

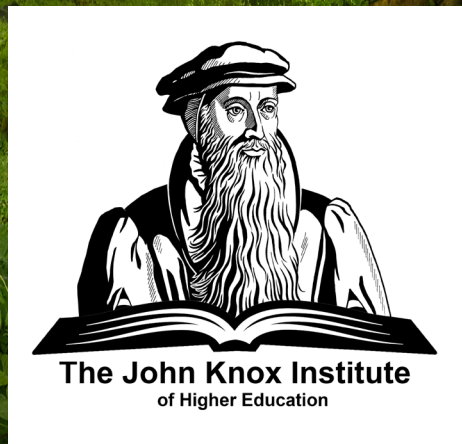
The Visions of Zechariah

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

by Rev. William Macleod

Lecture #4

**The Man with the Measuring
Line – Church Growth**



John Knox Institute of Higher Education

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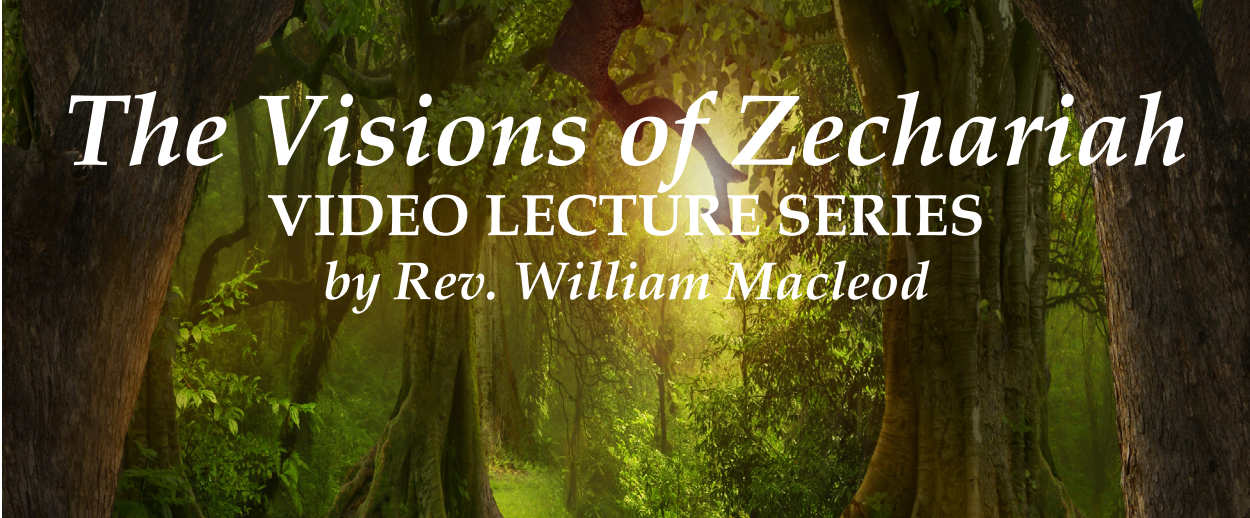
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The Visions of Zechariah

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

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Lecture #4 – Zechariah 2

The Man with the Measuring Line – Church Growth

Today we come to our fourth lecture in the series on Zechariah's Visions. We're dealing with the "man with the measuring line," which, in a sense, is describing for us church growth. So this is Zechariah, chapter 2.

As Christians in the twenty-first century, we have a tendency to be pessimistic. For the past hundred and fifty years, the church in Britain and western Europe has been in decline. The church has continued to spread in Africa, South America, and Asia, but it is generally very superficial and worldly. Most professing Christians show little zeal for the Lord. The charismatic movement, with its emphasis on health and wealth, the prosperity gospel, superficial choruses, man-centred worship, absence of the fear of God, and a lack of emphasis on personal holiness characterizes the vast majority of Christians in the developing worlds. Things seem to be going from bad to worse. Many of the best Christians are sad and depressed. They think it will continue like this till Christ returns. But God through Zechariah is encouraging us. Better days are around the corner.

Verses 1 and 2, The Man with the Measuring Line—"I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof."

Jerusalem, at this time, was in ruins. The Chaldeans from Babylon had broken down the walls, destroyed the palaces, and burnt the temple. The inhabitants had been carried away captive. For seventy years the land had been desolate. Now, a relatively small number of the exiles had returned. They set up an altar and began to worship God again in Jerusalem. They started to build the temple, but became discouraged. They were few in number. They had nothing like the resources which Solomon had when he built the first temple. They were surrounded by enemies who tried to frighten them and stop the work. The economic situation was also difficult. They had to build homes for themselves and to cultivate the fields. It's easy to focus on the difficulties when despair takes over. Some thought they would never be able to complete the building of the temple. They thought Jerusalem was always going to remain a ruin. Surely God has forsaken them. He has justly been angry with them. Their sins have been awful and it looks as if God has cast them off forever. But here, we have a fascinating vision. God shows Zechariah that there is a future. Here is a surveyor,

a builder, with a measuring line in his hands. Preparation is being made to build. God himself is involved. The city will be built again. We have here an encouraging vision for Zechariah, for the Jews at that time, but also for the true church of God today.

Looking now at verses 3 and 4, Jerusalem Crowded—“And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, 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.”

An angel was showing these visions to Zechariah. Another angel comes to meet this angel and has a wonderful message to declare: “Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein”—verse 4. At the time, very few lived in Jerusalem. It had no walls, and there was little security for the residents. Seventy five years after this, in the days of Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem would eventually be rebuilt. Even at that later date, special measures had to be used to conscript people to live in Jerusalem. Some were praised for volunteering to live there. There had to be a certain number of inhabitants to make a viable city out of it. But here it is predicted that the walls will not be able to hold the multitudes who will come to stay in Jerusalem. Later, Jerusalem did grow, but it was then a walled city. Similarly, in the time of Jesus, Jerusalem had a considerable population, but these were enclosed within the city walls. When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, in AD 70, they had to lay siege to the city for five months before they broke through the walls. So when was this prophecy fulfilled? It is surely yet to be fulfilled. The church becomes the New Jerusalem. In the New Testament age, it will grow and grow. On the day of Pentecost, three thousand were added to the church. This number of members soon greatly increased. The church has now grown till it is to be found as a minority in every country of the world. But the true church is still only a tiny minority of the world’s population. Surely this passage speaks not of a handful here and there, but of a great multitude. We think of our own congregations, how small they are. Here, though, there is a reference to overflowing numbers. God’s church will be as “towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein.” We look in faith and optimism for a day when our churches will have standing room only and crowds will be standing outside trying to get in.

Verse 5, God Protects—“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.”

To people in ancient times, a town without walls was very vulnerable. Enemies could easily attack under cover of darkness. But here is a promise. God says, “I...will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” When Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem, the city had powerful walls but yet they could not keep him out. The siege weakened the defenders, and bit by bit the battering rams broke down the walls. But if Jerusalem had a wall of divine fire around her, who could penetrate that? When the horses and chariots of Egypt were following the Israelites at the Red Sea, God was a barrier between them and the Israelites. He was a pillar of fire giving light to Israel, and a cloud of darkness to the Egyptians.

The king Ahaziah sent a captain of fifty with his fifty men to arrest the prophet Elijah who was sitting on a hill. He said to the prophet, “Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down”—2 Kings 1, verse 9. The prophet replied, “If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty”—verse 10. The fire came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty soldiers. The king then sent another captain with fifty men. This man demanded, “O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly”—verse 11. Again the prophet replied, “If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the

fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty”—verse 12. God was a wall of fire protecting his prophet. No army could hurt him. When the king sent a further captain with his fifty men, “The third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight”—verses 13 and 14. This captain knew full well that no matter how large his army was and how well equipped they were, they were helpless before the fire of God.

The new Jerusalem is the church of God. The church has many enemies today. Some are politically powerful and ruthless. Others are clever and sophisticated. But the church is safe because God is a wall of fire around her. Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”—Matthew 16, verse 18. In the city gates, the leaders gathered and made their plans. All the cunning of hell is organized against God’s church. But Christ will build his church, and nothing can hinder or destroy it. Nothing can hold back the advance of the church of Christ, because he is building his church.

We are also told here that God, “will be the glory in the midst of her”—verse 5. That was wonderfully true of Israel as they travelled from Egypt to the promised land. God was present among her as the Shekinah glory. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night led Israel, and when they encamped the pillar of God’s presence rested on the Tabernacle. When the temple was built the presence of God filled the Holy of Holies between the cherubims upon the mercy seat.

In Ezekiel’s prophecy we are told of the dramatic departure of the glory of God’s presence. First, we are told, “The glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house”—Ezekiel 9, verse 3. Then in the following chapter, we’re told, “Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east of the LORD’s house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above”—Ezekiel 10, verses 18 and 19. Finally, in the following chapter, it is stated, “Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city”—Ezekiel 11:22 and 23. The glory of the Lord had departed from the temple, and from Jerusalem.

And now we read that the glory of God will be the glory in the midst of her. There is no reference of the glory of the Lord coming down upon the second temple when it was built. It was stated, however, through the prophet Haggai, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts”—Haggai 2, verse 9. The glory of this second temple will be greater because of the Messiah, who is God himself, who would condescend to enter into it, and teach there. That second temple was destroyed by the Jews when they crucified Christ, but in three days, he raised up the new, eternal temple. Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body”—John 2, verses 19 to 21. This new temple is his church. It is composed of living stones, believers, and Christ himself is the chief cornerstone. This temple is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and so has the glory of God in the midst.

Coming now to verses 6 and 7, Separate Yourselves from the Heathen—“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. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.”

The land of the north was Assyria first, then Babylon, and eventually Persia. These empires were to the east but they always invaded from the north. God had scattered Israel abroad. In his wrath against his people because of their idolatry, they were carried away captive, and God had scattered them among the heathen. But now his purpose is to gather them again to the land of Israel. Assyria and Babylon had been destroyed. The Jews are to separate themselves from the nations. Sadly, too many Jews were comfortable in Mesopotamia. They had nice houses, and good jobs, and businesses. But God’s wrath is against the heathen nations, and he is going to destroy them. He warns his people, “Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.” Do not perish with the heathen.

The same message comes, of course, to us today. Paul warned the Corinthian believers, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel. And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”—2 Corinthians 6, verses 14 to 18. Marrying the unconverted or entering into a close business relationships with such is condemned. It will almost always lead to compromise. Christians and unbelievers are opposites. Christians love God, but non-Christians hate God. If we love and follow God, we will be hated by those who love Satan and his ways.

Similar teaching is to be found in the book of Revelation, with reference to the apostate church: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double”—Revelation 18, verses 4 to 6. God’s true people are not be members of the church of the Antichrist or of bodies that teach heresy and practise immorality.

The Jews are to return to Jerusalem. God’s people are to be a holy people not unequally yoked with the wicked. True Christians are to separate themselves from the sacramentalism and idolatry of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, and the liberal unbelief of so many mainline churches.

God Will Be Glorified in Destroying His Enemies, verses 8 to 9—“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. 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.”

“After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you.” God will, at the last, get the glory. His enemies will ultimately all be destroyed. They laugh at God’s people and mock them, but the Lord is grieved for his people and concerned for his own great name. His enemies will be trampled underfoot. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head. Christ will crush Satan and all his followers. Those who spoiled the church will be spoiled. The enemies of the church touch the apple of God’s eye. How special you are to God, you who are a child of his!

He loves you with an infinite, eternal and unchangeable love. Isaiah wrote: “I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses”—Isaiah 63, verse 7. He is bound in covenant love to his people, therefore, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old”—Isaiah 63, verse 9. Our great King states, “I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come”—Isaiah 63, verses 3 and 4.

The Angel of the Lord, who is speaking here, is obviously the second person of the Trinity, the Lord himself, for he adds, “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”—verse 9. That shaking of the hand destroys the leaders of their enemies so that they become a spoil to their own servants. The end result of that will be that all will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father—Philippians 2, verse 11.

Coming now to verse 10, Sing in Triumph—“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.”

Too often, God’s people are depressed and downcast. The Jews here are commanded to sing for joy. We often sigh and groan. No, remember what Paul said—Philippians 4, verse 4: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us”—Romans 8:37. “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”—Romans 8:31. Let us sing for joy! No longer will God be a stranger to us. He will not be our enemy anymore. He promised to come and dwell in our midst. We pray sometimes, “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down”—Isaiah 64, verse 1. But now he assures us he will come, and that he will dwell with us. He has further assured us, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”—Hebrews 13, verses 5 and 6. Let us from our hearts sing his praises and rejoice in him!

And then, coming to verse 11, Many Nations Will Be United to Israel—“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.”

The Lord is obviously not limited to Israel and Judah. Many nations are going to come and be united with them. This happened in the New Testament times. Christ commanded that the gospel was to be preached to all nations. Following Pentecost, the church spread to the Gentile world. Down through the centuries since then, all nations have been touched, but so far only a remnant from them. Surely there is a promise here that not just a few from these nations, but the nations themselves considered as a whole will come. We look forward to great multitudes being gathered into the church of God. They shall belong to God just as Israel did. God himself will dwell in these nations and he will be their God, and they shall be his people. All shall know that this prophecy is the truth sent by the Lord of hosts through his prophet.

And then to verse 12, God’s People Will Be His Portion—“And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.”

God has chosen Judah and Jerusalem. It has seemed at times that he is not interested in them and has forgotten them, but that’s not the case. They are his delight and have a great future before

them. This is true of the literal Judah and Jerusalem, for as Paul states, “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance”—Romans 11:29. We are looking for the natural branch to be grafted again back into its own olive tree. But these words are true for all God’s people, Jew or Gentile—they are his portion and delight. We receive God as our inheritance and God takes us as his inheritance.

Verse 13, You Enemies, Be Silent—“Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.”

For a long time, it seemed that God was asleep. His people were being trampled upon by their enemies. He allowed their enemies to gain the victory over them because of their backsliding. And now he arises to deal with their enemies. As the psalmist puts it, “Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach”—Psalm 78, verses 65 and 66. Though God seems to be sleeping, he is soon going to awake. Let us pray as Isaiah did: “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?”—Isaiah 51, verses 9 and 10. Let the enemies of the church be silent and frightened. God has stirred himself up. He will severely punish those whom he used to chastise his people. His church has a great future. Amen.