

ZECHARIAH

Chapter Two

Introduction

In every walk of life there are measures of success. The typical units of measure are size and money. The more money you have, and the larger your endeavor is, the more successful you seem.

What if you wanted to measure the success of a **ministry**? I hope you'd agree that size and money are *not* the true measure of a ministry! I could cite numerous examples from the Bible. Jeremiah had little success numerically; John the Baptist wasn't exactly rich. Even the earthly ministry of Jesus would not measure-up to the standards of size and money: He had nowhere to lay His head, and in the end all His disciples scattered.

If size and money are not the proper measure of a ministry, what is?

There was a man taking measurements in Zechariah's vision. God was measuring the ministry in Jerusalem. It may have been a physical measurement of width and length, of towns and livestock; but it was certainly a **spiritual** measurement of what God intended for His people. If we can determine what God intended for His congregation in the Old Testament, perhaps we can determine standards of measurement for our own congregation.

God reveals His two intentions in these verses:

1. In verse five you see that God intended to be spiritually present in the midst of His congregation.
2. In verse ten you see that God intended to come to earth and physically dwell among His congregation.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points this morning: #1 Measure Your Ministry By The Presence Of The Lord In Your Congregation, and #2 Measure Your Ministry By The Promise Of The Lord's Coming.

#1 Measure Your Ministry By The Presence Of The Lord In Your Congregation (v1-9)

The man with the measuring line is the fourth of Zechariah's ten visions – all received in a single fantastic night. I want to stress the primary context of this text. These verses in Zechariah are about Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Listen to this quote from Charles Spurgeon:

It is evident that this vision and prophecy graciously reveal the future history of Jerusalem. You may spiritualize, if you will, and say that Jerusalem signifies the Church: but I pray you not to forget the literal meaning of such words as these... Jerusalem is spoken of, and Jerusalem is meant... Jerusalem will be rebuilt in more than her former splendor; the Jews will be restored to their own land; and Messiah will reign as a prince of the house of David. We cannot understand many portions of Scripture except upon this belief. If it be so, it appears according to this prophecy that God shall be the protection of this great city, and the glory in the midst of her... Her Lord and King shall dwell in the midst of her; many nations shall join themselves unto Jehovah, and He, from shore to shore shall reign, while all flesh is silent before him, because he is raised up out of his holy habitation... I clearly see in Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ will come... that he will come personally to reign upon this earth. At his coming it appears clear to me that he will gather together the Jewish people, that Jerusalem shall become the metropolis of the new empire which shall then extend from pole to pole, from the river even to the ends of the earth. (AGES Charles Spurgeon Library).

Zechariah sees both the *immediate* and *ultimate* future of the Jews and Jerusalem. The first nine verses seem to relate more to the immediate future and the Jews that had returned to rebuild the Temple. I say this because of verses six and seven which were urging the contemporaries of Zechariah who had stayed behind in Babylon to return to Jerusalem. You'll see how verses ten through thirteen definitely look to the ultimate future of the Jews and Jerusalem – beyond even our own time to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to rule the earth from Jerusalem.

The Jews who had returned to rebuild the Temple were a discouraged group: Their Temple would not have the outward splendor of the former Temple... They had no king – only an appointed governor... They were still subject to the Medes and Persians... Their Samaritan neighbors were opposing their progress.

Zechariah sees into the spiritual realm. A man with a measuring line is surveying Jerusalem! God had a plan that He was working out. Despite the outward measurements, the true measure of their

ministry was spiritual. To know that God was the surveyor and builder of Jerusalem would greatly encourage and inspire these downhearted Jews. Their ministry may be difficult and seem insignificant; but it was really delightful and full of significance as far as God was concerned. Most importantly, His presence was in the midst of His congregation.

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The intentions He *had* and *has* for the Jews are intentions He has for **you** – believers in the church. Without ignoring the verses in their context, we want to make application of them to ourselves.

Jesus described the church as His building project; He said “I will build My church.” He also said,

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

In the Revelation of Jesus Christ the Lord is pictured as walking in the midst of His churches – present when they meet.

Knowing that Jesus is the builder of your ministry should greatly encourage you. Your ministry, your service to the Lord, may be difficult and seem insignificant; but it is really delightful and full of significance as far as Jesus is concerned. Jesus is present in your midst and you can both *expect* and *experience* His presence.

There are some things, though, which we must understand about ministry. The first is that God is the One who establishes your ministry.

Zechariah 2:1 Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand.

Zechariah 2:2 So 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.”

The Jews were busy building. But they were only building because God had brought them back. The things they were building were by God’s design and plan.

What I am going to say next may shock you: Not every church or ministry, either within or outside of a church, has been established by

God. It is possible for men and women to start “ministries” that God never intended.

I don’t say this lightly. Before I came to Hanford in 1985 I had to be convinced that God Himself had established this church. I had to know that it existed by God’s design and not by the desires of any man or group of men. I carefully suggested alternatives to starting a new church; these alternatives were spiritually unsatisfactory. Even then we waited upon the Lord to reveal His will for us and the church here.

Sometimes people establish a ministry because they see or perceive a “need.” **Need isn’t enough!** When the children of Israel “needed” to be delivered from their bondage in Egypt, God sent them a baby – Moses. Then He prepared Moses for 80 years before he was ready to represent God.

Ministry is not a hobby; it’s not an experiment. God establishes churches and ministries by His own plan.

The next thing you learn is that God is the One who expands your ministry:

Zechariah 2:3 And there was the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him,

Zechariah 2:4 who said to him, “Run, speak to this young man, saying: ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it.’”

The Jerusalem the surveyor measured was not the Jerusalem Zechariah walked through everyday. It was Jerusalem as God saw it – more expansive, more extensive. In other words, God had already established the extent of Jerusalem and would expand it according to His own predetermined design.

One of the most popular movements in the church today is the church growth movement – teaching churches the techniques to make their churches grow. Church growth is in God’s capable hands – **not ours!**

Let’s skip verse five for a moment. We’ve so far learned that God establishes and expands ministries according to His own design.

What is our part? In verses six through nine we'll see that our part is to *announce* and to *assist*.

You are to announce:

Zechariah 2:6 "Up, up! Flee from the land of the north," says the LORD; "for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven," says the LORD.

Zechariah 2:7 "Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon."

God had used the Babylonians to discipline His people. Their discipline had ended. He then raised-up the Medes and Persians to conquer Babylon and free His people to return to Jerusalem. Fifty-thousand had returned; many more had remained. He was ordering those who remained to flee and escape before He fully destroyed Babylon.

God had sovereignly dispersed them to Babylon. Now He was calling them back to Jerusalem and Judea. God, through Zechariah, was announcing and making known His will.

You and I have the benefit of the completed Scripture. In it God's will is revealed. You and I are simply to announce what is written in the Bible.

With the announcement should come assistance:

Zechariah 2:8 For thus says the LORD of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.

Zechariah 2:9 For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me.

Before I go on, let me point out an important doctrinal teaching. In verse eight you read, "He sent Me after glory..." The Hebrew text literally says, "Jehovah sent Jehovah." This is only sensible if you understand that God exists as a Trinity – as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father sends God the Son. The Bible everywhere teaches the trinity.

The announcement was plain enough: "Up," "flee," "escape." To assist their obedience, God revealed some of His thoughts toward them. For example: they were the "apple of His eye." The assistance God gave them to obey His announcement was a clear

representation of His thoughts and His heart, toward them as His people.

You are called upon to assist others by revealing and representing God to them. Too often we misrepresent God to others by portraying Him as cruel, unloving, distant. We do it to motivate people from fear or guilt. The love of God, and His grace for you, are His true motivations.

Now that we've learned a few things about ministry, let's return to our theme: You can expect and you will experience His presence in your midst. We skipped verse five; verse five is the statement of God's presence with His people. Let's read it now:

Zechariah 2:5 For I,' says the LORD, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'"

Churches go to extremes when it comes to expecting and experiencing the presence of God in their midst:

1. At one extreme you find charismatics who emphasize all manner of excessive outward manifestations during their worship of God to "prove" God was present in their midst.
2. At the other extreme are conservatives who object to any special sense of the Lord's presence in their midst as being unnecessary and perhaps even unbiblical. There is thus a strong emphasis on the Word of God as it relates to your intellect and not your emotions.

It can be challenging to find just the right balance; *that's why there are so many churches!* Even within Calvary Chapel's there is much diversity. We want to see Jesus manifested in the midst of our worship and study of the Word without being *maniacs* or becoming *mechanical*.

1. When it comes to the worship of God, we attempt to direct it towards God without allowing outward excesses that take the focus off of God and onto a person or people.

2. With respect to the Word of God, we present it systematically but not intellectually. Our study of the Word **is** intelligent but also (hopefully) inspirational.

What do we really mean by *expecting* and *experiencing* the presence of God? In verse five we're told that His presence is two things: A wall of fire all around, and His glory in your midst.

1. Walls are means of protection. God wants you to expect Him to be a wall of fire around your life. Nothing can breach the wall without God's approval. You are safe and secure in His care – even in the midst of trials and tragedies. You won't *escape* trouble, but you will be able to *endure* it.
2. "Glory in [your] midst" describes the indescribable experience of God's peace, joy, and love in all of your circumstances.

This, to me, is the true presence of God in our midst – the expectation of His care, and the experience of His comfort regardless your circumstances.

The presence of God in your congregation is one way you measure your ministry. The other is the promise of the Lord's coming.

#2 Measure Your Ministry By The Promise Of The Lord's Coming (v10-13)

These last four verses are the ultimate future of Jerusalem, Israel, and the nations of the earth:

Zechariah 2:10 "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the LORD.

Zechariah 2:11 "Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.

Zechariah 2:12 And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

Zechariah 2:13 Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!"

This has not yet occurred. It is the future Millennial Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus will literally, physically return to Jerusalem. He will

rule the world from His throne. All the nations of the entire earth will submit to Him.

This is the only place in Scripture where the land of Israel is called “the Holy Land.” We call it that today, and that’s OK – as long as we realize it is *not yet* the Holy Land. It will only be the Holy Land when Jesus Christ returns to it.

The promise of the Lord’s coming would have been a great encouragement to the Jews who were struggling to rebuild the Temple.

The promise of His coming is still a great encouragement to the church! He came the first time and was rejected by the Jews. He promised to come again. We live in-between these two comings. Jesus is not through with the Jews, but He is building His church during this time. He will come for His church in the Rapture; then, seven years later, He will come with His church to earth to fulfill these promises in Zechariah – and hundreds of others that describe His rule over the earth.

It is a measure of your ministry that you constantly remind people of the promise that Jesus is coming. Jesus Himself focused on the promise of His coming:

John 14:1 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

John 14:2 In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there you may be also.*”

Revelation 22:7 “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

Revelation 22:12 “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

The apostle Paul called the coming of the Lord your “blessed hope.” When he needed to minister comfort to discouraged believers, he described the return of Jesus for them.

It's not just the events of the Rapture and the Second Coming; it is an overall emphasis on future things that should be the measure of your ministry. Christians are pilgrims, strangers, foreigners on earth. We need to be reminded that this is not our home. Our hope is in the future.

God called the Jews to come out of Babylon. Babylon was a real city where they dwelt. Through the centuries Christians have used the term "Babylon" to describe the world itself. Thus, anywhere you dwell is "Babylon." God still calls you to come out of Babylon in the sense of keeping your contact with the world as light as possible.

Conclusion

Let's close with a devotional thought. God called Israel "the apple of His eye." The apple of the eye is the pupil. The eye, and the pupil, are extremely vulnerable and we do whatever is necessary to protect them. So the first thing we understand is that God does whatever is necessary to protect His people.

The phrase "apple of my eye" has come to mean the thing that is most precious to someone. So the second thing we understand is that God's people are what is most precious to Him.

The particular word for "apple" in this verse is the Hebrew *babah*. It is of uncertain origin; some scholars suggest it is similar to our English word "baby" and give it the meaning *the little man*. They note that when you look into someone's eye, you can see a tiny mirrored reflection of yourself.

So the third thing we understand is that God's people are "the little man" of His eye. If you were to look into God's eye, you would see yourself reflected there – *and God would see Himself reflected in you!* The idea here is that you are being perfected as you and God gaze upon one another.

You are protected... precious... and perfected by God as you expect and experience His presence and hold to the promise of His coming.