

Zechariah Chapter 3

Book Study

Zechariah's fourth and fifth visions (Zech. 3-4) go together in a special way in the eight visions. They show that God will cleanse and anoint His people so that they may walk in the fullness of God's promised destiny and blessings as set forth in the first three visions (Zech. 1-2)

These two visions focus on the two main leaders in Israel, Joshua, the high priest (Zech. 3) and Zerubbabel, the governor (Zech. 4). The spiritual condition and experience of the leaders in the kingdom impact and reflect the spiritual condition and experience of the people they lead. Zechariah saw the two main leaders of the temple in Jerusalem (Zech. 3-4). This vision presents Israel's leadership and national calling as priests to all the nations (Ex. 19:6; Isa. 61:6). These two visions encourage the two leaders who are primarily responsible for rebuilding the temple.

The Lord addresses the two main obstacles that hinder His people from enjoying their destiny. The first obstacle is our sin; therefore He provides spiritual cleansing and renewal (Zech. 3). The next obstacle is our lack of resources; therefore He gives supernatural provision (Zech. 4). In other words, we need His grace for continued spiritual renewal and supernatural provision.
– Mike Bickle

Read Zechariah Chapter 3

The vision has four parts: the heavenly scene (3:1-2), a symbolic act (3:3-5), an exhortation to wholeheartedness (3:6-7), and a revelation of the coming Messiah and His salvation (3:8-10).

Joshua was functioning here in his high priestly capacity as the official representative of Israel. The high priest represented the nation before God on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-10). As the sin of Joshua was removed, so the sin of Israel and the land will be removed (3:9; 13:1-2).

What God did for Joshua, He will do for Israel as a nation and for each believer in Jesus.

Chapter 3: NKJV with Notes

3 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to *oppose* him.

- Accuse: The phrase “to oppose” is translated “to accuse” (NAS, NIV). Satan continually accuses God’s people (Rev. 12:10). Satan can only accuse; he cannot condemn.

“10The accuser of our brethren, who accused them before God day and night.” (Rev. 12:10)

- Angel of the Lord: Most conservative commentators believe that the Angel of the Lord is the preincarnate Christ, the second person of the Trinity. Zechariah had seen Him earlier that night in the first vision (1:11-12). The Angel is called “the Lord” (3:2)

2 And the Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?”

- Rebuke you: The Lord rebuked Satan, not because the accusations against Joshua were false, but because of God’s gracious love for and sovereign choice of Joshua and Israel. The Lord will not tolerate Satan’s accusation against us. Neither should we. We must make this same declaration of truth over our heart day by day. Jesus’ intercession for us is far stronger than Satan’s accusations against us (Rom. 8:34).

“33Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us...38I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities...39shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ. (Rom. 8:33-39)”

- The Hebrew word *satan* means "adversary." While the Hebrew term can apply to human adversaries (see 1 Kings 11:14, 23, 25), in this narrative the adversary was not a human being but Satan himself. The fact that Satan was standing on the right side is significant. According to Jewish tradition, the right side of the altar (both the brass and golden altar) is reserved for God Himself. The "right hand" signifies power, authority, and exaltation; Christ sits on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1; see also Acts 2:33; Heb. 1:3; 12:2). Note that when the angel Gabriel announced the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias the priest, the angel was standing on the right side of the golden altar in the holy place (see Luke 1:11). When Zacharias heard

the news, he could have been stricken with fear for two reasons. First, no man was to be in the holy place during the burning of the sacred incense except the one priest that the high priest had appointed. If another priest had entered the holy place, he could initiate God's judgment, or both could be expelled from the priesthood. (King Uzziah was struck with leprosy for offering incense, according to 2 Chron. 26:16-21.) Second, Zacharias knew the right side of the altar was reserved for God only; if someone had appeared there, it could have been the Lord Himself.

In Zechariah 3:1, Satan made a bold move to stand in the very place reserved for God's presence on the Temple Mount at the altar of sacrifice. However, the unclean garments of Joshua the high priest gave Satan the legal right to accuse him, just as sin in our lives can open the door to Satan's accusing us before God (see Rev. 12:10). One of Satan's spiritual strategies is to take advantage of our spiritual uncleanness and the unrepentant attitudes that barricade us from God. Satan uses mental guilt and spiritual condemnation to make believers feel inadequate and failure-ridden, thus hindering confidence in prayer and blocking understanding of God's willingness to answer prayer (see 1 John 3:20-21). The Lord's response to Satan's brashness was to say, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan" (v. 2), and then He instructed that the high priest's filthy garments be replaced with clean and proper ministry garments (v. 3-4). The mitre (v. 5) was the high priest's golden crown, which was engraved with the words "Holiness to the Lord" on the front; this was to be worn only by the high priest (see Exod. 28:36-38). Joshua was then given a serious charge to follow fully the Lord's instructions for the priesthood (v. 7). This narrative reveals how Satan will attempt to disrupt the most sacred moments in God's house by bringing accusations against the ministers about their past failures or some form of uncleanness that may have stained their garments of righteousness. The good news is we can cleanse our garments in the blood of the Lamb and stand justified in the house of the Lord. – *Perry Stone Hebraic Prophetic Study Bible*, p. 1463

- At the same time as Satan was accusing Joshua in the spirit realm, Tattenai, the Persian governor of Samaria, was accusing Joshua (Ezra 5:3), saying that he had no right to build the temple (Ezra 5:1-17). Tattenai governed the region beyond the River, west of the Euphrates to the Sea.

“1Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah...prophesied to the Jews...2So Zerubbabel...and Jeshua...rose up and began to build the

house of God...3At the same time Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River...spoke thus to them: "Who has commanded you to build this temple?"...7They sent a letter to him [King Darius]

- Brand plucked from the fire: The Lord describes Joshua (and Israel) to Satan as a brand plucked from the fire (3:2). Israel had just been delivered from the fire of the Babylonian captivity. She was like a burning stick that God had pulled out of a fire to save her from total destruction. God will not allow Israel to be totally destroyed in the fires of His judgment. Israel has almost been destroyed several times in history, such as in 70 AD. It will happen again in the Tribulation (13:8; Jer. 30:7; Rev. 12:13-17), but God will intervene in mercy. Having snatched Joshua, or Israel, as a brand from the fire, He has no intention of allowing them to be totally destroyed.
- Amos uses this same phrase to describe Israel being snatched as a half-burned stick in a time of divine discipline. Amos recounts Israel's rescue from a situation comparable to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, when fire fell from heaven to destroy them. "11 I overthrew some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; yet you have not returned to Me..." (Amos 4:11)
- That is a vivid phrase. Maybe you have thrown something on the fire you didn't intend to. Have you ever done that, then whipped it out before it got burnt, rubbed out the flames, and it is charred and dirty but it is saved? God says of Jerusalem, "Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?" – Pawson p. 49

3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

- Filthy garments: Joshua was guilty, as shown by his filthy clothes. He also represents Israel. We, too, are guilty as charged. We have no hope of acquitting ourselves.
- I want to give you the literal Hebrew now. If you are offended I am sorry, it is the Word of God. It says, "Joshua was standing before the Lord in clothes that were saturated with vomit and human excrement." I am afraid we can read "filthy clothes" and not get the feeling of it, but that is what it says. In other words, he was standing there in clothes that he had soiled himself. That is the picture. - Pawson p. 50

4 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, “Take away the filthy garments from him.” And to him He said, “See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.”

- *Rich robes*: The rich robes are symbolic of being clothed with God’s righteousness and with priestly robes (Ex. 28:8-9; Lev. 8:7-9; Isa. 61:10; 2 Cor. 5:17, 21). The truths of the gospel of grace are set forth in this passage. In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus says that the father put the best robes on his son (Lk. 15:22)

“21He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor. 5:21)

“10For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments.” (Isa. 61:10)

5 And I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.”

So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by.

- **Intercession**: Zechariah asked the Lord to put a turban on Joshua’s head (3:5). His intercessory declaration was accepted. Perhaps the Lord purposely left out the turban to allow Zechariah to participate in the process through intercession. The expression “I said” in v. 5 indicates that Zechariah was standing in the heavenly council in this vision.
- **Turban**: The turban is a symbol of Israel’s reinstatement as a priestly nation (Ex. 19:6). The Lord clothed Joshua in the rich robes of priestly garments to signify the grace that qualified him to be in leadership in God’s kingdom. The Lord will forgive, transform and equip Israel to fulfill her original calling to be a priestly nation (Ex. 19:16; Isa. 61:6).

The Coming Branch

6 Then the Angel of the Lord admonished Joshua, saying, 7 “Thus says the Lord of hosts:

‘If you will walk in My ways,

And if you will keep My command,

- The Lord admonished Joshua to walk in wholehearted obedience (3:6-7). This is the only reasonable response to receiving God's extravagant grace. The Lord gave him two exhortations (to godly character and to diligent service) as the conditions for receiving three promises.
- The exhortation to keep God's command, or charge, is to "not quit," but to be diligent in the ministry assignment that God gave him. Some see their ministry assignment as a voluntary activity that they can quit when it gets hard, rather than a military assignment in a war zone that they must fulfill regardless of the opposition or difficulty they face.

Then you shall also judge My house,

And likewise have charge of My courts;

I will give you places to walk

Among these who stand here.

- Places to walk among these who stand here: "These who stand here" refers to the angels who stood in God's presence (3:4). The NAS says, "I will give him free access to stand among those that are with you now." This promise includes experiencing nearness to God, access to the angelic realm and the heavenly council, and eternal rewards.
- When God works, his method is through leadership. His pattern is to raise up people for the right jobs. So often we think that method is the key to what God does. We chase around looking at this work and that work, and trying to analyse the method, and then we try to apply it. It never works, and the reason why it doesn't work is simple: it is people not methods that God can use. He suits the methods to the people he has raised up. In fact, this is the whole history of the Bible. When God wants to act he raises up an Abraham, a Moses, an Elijah. Leadership is the key to things happening. Leadership is always his method and you can't get around this. - Pawson p. 45

8 'Hear, O Joshua, the high priest,

You and your companions who sit before you,

For they are a wondrous sign;

-You and your companions: Joshua and his leadership team were priests. Their priestly role was an imperfect type of Jesus and His priesthood.

In their wholeheartedness and faithfulness (3:7) they were to be a picture that gave others insight into the Messiah, and inspiration to walk in His grace and to be priests as they were. They were “proof” that the priestly lifestyle is wonderful, attainable, and doable.

These men were used to restore the priesthood and temple; they were prophetic signs that the fullness of both would come in the future. Their very existence as faithful priests was a sign of God’s favor on that generation, and that all Israel would be saved (3:9).

For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH.

- Many scholars interpret the BRANCH to be an epithet of the coming Messiah, as Isaiah wrote, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isa. 11:1-2). The term also relates to the promise of the Davidic dynasty: "There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed" (Ps. 132:17); "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth" Jer. 23:5). According to Zechariah, a man called The BRANCH will rebuild the temple (see Zech. 6:12). This prophecy about The BRANCH is a double-reference prediction, as the primary builders of the Jewish temple in Zechariah's day were Zerubbabel and Joshua (see Hag. 1:1, 12, 14).

However, another temple will be built during the time of the millennial reign of Christ, and this temple will be directed under the leadership of the Messiah, The BRANCH. Zechariah's symbolic reference to the stone (V. 9) is also linked to the coming Messiah. The stone with seven eyes foreshadows the Lamb with seven horns and eyes, found in Revelation and symbolizing Christ (see Rev. 5:6). The prophecies dealing with the stumbling stone and rock of offense are found in Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:13-15; Matthew 21:42; and 1 Peter 2:7. However, the "stone which the builders rejected" became the chief cornerstone of the Church (see Matt. 21:42; Eph. 2:19-22). Zechariah's description of the seven eyes on the stone could also reflect a custom in the ancient east where foundation stones of temples were carved with a message from the builders. The Lord is watching over the entire process from the laying of the foundation to the completion of His house in Jerusalem. - *Perry Stone Hebraic*

- There is a branch going to come that is going to serve God. Jeshua, that is his real name, the same as the name Jesus, and God said, "You, Joshua," or Jeshua, which means "God saves", "you are a picture of a branch that is coming, my Branch that is going to shoot up from the royal stump again and be the Saviour. - Pawson p. 52

9 For behold, the stone

That I have laid before Joshua:

Upon the stone are seven eyes.

- Seven eyes: On the stone were seven eyes symbolizing Jesus' omniscience (Rev. 5:6). Jesus possesses omniscience—all knowledge and wisdom. In Zechariah 4:10, we learn that the seven eyes on this stone are God's eyes going to and fro throughout the earth.
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Behold, I will engrave its inscription,'

Says the Lord of hosts,

'And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

- I will engrave its inscription: God will engrave on the stone a declaration related to His removing Israel's sin in one day (3:9c). It is not clear what the inscription specifically is. Stones in the ancient world had writings on them; they were memorials to commemorate significant events or to tell of the greatness of a king, etc. Since the national salvation of Israel is mentioned in the next phrase, the inscription is probably related to her salvation.
- Can you imagine what that will mean for the world? If their casting off has meant so much to us, what will their inclusion mean? Think of the day when the entire nation will have its guilt removed. What happened to Joshua in this vision will happen to the whole of Israel and every Israeli will stand clothed before God in righteousness. Think of that. I get excited about that: a nation of priests born in a day; the land cleansed in a day. It will happen in that day when they see Jesus, look on him whom they pierced, realise their guilt and are forgiven. I tell you that God can cleanse a man in a single minute - miracle of miracles. Pawson p. 53

10 In that day,' says the Lord of hosts,

‘Everyone will invite his neighbor

Under his vine and under his fig tree.’ ”