

LESSON 4

Zechariah 2:3-5

3 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, 4 And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: 5 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

Two angels join the scene in verse 3 — the one that had been talking to Zechariah (presumably in an earlier vision) and another angel who goes out to meet him. One of the angels tells the other to run (not walk!) and give “this young man” a message.

Before we look at the message, who is this young man? We really have only two choices — either it is the man with the measuring line or it is Zechariah. If it is Zechariah, then we certainly have confirmation here of something we suggested in the introductory class — Zechariah was a young man at this time.

But if it is Zechariah, what about the man with the measuring line? Does he just step off the stage without playing any role? And why does Zechariah need the angel

to run and tell him something that verse 4 suggests he was able to hear when the first angel said it? I think this young man is most likely the man with the measuring line.

But why is he called a young man? The Hebrew word for “young man” used here can also be used to denote a servant in a household or an official in a court or temple. I think its use here is most likely in that latter sense because the context is focused on what he is doing rather than on his age — this man is an official of some sort tasked with measuring the city.

This official is going out to measure, but there is something very important he needs to hear first. What is it?

Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

The message is an unexpected one — he is told that Jerusalem doesn’t need any walls! In fact, he is told that Jerusalem will be a city without walls. Why? Because God will be their wall, and God will be their glory.

Why the mention of fire? That does seem surprising because fire was usually associated with the destruction of walls. Perhaps it is a reminder of who has the true fire and the true power to destroy. “For our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). That explanation fits well with what we are about to see in this vision.

Here the people are told that they don’t need a man-made wall, but Nehemiah would soon build a man-made wall anyway. Why? Because the point of this vision is not to tell the people that they don’t need to build a wall to protect themselves. I know that on the surface that sounds exactly like the point of the vision — but it is

not. How do we know that? Because Nehemiah tells us in Nehemiah 6:16 that the wall was the work of God.

So what then is the point of this vision? This man with the measuring line had a serious problem — his conception of the city of God was too small. It was poured into too small of a mould. He had failed to understand the far greater things that God had promised. He needed to think of the Jerusalem of God in far grander terms.

Verse 4 says that no walls would be able to contain all of the people and cattle living in the city. When would this happen? Zechariah is about to do something here that he will do again and again in this book — he is about to look beyond the present situation to instead look far down the years to see what God was preparing for his people. And verses 6-13 describe that wonderful (then) future promise.

Zechariah 2:6-9

6 Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. 7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. 8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. 9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall

**be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that
the LORD of hosts hath sent me.**

The key word in verses 6-9 is the first word in verse 7 — **deliver!** These verses are a promise of deliverance. God's people are told in verses 6 and 7 to get out of the way because God is about to punish Babylon! We will see something very similar in Revelation. There God's people are protected and delivered while Jesus defeats the entire Roman empire by himself! Yes, we are to wear the whole armor of God, but here and later in Revelation we see, not us fighting for Jesus, but Jesus fighting for us!

Babylon is more east than north from Jerusalem, but the road to and from Babylon is due north from Jerusalem. Anyone coming to Jerusalem from Babylon would come from the north as they bypassed the desert and followed the Euphrates River.

Verse 8 is beautiful. How much does God love and care for his faithful people? How does God see us? How does God feel about those who persecute us? "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." We are the apple of God's eye! Just think about that the next time you are tempted to feel discouraged or unloved. If we could only see ourselves as God sees us, I am convinced that we would be transformed. The church is beautiful and powerful beyond description. That's how God sees us. Is that how we see us?

What does verse 8 mean when it says, "after the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you"? What is this glory? Who are "he" and "me"?

First, "me" is the speaker, who is identified in verse 8 as the Lord of hosts. So who is "he"? Who can send the Lord of hosts to do something? I think the best way to understand verse 8 is to view the speaker here as the Angel of the Lord (while being called the Lord of hosts). Most commentaries agree:

From this point onward throughout the chapter there is a peculiar change of subject; sometimes the Lord speaks as the Lord; sometimes concerning the Lord. [Perhaps] this is for the purpose of indicating, on the one hand, the identity of this “Angel of the Lord” with the Lord and, on the other hand, a personal distinction from Him.

I think we will see this again in Zechariah 3:2, where “Lord” will be used to refer to the Angel of the Lord.

We have mentioned several times the possibility that the Angel of the Lord in these visions is the preincarnate Christ, and I think the evidence is mounting in favor of that view. This verse is particularly strong — the Lord of Hosts says that he has sent me! I am not aware of another way to understand that statement.

That part of the vision must have been particularly shocking to a Jew of Zechariah’s day, but God was once again lifting that curtain to let them see something they should have already understood. The Messiah is divine.

Isaiah 9:6 — *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

What about the glory in verse 8? What does it mean that “after the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you”? That is the reason why the Lord of hosts was sent to spoil these nations — for glory.

Isaiah 59:19 — *So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.*

This vision reminds us of Jeremiah 50-51, which is a lengthy attack on Babylon for its treatment of Jerusalem and the temple. Here in verse 7 we see the daughter of Babylon, and we see daughter of Babylon in Jeremiah 50:42 and 51:33. Here in verse 6 we see the land of the north, and in Jeremiah 50:9 we read: “For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country.” So if the people were wondering when the prophecies of Isaiah 13 -14 and Jeremiah 50-51 would occur, the answer here is that they are yet future. The verb tenses are future — “I **will** shake mine hand upon them, and they **shall** be a spoil to their servants.”

So when would it happen? Verses 10-13 will help us answer that question, but I think Daniel also helped us answer that question.

***Daniel 2:44** — And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

The Babylonians may have worried about the Persians. The Persians may have worried about the Greeks. The Greeks may have worried about the Romans. The Romans may have worried about the Parthians and the Barbarians. But they all should instead have been worried about the coming kingdom of Christ, which would sweep them all away!

Zechariah 2:10-13

10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith

the LORD. 11 And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee. 12 And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. 13 Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

Before we study these verses, I think it would be helpful to briefly consider another question. The promises in this book are for the faithful people of God. At the time this book was written, the faithful people of God were the faithful Jews, many of whom had returned to Jerusalem and were rebuilding the temple. The immediate blessings in this book are directed to them. But to whom are the *future* blessings directed? And a related question — who are the people of God *today*?

In one way the answer to that question has never changed over the centuries, but in another way the answer is very different today. The answer has always been the same in the sense that God's people have always been the faithful remnant who love, trust, and obey him. That was true then, and it is true today.

But who are those people today? Look around. We in the church are those people today, and sadly (I will say, echoing Romans 9:2) the church today is primarily composed of Gentiles. That's a very big change from the days of Zechariah, but the Bible is crystal clear on this point — we in the church are the people of God.

1 Peter 2:9 — *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.*

Romans 2:29 — *But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

Philippians 3:3 — *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

Matthew 21:43 — *Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

Romans 11:5 — *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

Galatians 3:7 — *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

Ephesians 2:19-22 — *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Now back to verses 11-13. To whom are those verses directed? We just saw a big hint. Ephesians 2:22 described the church as a habitation of God — the dwelling place of God. Look at verse 10: “I will **dwelling** in the midst of thee.” Look at verse 11:

“I will **dwell** in the midst of thee.” Look at verse 13: “for he is raised up out of his **holy habitation.**” Let’s turn to Isaiah for another big hint. First look here at verse 11: “And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people.” Now look at Isaiah 2:2-3.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Those verses were fulfilled when the church was established in Acts 2. How do we know? Because Luke 24:47 and Acts 2 tell us so. These verses in Zechariah are saying the same thing and pointing to the same great event — the establishment of the eternal, unshakable, immovable kingdom of Christ in Acts 2.

How do we know that the focus of the vision has shifted from Zechariah’s day to a future day? Most importantly we know it from our study of the rest of the Bible. We can see the same prophecies elsewhere (as in Isaiah 2), and we can see their fulfillment in Acts 2.

Also, we know that a shift in time has occurred from studying history. We know what did happen in Zechariah’s day and what did not happen. We see God telling them that they won’t need a wall, and then we see God telling them to build a wall. That lets us know the time frame has shifted in this prophecy.

And we have an important textual indication — look at verse 11. “And many nations shall be joined to the LORD **in that day,** and shall be my people.” We have seen the phrase “in that day” before, and it usually indicates a significant shift forward in

time. The phrase occurs 22 times in Zechariah! This is its first occurrence in the book. The beautiful Messianic prophecy in Haggai 2 also uses the phrase “in that day” (Haggai 2:23).

So when did all of this happen?

- I will dwell in the midst of thee?
- Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people?
- The LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land?
- The LORD shall choose Jerusalem again?
- The LORD is raised up out of his holy habitation?

When did all of that happen? Does any student of the Scriptures really need to ask that question? Each of those promises was fulfilled in the first century when the promised Messiah came and established his promised eternal kingdom.

Ephesians 2:22 — *In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

Luke 2:30-32 — *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

Romans 11:26-27 — *And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

What chapter are we in? Chapter 2. Here we have yet another beautiful Chapter 2 that describes the church. If you want to learn about the church, you can start by reading Psalm 2, Isaiah 2, Daniel 2, Joel 2, Zechariah 2, Acts 2, and Ephesians 2. I know that the chapter and verse divisions were added by man (except for the “chapter” divisions in the Psalms, which aren’t really chapters), but all of those “church Chapter 2’s” is a remarkable coincidence. And especially when we will see how the number two is used in Zechariah 4:14 to describe the church.

Notice also that in this third vision we saw a part of the vision that was fulfilled in Zechariah’s day and another part of the vision that was fulfilled when Jesus came and established his kingdom. Keep that in mind — we will see that type of dual fulfillment again.

CHAPTER 3

Zechariah 3:1

1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

“And he showed me Joshua.” Who was Joshua? Joshua was the current high priest, and this is not the only time we will see Joshua in this book. His name is spelled Jeshua in Ezra 5:2 and Haggai 1:12.

***Ezra 5:2** — Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and **Jeshua** the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house*

of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.

(We will see Zerubbabel in the next chapter of Zechariah.) Joshua was the son of Jozadak, and, as high priest, he held the highest religious office among the returned exiles.

That question was easy. The next question is more difficult — why did God show Joshua to Zechariah? Why is Joshua here? We have two options. First, this may be a vision that is about Joshua himself. Second, Joshua may appear in this vision only as a figure for something else or someone else. So what is the answer?

I think we can rule out the first option. I think it is almost certain that this vision is not about Joshua the person, although some commentaries make valiant efforts to argue otherwise. While the office of high priest was certainly significant, Joshua the person did not seem to have any particular significance apart from his office as far as we can tell from the text. Also, we will later see Joshua receive a crown in Zechariah 6:11, which we know must be figurative since Joshua is from the tribe of Levi rather than the tribe of Judah. And so it would seem natural that his appearance here is also figurative.

I think the context of this book and of this vision demands that we look beyond Joshua the man and instead look for something or someone who is being shown here using Joshua as a figure.

So who or what is Joshua representing? We have two likely possibilities. Either Joshua is representing the Jewish people or Joshua is representing Jesus, the perfect high priest who was to come. Let's leave this question open for now until we have read more of the text.

But one thing we can say right now is that the high priest certainly acted as a representative for the people. He prayed for the people; he entered the Holy of Holies on behalf of the people; he bore the guilt of the people.

Hebrews 9:7 — *But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.*

The high priest bore the names of the twelve tribes on his breastplate (Exodus 28:29), which showed that he represented the people of Israel before God. So we should not be surprised if Joshua is being shown here as a representative for the people. Another thing we can say at this point is that Joshua's name may itself be a clue — it means “God saves.” But let's keep reading before we make up our mind.

Who else do we see in verse 1? We see the Angel of the Lord again — and again, it is possible (perhaps we should say “likely” by now) that this is a preincarnate appearance of Jesus. We will have more to say on that point when we get to verse 2.

We also see Satan. What is he doing here? The text says that he is “standing at his right hand to resist him,” meaning that he is standing next to Joshua to accuse him. Revelation 12:10 tells us that Satan accuses God's people before God day and night. That description of Satan reminds us at once of the opening chapters of Job, although there you will recall it was God who first brought up Job as an example to Satan — “hast thou considered my servant Job?” Perhaps Satan had been accusing others, and so God used Job as an example of righteousness.

Remember when as a child you had a brother or sister who would always rush off to your parents to accuse you? That is Satan's full time job! He is a full time accuser! Whenever you sin, you can picture Satan rushing off to God to tell him what you just did!

And Satan is the father of lies, and so there is no telling what lies Satan is telling God about us. But we should not be worried — God is an all-knowing, righteous judge. And we have another before him who is pleading our case.

The scene here in verse 1 is similar to that found in Psalm 109:6 — “Appoint a wicked man against him; let an accuser stand at his right hand.” In short, things are looking pretty bad for Joshua.

Zechariah 3:2

2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

Verse 1 told us that Joshua was standing before the Angel of the Lord, and verse 2 begins with a statement by the Lord directed at Satan. The statement in verse 2 by the Lord creates another question — the Lord says, “the Lord rebuke thee.” Is the Lord referring to himself there? And, if so, why doesn’t he just rebuke Satan himself?

The most likely explanation is that “the Lord says” in verse 2 is an abbreviation for “the Angel of the Lord says.” That makes sense from the context here, as well as the context of the previous verse in which the Angel of the Lord is introduced to the scene. Most commentaries agree:

Almost all expositors agree that the angel of Jehovah is the Speaker here who takes the name of Jehovah because of the intimate and mysterious relation he sustains to Him.

This would seem to be a strong indication that the Angel of the Lord here is divine, but I suppose it is possible that the phrase “the Lord said” in verse 2 is just shorthand for “the Lord said through his messenger.” But when we consider what we said earlier about Zechariah 2:8, it seems to me that we are seeing both God the Father and God the Son in these visions.

In any event, the rebuke in verse 2 is a double rebuke from God, which means that it was a very harsh rebuke! God was not going to listen to anything Satan had to say about his people!

We have said already that a big reason Zechariah was written was to provide comfort and encouragement to the returned exiles. And they must have received tremendous comfort and encouragement from these verses. In the previous chapter, God described them as the apple of his eye. Here, God describes them as having been chosen and as having been a brand plucked out of the fire. They had been very close to total destruction, but God had chosen them and saved them like someone would pluck a burning brand out of the fire to keep it from being consumed. And now when Satan showed up to accuse their high priest, God made it clear that he was not going to listen to any of it.

Zechariah 3:3-4

3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. 4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying,

Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

Verse 3 tells us something very unexpected about Joshua — he was clothed with filthy garments. It was unexpected for at least two reasons.

First, the high priest was supposed to be the very essence of purity. Under no circumstances was he to ever become defiled or unclean.

Leviticus 21:10-12 — And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the Lord.

Second, the English word “filthy” in verse 3 does not even come close to what is being described here. The Hebrew word suggests the most vile of conditions. It literally means “befouled with excrement and vomit.” One commentator described the situation this way: “Few verses in the Old Testament portray a more graphic or repugnant scene than verse 3.” The high priest’s garments were supposed to be most holy, but Joshua’s garments are seen as being soiled and defiled beyond imagination. This vision would have been extremely shocking to those who heard about it and to Zechariah who saw it.

Verses 3-4 provide some more evidence on whether this Angel of the Lord is the preincarnate Christ. Recall that we saw the Angel of the Lord in verse 1, and that the Lord was heard speaking in verse 2. In verse 3, Joshua is shown standing before the angel (presumably the same Angel of the Lord from verse 1). And look at what the Angel of the Lord says in verse 4: “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” Either this Angel of the Lord is God the Son, and that is certainly what the personal pronoun “I” in verse 4 suggests, or perhaps God is using the personal pronoun as he speaks through his messenger. I favor the former view, but we can’t be dogmatic either way. (Recall that we are not saying that Jesus is an angel. We know that is not the case because angels are created beings. But “angel” just means “messenger,” which could certainly apply to Jesus.)

In verse 4, we have the beautiful picture of Joshua having his filthy garments taken away so that he can put on a change of clothing. And we also see in verse 4 something that we likely already suspected — these filthy garments are figurative of sin. The filthy garments being taken away is a figure for Joshua’s iniquity being taken away. And the word “filthy” that is used here graphically makes the point that these sins could hardly have been any worse — and yet they are taken away. (And if we think our robes apart from Christ would look any better than Joshua’s robes, then we don’t understand anything about sin!)

Satan was likely saying that these sins were so bad that they could never be forgiven, that the people could never be trusted, that they would fall away quickly — but God was having none of that.