

Zechariah 2:10–13

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[0 : 0 0] It's great to be here this evening. Advent is wonderful, isn't it? Well, Advent means arrival, and it concerns the arrival of Jesus, and it counsels us readiness for his coming. In Advent, we wait for one person two times. First, we remember Israel's wait for the Messiah as we count down to Christmas, Jesus' first arrival. Second, we wait for Jesus now, for his promised return, which ends history as we know it, the final judgment, new life forever with God, the remaking of all things, Jesus' second arrival. In both Advents, we remember that the Lord comes. Even if he seems to delay, even if things seem hopeless, surely he comes.

This is the startling promise of Zechariah 2, verse 10. I encourage you to open your Bible there. It'll help you out as we go through. I think it's page 794. This was our fourth reading. Zechariah 2, verse 10. Behold, I come. I will dwell in your midst, declares the Lord.

Well, let's look to Zechariah's context to see what this means. Zechariah is written in the first waiting for the first coming of the Messiah, 500 years before Jesus arrives. The location is Jerusalem. The setting is restoration from exile. Exile is when God sent his own people, the Jews, out of their land as judgment for rebellion against him. He actually impelled enemy nations to carry off his own people, scattering them across the region, destroying the temple, destroying the walls, destroying the city of Jerusalem. That's exile.

Restoration is when God gathers his people back to their land, executing a plan that he promised to many prophets over many years. And wonderfully, this restoration is not just for Israel or Jerusalem.

It initiates a work of restoration for the whole world, culminating in the arrival of God's true king Jesus. But in Zechariah's time as a prophet, only the first glimmers of this promise, the first shreds of restoration have begun to appear. The exiles have begun trickling back into Jerusalem.

[2 : 4 0] The foundation of the new temple has been set. But even so, for Zechariah and the Jews, things don't seem so great. Building a temple isn't easy. I was just in Jerusalem in June. The stones are about the size of a smart car. They're huge. This is a monumental task. There's not very many of them, and they're still under foreign rule. The taxation is harsh. The city is a ruin. There's no walls.

There's enemies on all sides. And that's where we are in chapter 2 in Zechariah. And if you want to, you can flip the page over. At the beginning of the chapter, the vision, this second vision of Zechariah is of a man. And he has a measuring line. And he's going out. Zechariah sees him going out to measure the city as a surveyor might before building a wall. He's measuring the dimensions of the city.

And the angel says to Zechariah, stop him. Go catch him. Go get the man. Tell him Jerusalem is about to swell with people. It's about to extend far beyond the borders of the wall. The Lord himself is going to be like a wall of fire for the city. Further, tell him that the people should flee Babylon and they should come back to Jerusalem because I'm about to judge Babylon. And I'm going to protect you, my people, like the apple of my eye. Why tell this man these things? What does it mean? Well, one of Zechariah's main tasks throughout the book is to remind the people you need to attend to God first by rebuilding the temple. And here in the beginning of chapter 2, God says, don't look at rebuilding the wall. I'll protect you myself. Don't quail in fear at the might of Babylon as they loom at your borders. I'll judge them shortly. Instead, pay attention to what is really happening. Focus on what really matters, which is this, verse 10. Behold, I come to dwell in your midst. And verse 13, the Lord has roused himself from his holy dwelling. Or if you're Narnian at heart, Aslan is on the move. That's the sense here. The Lord is embarking on his plan of restoration.

He works. He comes. It's started. It's happening. So you, restored exiles, attend to him. Attend to his temple. Not the wall. Not your other concerns. Look to your God who comes.

Part of this promise is that many nations are going to come to dwell in Zion. That's verse 11. Yes, that's going to happen much later after Jesus comes. When God lifts up Zion as the light of his salvation, calls the peoples of the whole world to himself through his chosen branch, Jesus.

[5 : 27] Another part of the promise is that the Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the Holy Land. That he will again choose Jerusalem. That's verse 12. And Judah here is not a place. It's a people.

The Lord is going to gather his people back as his own. He's going to restore them. He's going to choose Jerusalem as a location for this great salvation that he's enacting. God is going to draw and restore the entire world to himself through tiny Judah, her city, Jerusalem, and her king, David's son, Jesus, who is coming. But the main encouragement here is attention to God's arrival and action.

Behold, I come to dwell among you. I will act in your midst. My plan, my story, it moves forward. And there are two responses commanded of us in this passage. Those who are alert to God's arrival.

The verse is in verse 10. Sing and rejoice. Our response to this promised arrival is joy. Celebrating, singing. Now that's what we're doing here today, isn't it? Why? Because the Lord comes to restore. He comes to heal and to save.

The grand plan of God is to wipe away every tear, to destroy death, to end injustice, for true peace. It's happening now. It's already begun in Jesus. And when he comes again, he's going to finish that work forever. And as the angel says in Luke, it's good news of great joy.

[6 : 59] And so into this seeming disaster of being a Jew in Jerusalem in 500 BC, where the way forward just looks incredibly murky. And to all of us who are in this world, which sometimes seems like a sinking ship, Zechariah radios in. He radios into us who are sinking and drowning. And he says, help is coming.

The Coast Guard has launched. The helicopter's on the way. You're saved. And response to news like that is great joy. Jesus has come. He comes again. Your God comes to restore.

Sing and rejoice. But the second thing that we are to do, which is just as appropriate, is this command in verse 13. Be silent, all flesh.

And the sense here is awe. Awe before the mighty action of God. If you imagined that God was sleeping, know for certain that he is roused. He's awoken. He's at work.

Something momentous is happening. Shut your mouth. Attend to what is happening. The Lord comes. Let all mortal flesh keep silence and wonder. I love that hymn that we just sang.

[8 : 17] Proclaims this wonder and awe of what happens when heaven comes to earth. The fear and trembling that it can inspire in our hearts when we become aware of what is truly happening.

And there's also fear and trembling because along with restoration and his second coming, Jesus also brings a reckoning. And at that time, our homage and loyalty and worship is due.

And so Advent is also time for repentance. Because when God comes, he also comes to judge. But thanks be to God that in his first coming, he came as a humble servant to die in our place on a cross.

So here's the encouragement of Zechariah 2 verses 10 to 13. Pay attention to what is happening, to what God is doing. Be ready for his arrival.

Rejoice and wonder as God works his grand plan of salvation for all people. And though these two things might seem to rule each other out, on the one hand to sing and rejoice and on the other to keep silence, they work together in this way.

[9 : 26] That we are to put our state attention to the way things really are. To the Lord who stands behind all history and changes all things when he enters first as a baby and again when he comes as judge of all.

Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen. Amen. Amen.