

Zechariah 2 is the third of eight visions God gave to Zechariah. The first three are about the reconstruction of the temple. In the first vision God was angry with the nations that had abused the Jews and promised the rebuilding of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. The promise was in 1:16, *¹⁶ Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.* Though the work had been stopped by their neighbors treacherous and false accusations to the king of Persia, God promised the construction was to resume (Ezra 4:23ⁱ).

The promise of the second vision was that God would deal with the enemies of the Jews through these craftsmen. In that vision the craftsmen were more influential than the might of nations. The temple they would build would be more effectual than empires. That had a partial fulfillment in the king of Persia telling those nations to support the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 6:8-10ⁱⁱ). This vision indicated a shift from the theocratic empire to a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men and women. While God had influenced nations through the blessings on the nation of Israel, now the influence would come through the temple worship leading to the coming Messiah.

Some of you have asked about the timeline of the events and the connection with Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai. I've included this summary on the back of your bulletin. Cyrus proclamation and the return and beginning of the temple construction happened in 537-534BC. In 534 the accusations were made and construction stopped. This is covered in Ezra 1-4. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied six years later in 520BC. The governor of the Trans-Euphrates saw the construction resume and wrote to see if the king approved. He not only approved but had that governor pay the expenses from the taxation of the region. The temple was completed in 515BC (Ezra 6). Ezra came to Jerusalem in 458BC and instituted his reforms (Ezra 7-10). Then Nehemiah came in 444BC and oversaw the reconstruction of the walls (Nehemiah 1-12). Ezra was with Nehemiah during part of this time. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem in 432BC to deal with backsliding (Nehemiah 13). The time from the return to the completion of the walls was about a century.

The book of Ezra records the early and later portion of this era. Zechariah and Haggai came on the scene early in this time span when the temple construction had stopped. Their prophecies encouraged the people to finish the temple construction (Ezra 6:14ⁱⁱⁱ). It would be 75 years later when Nehemiah would come to help the people build the walls around the city. That context is important for the third vision.

¹ And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand!

² Then I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length."

Zechariah 2:1-2 In the vision Zechariah directly asks one of the craftsmen what he is doing. He answers that he is measuring the city's perimeter which is the job of a surveyor in preparation for building the walls. The vision is apparently like being in a 3D movie that responds to input. Imagine

that! It's like a dream that is hard to distinguish from an actual experience.

³ And behold, the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him ⁴ and said to him, "Run, say to that young man, 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it. Zechariah 2:3-4 The two angels meet and the one that just arrived told the angel who had been with Zechariah to run and tell the surveyor that the old walls would not be sufficient for all the people and livestock. It will have to be without walls, (at least for the time being.) And it was without walls for 75 years as more people returned to the Promised Land.

Remember that in the first vision God said He was exceedingly jealous for His people (1:14^{iv}). Hidden in this prophecy and the accounts from Ezra and Nehemiah is a story of great grace. We can read in their accounts that the people were living with compromise. They were disobeying the laws of Moses by intermarrying with women who worshiped other gods and let their wives raise their children under those nations' customs. There were Hebrew children who couldn't speak Hebrew (Nehemiah 13:23-24^v). Men divorced their Hebrew wives and married foreign women for commercial advantages. Even when the temple was completed an enemy would be allowed to live in one of the rooms dedicated for the priests and holy items (Nehemiah 13:4-5^{vi}). The wealthy were taking advantage of the poor. That is why Zechariah began his message with a call to repent. Even with all this sin going on, God is calling His people back and promising the city will be restored and even expanded (Zechariah 1:3^{vii}). Consider the grace expressed in the next verse. How gracious and merciful God is to us!

⁵ And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst." Zechariah 2:5 If there are no walls, what is to keep their enemies from robbing them each harvest season? The LORD declared that He would do what He had done for Israel in their flight from Egypt when the pillar of fire stood between them and the Egyptians (Exodus 14:19-20^{viii}). That pillar of fire was referred to as the angel of the LORD. We have already seen that He is the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus. Exodus 14 promised God would gain glory for Himself when the Egyptians were defeated in the sea (Exodus 14:17^x). Here Jesus promises to be the shield of fire around them to protect them and to be the glory in the midst of Jerusalem.

I understand the fire all around for protection. I've seen it in my own life. I've read about it in the lives of missionaries. There are numerous accounts of natives surrounding a missionary's compound to wipe them out but then fleeing before the attack was launched. Later those involved in the attempt say they fled because of the gigantic warriors that appeared at the walls of the compound. Knowing that whatever comes into our lives must go through Jesus first is a comfort. It means everything is filtered so that all things, even difficult things, work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28^x, 35-37^{xi}). How reassuring that is!

What does it mean to be the glory in her midst? In the context of Exodus 14 it meant to be victorious over the enemies that pursued them by supernatural means. Perhaps that

is what is being referred to here. But might the thought also extend to a future time when what they were building would be visited by the One whom Zechariah was predicting (Malachi 3:1^{xii})? I believe an equally amazing fulfillment is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. While the Lord Jesus did protect these villages around Jerusalem despite their weakness and numerous enemies, that may have only been a limited intermediate fulfillment. The final fulfillment will be the Lord Jesus reigning over the earth from Jerusalem in the millennium (Revelation 20:4^{xiii}).

There is an eternal truth here. Jesus is our great protector, a wall of fire around us (Psalm 127:1^{xiv}). It does not mean that illness or trouble will never come, but that the enemy of our soul cannot do anything to us without God's permission (Job 1:12^{xv}). And He is the glory in our midst (John 14:23^{xvi}). He defeats the enemy's attempts to destroy us by giving us victory over sin. The transformed life gives glory to God. The very presence and power of the Holy Spirit within us brings glory to God as we yield ourselves in service and love. Even though many of these who had returned to Jerusalem were compromising, Jesus promised to be a wall of fire all around them and glory in their midst. Is that not true for every believer? It appears to me to be so. Did the Lord say to David, "The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is the shade upon thy right hand" (Psalm 121:5^{xvii})? The Lord put a hedge around Job that could only be breached with God's permission. Isn't the Holy Spirit the glory in our midst? Then we can take this verse personally. Jesus is a wall of fire all around *you* and the glory *your* midst!

This ends the third vision. Now Zechariah will tell the Jewish people the response God expects. *⁶ Up! Up! Flee from the land of the north, declares the LORD. For I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, declares the LORD. ⁷ Up! Escape to Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.* Zechariah 2:6-7 It was time for the exiles to move to Jerusalem. The Jews had grown comfortable in their new-found prosperity. They had been in the north for seventy years. Most had never seen Jerusalem. The conditions in Jerusalem were not nearly as comfortable or prosperous as in Babylon. The neighbors of Jerusalem harassed and hindered the Jews. Why should they return? The agricultural land was poor and the city had no walls. At that time the temple wasn't even completed. God wanted them to look to the future with eyes of faith (2 Corinthians 4:18^{xviii}). Babylon was destined for even more wrath from God and the Jews would be better off if they moved to Jerusalem.

This is sometimes the call to us as well. God challenges us to step out of our comfort zone and into the realm of faith. He knows we are better off looking to the spiritual than comfortable and distracted by the physical (1 Timothy 5:6^{xix}). If they would move at once, they would have a part in the finishing of the temple and its worship that looked forward to the Messiah. Their children would have a part in rebuilding the walls and the revival that would take place under Nehemiah.

God used the term "escape." What were they escaping? Babylon represents the world and all those who fight against God's people, whether those redeemed people are Jews or the Gentiles in Christ. We see this in the book of Revelation (Revelation 18:20-21^{xx}). It is the world of man fighting against God, trying to be his own god and living for the

pleasures of this life no matter the cost to others. They were escaping the bondage of materialism and comfort that kept their focus on the present world and what it offers to focus on the eternal God and His promises (Revelation 18:7^{xxi}).

⁸ For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye: Zechariah 2:8 I'm stopping mid-sentence just to point out God's expression of love to His chosen people. Those who touch us touch the apple of His eye. That comes from Deuteronomy 32:10^{xxii} and Psalm 17:8^{xxiii}. Our image is reflected in His eyes because His eyes are ever toward us as He forms us into the bride of Christ. It is another expression of divine protection. Consider how quickly you swat at something headed toward your eye. God was not only going to deal with the nations that plundered them, but also protect Jerusalem in its vulnerable state if they would return.

⁹ "Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me. Zechariah 2:9 As the nations that plundered the Jews were themselves plundered, the Jews knew angel was God's messenger and that God is just. When the Day of Judgment comes, all will know that the prophets of old were God's messengers. The Jews of that day knew Zechariah was a prophet and that these predictions had a spiritual side or they would not have preserved his writings. We'll see the Messianic side of these prophecies in the next chapter and in chapters 9 to 14.

¹⁰ Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD. Zechariah 2:10 Though the physical conditions were still difficult, Zechariah is commanding the inhabitants of Zion to sing and rejoice because the LORD will come and dwell among them. We have seen how prophecies have multiple fulfillments. It is certainly the case with this one. The promise would come to pass in one sense when the temple was completed but in a much greater sense when Jesus was born in Bethlehem and entered Jerusalem during the feast days (Zechariah 9:9^{xxiv}). But then there is an even greater fulfillment in that the daughter of Zion is the people of God and the Holy Spirit lives in us, literally in our midst. And Jesus will again be physically present in our midst when New Jerusalem descends from heaven. (Revelation 21:22-23^{xxv}).

¹¹ And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. Zechariah 2:11 In what day? Though there are multiple fulfillments, here we can see exactly what Zechariah was predicting. This was certainly not the case in the day when the temple was rebuilt, nor in the day when Jesus walked the earth, but rather when the Holy Spirit was poured out. That is when those who leave spiritual Babylon and become the city of God, New Jerusalem, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That is when the people of many nations began to join themselves to the LORD as the gospel went out to the world (Acts 1:8^{xxvi}). We read this now and know Zechariah was a prophet of God. Every nation in the world has groups of believers. Even nations closed to the gospel have underground churches that risk their lives to follow Jesus.

12 And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.” Zechariah 2:12 The spiritual side of the prophecy does not negate God's promises to physical Israel, Jews of faith who await the Messiah. The Millennial kingdom will be centered in physical Jerusalem (Psalm 110:2-3^{xxvii}; 146:10^{xxviii}).

13 Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling. Zechariah 2:13 At that time in history it looked rather bleak for those who had returned. But in God's timetable, it was just a short time before the temple would be built which then meant the Messiah would soon come to dwell among their descendants, teaching and healing in their midst. So rather than complain and be downcast over the present circumstances, they were to sing and rejoice over the promise, but then be silent, waiting and watching for the LORD to act like He had throughout their history. How we need to learn to be still before God (Psalm 46:10^{xxix})!

The Jews had their amazing accounts of the plagues on Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, taking the promised land, King David and the glory of the empire under Solomon, the temple being filled with the glory of God, the miracles of the prophets, and even the return from captivity. But presently it seemed like God had forgotten them. Zechariah is calling them to open their eyes and hearts and close their mouths and expect God to move, to by faith believe in what was promised and look forward in expectation. This call to silence is similar to God's rebuke to the whining Israelites at the Red Sea. They were to be still and see the salvation of God (Exodus 14:13-14^{xxx}). The immediate fulfillment was the king of Persia allowing the temple construction to resume (See ⁱⁱ.)

As they were taking the steps toward the temple being built and the coming of Messiah, so we are taking steps toward the return of Christ and the Millennial kingdom. We sing and rejoice, but we also silently look forward in expectation for God to move, knowing that His return will bring a glorious conclusion to the history of mankind. We are also to stop our whining and rejoice for what has been done and what God is soon to bring to pass. Listen in stillness for His voice in our midst directing us in service as we continue to find living stones to build the eternal temple. Whether in our day or one soon to come, we trust the promises will come to pass, promises of being fashioned into the perfect bride of Christ, of His return for us, and of our heavenly home. In the meantime, He will be a wall of fire all around us and glory in our midst (Acts 4:31^{xxxi}).

Questions

- 1 Review the timeline.
- 2 Describe the vision.
- 3 What was the promise? Can you claim it?
- 4 How did Zechariah interpret the vision?
- 5 What was the term of endearment?
- 6 What was connected to that term?
- 7 How should we interpret verse 10?
- 8 How do we know what verse 11 points to?
- 9 Why was verse 12 so encouraging?
- 10 Why is silence so important?

ⁱ **Ezra 4:23 (NIV)**

²³ As soon as the copy of the letter of King Artaxerxes was read to Rehum and Shimshai the secretary and their associates, they went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop.

ⁱⁱ **Ezra 6:8-10 (NIV)**

⁸ 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. ⁹ 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, ¹⁰ so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Ezra 6:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia;

^{iv} **Zechariah 1:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion.

^v **Nehemiah 13:23-24 (ESV)**

²³ In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. ²⁴ And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but only the language of each people.

^{vi} **Nehemiah 13:4-5 (ESV)**

⁴ Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah, ⁵ prepared for Tobiah a large chamber where they had previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

^{vii} **Zechariah 1:3 (ESV)**

³ Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

^{viii} **Exodus 14:19-20 (ESV)**

¹⁹ Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

^{ix} **Exodus 14:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen.

^x **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

^{xi} **Romans 8:35-37 (ESV)**

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

^{xii} **Malachi 3:1 (ESV)**

¹ "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

^{xiii} **Revelation 20:4 (ESV)**

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

xiv **Psalm 127:1 (ESV)**

¹ Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

xv **Job 1:12 (ESV)**

¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

xvi **John 14:23 (ESV)**

²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

xvii **Psalm 121:5 (ESV)**

⁵ The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand.

xviii **2 Corinthians 4:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

xix **1 Timothy 5:6 (ESV)**

⁶ but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.

xx **Revelation 18:20-21 (ESV)**

²⁰ Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!" ²¹ Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more;

xxi **Revelation 18:7 (ESV)**

⁷ As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.'

xxii **Deuteronomy 32:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ "He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

xxiii **Psalm 17:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings,

Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

xxv **Revelation 21:22-23 (ESV)**

²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

xxvi **Acts 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

xxvii **Psalm 110:2-3 (ESV)**

² The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! ³ Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.

xxviii **Psalm 146:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!

xxix **Psalm 46:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

xxx **Exodus 14:13-14 (NIV)**

¹³ Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

xxxi **Acts 4:31 (ESV)**

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.