serve people in your neighborhood, like the guy who needs help cutting his grass because he broke his leg? It’s not just the big things; our smallest acts of kindness are like the wax on a document. By themselves, they seem to be worth very little. But Jesus, our future and forever King, says, “I will imprint your work with My signet ring. And when I do that, your work will become priceless in My eyes and for My eternal Kingdom.”

In this story of the exiles, we’ve seen God rebuild their society. How was it done? By changing the political structure? By passing new laws? By throwing the non-Jews out of the country? No. It was done by a small minority of God followers committing themselves to a deeper level of living in God’s Word and in God’s Ways. They prayed like they never had before. They worked together and they loved each other with a radical and sacrificial love. And they rebuilt their worship first and their wall of protection later. If we want to rebuild America, if we truly want to make America great again, this is the path – know the Word, do the Word, share the Word. And on the day when we see Jesus face to face, we will see in reality that with Him, small things were really big. Let’s pray...

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Ford, “The Race for the Secret of the Universe,” Parade Magazine (7-26-09) and Daily Mail, Mark Prigg, 9-1-15, “The ‘god particle’ gets clear: New results from Large Hadron Collider reveal more about elusive Higgs Boson particles.”

<sup>2</sup> Joe Jordan, contributor, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2004), p.236