

July 12, 2026

A GLORIOUS VISION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Zechariah 2:1-13

(3 of 10 in a series through Zechariah)

I mentioned last week that many of the prophecies of God bringing his people out of exile sound almost too good to be true. The same can be said about the way that Jerusalem is spoken of in the Scripture. As David became Israel's king, he made Jerusalem the center of all things. It was the capital city for all of Israel, the place where the temple was ultimately built, and more importantly the place where God chose to make his presence known in the midst of his people. This is one reason the conquest of the southern kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians was so painful for so many Israelites. It meant they had to leave Jerusalem and the worship of God that was centered in this great city. They were exiled and made to live in Babylon, while the city of Jerusalem lay in ruins.

And yet the Lord didn't let them despair as if there were no hope. He spoke of a day when Jerusalem would be restored beyond any glory it had ever known, especially through the prophet Isaiah. I noted some of these details last week, but they really are extraordinary. Isaiah 54:11-12 speaks of Jerusalem being built with precious stones. Its foundations made of sapphire, parts of the city made of jasper and ruby, its gates with crystal, and its walls with other precious stones. Isaiah 27:6 speaks of the land blossoming, putting out shoots, and growing so that the entire earth is filled with fruit. Isaiah 60 speaks of the gates of this glorious city never needing to be shut because of attacking enemies (v. 11), foreign nations bringing into the city their riches into Jerusalem (v. 13), and the sun no longer being needed as the Lord would be its light (vv. 19-20).

I mentioned some of these descriptions last week because the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple could have felt quite discouraged and weary as they looked around and saw nothing like these extravagant descriptions in the sixth century BC. But, as we noted last week, on the evening of February 15, 519 BC, Zechariah received a series of visions, the first two of which showed the Israelites not to be discouraged by reminding them that God was seeing all that was going on, was aware of everything, loved them, longed to be with him, and would indeed one day make everything right. And yet, as glorious as the message of those first two visions was, the visions didn't stop there. There was more to come, and the third of these visions is found in our text this morning—Zechariah 2.

In this third vision, Zechariah is given pictures that correspond to these extravagant descriptions of Jerusalem that we've heard from Isaiah. And to the reader, it should become clear that these visions aren't mere descriptions of Jerusalem being rebuilt in the sixth century BC. They exceed anything that did or could have happened in that time period. Rather, these are descriptions of a city to come, a heavenly city, a city that the book of Revelation refers to as the "new Jerusalem" (Rev 3:12; 21:2). In other words, the Lord is showing his people around 500 years before Christ came into the world his glorious plans to make a new heavens and new earth and fill it with his people—a reality that began with the death and resurrection of Christ and will be culminated

with his return. In other words, he again is encouraging his people by showing them not to give up on the fulfillment of these extravagant descriptions of Jerusalem.

However, chapter 2 isn't made up simply of this encouraging vision. We find the vision itself given to us in the first five verses of the chapter. Then, in verses 6-13, we find the Lord speaking to his people in light of this glorious vision, telling them what they must do as a result. Consequently, the truths that are found in the vision given in verses 1-5 are given to us again in verses 6-13 as the people are told what to do in light of this vision. Therefore, I want to show you this morning, as we walk through this vision in verses 1-5 and its application in verses 6-13, the encouraging truths that the Lord revealed to Zechariah, truths that bear on us this morning as well as we await this new Jerusalem to come. And we can begin by noting that God will bring multitudes into his new creation.

God's will bring multitudes into his new creation

As the vision begins, Zechariah tells us that he lifted up his eyes and saw a man with a measuring line in his hand. Now, this imagery may not strike us as obvious, but it does occur elsewhere in the Old Testament. For example, when the prophet Jeremiah prophesies about the rebuilding of Jerusalem in 31:38-40, he speaks of the measuring line going out first. In other words, this is what you would do to survey the land, mark off all the boundaries, and stake everything out to prepare for building. So, that particular imagery would have been familiar to Zechariah. But he doesn't know where the man in the vision is surveying or what he might be building, and so he asks, "Where are you going?" And the man answers Zechariah, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length" (v. 2). In other words, the man is preparing for the city of Jerusalem to be rebuilt, but because he's measuring the entirety of the city, the man is probably measuring everything for the rebuilding of the walls of the city, in particular, which would have surrounded the whole city.

Now, to Zechariah, this would have been good news. After all, Jerusalem had been left in ruins after its conquest at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 BC. To have a vision of someone surveying the land for the city and its walls to be rebuilt would have been exciting. And yet, the angel who had been talking with Zechariah and guiding him through the visions, surprisingly comes forward at this point and tells another angel to go stop this young man. In fact, the angel tells him to go to him with urgency. He's told to run to him. Why?

Well, the man with the measuring line has no need to measure, but it's not because the Lord isn't going to rebuild this glorious city. Rather, the man needs to stop because the Lord is going to do something more glorious than this man with the measuring line envisions. Thus, the angel is told, "Run, say to that young man, 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it'" (v. 4).

In other words, the reason the man with the measuring line need not to waste his time measuring for the walls to go back up is because the building of walls would create insufficient

boundaries for the multitudes of people that the Lord is going to bring into the city. This future city will be filled with so many people that the walls couldn't contain them.

And this explains why Zechariah says what he does in when he seeks to apply this vision in verses 6-13. His message is that if God is going to populate this new glorious city to such a degree that walls can't contain them, then the Israelites are foolish to stay in Babylon and be content there. Therefore, he proclaims in verses 6-7, "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. Up! Escape to Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon." He's telling them to get up out of exile and go to Jerusalem.

But, perhaps surprisingly, it's not just Israelites in exile who are going to come and populate the city. The Lord tells us that he's also bringing many nations. We read in verse 11, "And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people."

Now, obviously, the fulfillment of this vision didn't happen in the earthly Jerusalem in the sixth century BC. Any Israelites who did come and repopulate the city were merely serving as a picture, a type of what was to come. Interestingly, Nehemiah actually did come back and lead in the rebuilding of the walls. And they were plenty sufficient. Hordes of Israelites didn't stream in, nor did the nations. But that didn't mean that God wouldn't fulfill his promise of bringing multitudes of people into the new Jerusalem that would be a new heavens and new earth.

Rather, after Christ died, rose, and ascended back into heaven, his disciples began proclaiming the gospels, and guess what? Multitudes have come to him. Yes, many among the Israelites—including 3,000 on the day of Pentecost alone. But also multitudes from the nations, like you and me. I mean, it's crazy to think that people in Jackson, TN have devoted their lives to this promised Messiah who came to Israel, and yet this very thing was promised. It was given to Zechariah in this vision. There are already more believers throughout the ages than the earthly Jerusalem could contain, and every day, through the preaching of the gospel, more and more are coming in. God is bringing multitudes into his new creation. But it's not just that God is gathering a people, we also see that God will his people from ultimate harm.

God will protect his people from ultimate harm

A city without walls sounds good in theory, doesn't it? More and more people can come in without limitations. But the purpose of walls around a city wasn't simply to create a border for the city that might contain those within. The purpose of a city having walls was for protection. And so the good news that so many will stream into the city that there can't be walls actually creates a problem to solve—what about protection? How will all those in the city be kept from harm?

But as soon as the question comes up in our minds, the Lord answers it. Immediately after proclaiming that the city will be without walls in verse 4, the Lord adds, "And I will be to her a

wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst” (v. 5). The Lord will take it upon himself to protect and care for his people.

Moreover, he tells us why in the latter half of the chapter where Zechariah applies the vision. After telling the people to get out of Babylon and come to Jerusalem, he adds in verse 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 refers to the Lord’s people as the “apple of his eye.” This Hebrew phrase translated the “apple of his eye” is a phrase that refers to the middle of one’s eye. By referencing the middle of the eye, it’s denoting the part of the eye that was thought to be most vulnerable, or—and this is crucial for our purposes—that part of the eye to which you would give most care to protect. So, “apple of my eye” is a fair equivalent translation, since that indicates something that is treasured and cared for. That’s the idea. God would protect his people as one protects the vulnerable part of one’s eye.

In context then, when the Lord tells the nations that they will be judged because they brought harm to his people, who are the apple of his eye, the Lord is saying, “I’ll judge the nations because they went after my people whom I treasure, to whom I give an inordinate amount of care, and whom I protect in light of their vulnerability and weakness.” In other words, with this phrase the Lord is simply doubling down on his commitment to protect and care for his people. In the Lord’s mind, to attack his people is to attack him, to touch them is to touch him. That’s why, you may remember, that when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Saul (eventually Paul) who was persecuting the church, the Lord said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *me*?” (Acts 9:4).

Now, let’s put these first two truths together. The Lord is gathering a multitude to himself through the preaching of the gospel in this age so that they might populate his new creation. You and I are evidence of that. If your faith is in Christ, you’re part of that multitude. But what does it mean that he’ll protect those who are part of his kingdom, then? It means that he’ll allow no ultimate harm to come to us.

This, of course, might raise all kinds of objections from us. After all, many in our own congregation are suffering, and many believers have been martyred throughout the ages. Fair. So the message isn’t that the Lord will protect us from any harm. It’s not even a promise that the Lord will prevent people from destroying our bodies. But the Lord will protect his people from ever suffering eternal loss. In other words, he won’t let anyone snatch us out of his hand or cause us to fall away from him. Even if they kill us, he’ll bring us to himself. What looks like loss for us to the outside world is actually us conquering and being preserved by our Lord as we hold fast to the gospel. And so the Lord is saying that he’ll protect his people in the sense that he’ll preserve us. He’ll hold us fast to the end, himself being a wall of protection against all that might come at us and threaten to pull us into hell. He cares for his redeemed people as one cares for his own eye.

And if you think that this glorious vision couldn’t get any better than the Lord caring for us as one protects the most vulnerable part of one’s eye, it actually does get better. Throughout the vision the Lord also shows us that our God will give himself to his people and his people to himself.

God will give himself to his people and his people to himself

If God pictures this new Jerusalem as a city where he gathers all his people, then what is there? In other words, what's the attraction? What's so great about this city? Notice what the Lord says at the end of verse 5. He declares, "And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst." God himself will be in this city. His glory will fill it. And so God is saying to us, "I will bring you into my new creation as my redeemed people because that's where I am. I will guard you every step of the way to make sure you get home, so that where I am, there you will be also."

And when Zechariah applies this vision in the second half of the chapter, he repeats this truth but also adds to it, saying as a mouthpiece of the Lord in verses 10-12, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD. 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. And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem."

Here, the Lord repeats that his people shall be with him as he will dwell in their midst. But at the end of all of this, he adds that he will inherit his people. In other words, our Lord isn't merely saying, "I'm the most glorious and most satisfying thing anyone can know, and I will give myself to you as your God"—though he is certainly saying that. He's also saying, "And I desire you as my inheritance." In other words, he genuinely does love his people and desire them to be with him. That's why he brings us into his kingdom, and that's why he guards us from ultimate harm. He loves us. That's why he is intent on making us his and preserving us until we are home with him. What a glorious truth!

But there's one more note we must sound as we conclude our trek through this third vision recorded in chapter 2. In light of these glorious truths, there is a fitting response. We must sing, rejoice, and be in awe of our glorious God.

Therefore, we must sing, rejoice, and be in awe of our glorious God

How might Zechariah apply this news that has gotten so good that now we're told the Lord sees us as his inheritance that he's determined to bring home to himself? Zechariah commands us to respond in worship. Particularly, he says, "Sing and rejoice" (v. 10). And then, after all that he's declares in verses 1-12, he ends, saying in verse 13, "Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling." In other news, we should stand in silent awe of our great God, and we should sing and rejoice in light of his glorious promises. We should worship our Lord with reverence and rejoicing. How could any lesser response be fitting?

Now, these promises weren't fulfilled in Zechariah's day. The Lord was giving glorious visions that would largely come about in our day. A little more than 500 years later, as Jesus came into this world, he came to gather a people to himself. He came to ransom a people for God who would

populate this new creation, this new Jerusalem. And Jesus not only called people to himself—through his own work and as he proclaims the gospel through us—but he declared that no one would be able to snatch them away from him. He'd preserve all that the Father gave to him so that he might present them holy and blameless on that great day. And that great day when Christ returns is none other than the day that we will dwell with our Lord forever and he with us. It is a day all of the glorious truths of this third vision will be fulfilled.

Now, I know that right now this vision isn't perfectly fulfilled. We're not there yet. The new Jerusalem is not yet a reality. We still feel the attacks of the enemy. Sin still seems to torment. And death keeps snatching away our loved ones and us ourselves. And yet God gave a vision to a people 2,500 years ago because he knew that knowing the glorious reality to come motivates a people to press on in the present. And the same should be true for us. So, let's end with this glorious picture of what's to come.

At the end of the book of Revelation, John tells us that he "saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." And he adds, "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. He saw "the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. It's radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal." John continues, "And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day---and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev 21). May that day come quickly. And until then, let's sing and rejoice and stand in awe of our redeeming, preserving Lord. Amen.