

Zechariah 03 - Cleansing of the High Priest Joshua; Israel's Future Cleansing

II. Eight night visions (Zech 1:7—6:15)

- (4) Cleansing of the High Priest Joshua (3:1-10)
 - (A) The Stages of Joshua's Cleansing (3:1-5)
 - (a) Satan's Condemnation (3:1)
 - (b) God's Rebuke (3:2)
 - (c) Joshua's Cleansing (3:3-5)
 - (B) Jerusalem's Future Cleansing (3:6-10)
 - (a) King-Priest (3:6-7)
 - (b) Future Branch (3:8)
 - (c) Cleansing (3:9)
 - (d) Peace (3:10)

The fourth vision (Zech 3:1-10), the first of the two messianic “centerpiece visions” in the series, communicates the trial of the High Priest, Joshua, who represents the Jewish people before the Lord. This vision demonstrates that, although the people are unclean and thereby unworthy to worship the Lord, as a sovereign act of elective grace He will make His people clean and bless them.

The vision opens with Satan, the angelic adversary, before the Lord in the Temple Courts standing ready to condemn Joshua, the High Priest, because of the filthiness of His clothing. While the accusation would have been true that the ritual impurity of Joshua's clothing would disqualify him from serving as High Priest, the Lord Himself rebukes the accuser and provides clean, royal robes for Joshua to wear.

Joshua, as the representative of the Jewish people, specifically of the remnant now laboring in Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, is declared worthy of the Lord by a sovereign declaration of His grace. The Jewish people and their leaders could be fully confident that the Lord would accept their worship.

The Lord charges Joshua to faithfully execute the responsibilities of his priesthood and encouraged him with the promise of the coming Messiah, who will bring a period of prosperity and blessing. The Lord reveals that Joshua and his priestly colleagues are symbols of this coming Messiah, called here the Branch, a term filled with royal Davidic connotation. This Messianic figure is also designated here as an omniscient foundation Stone. This Messianic Davidic ruler would serve as High Priest and remove the Jewish

people's sin, thereby inaugurating a period of tremendous blessing for the people and their land.

Zechariah 3

- (4) Cleansing of the High Priest Joshua (3:1-10)
 - (A) The Stages of Joshua's Cleansing (3:1-5)
 - (a) Satan's Condemnation (3:1)

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right to accuse him.

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

1 Then I saw Joshua the High Priest standing in the presence of the angel of the LORD, with Satan standing at his right to oppose him.

1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

- "Then" - a *waw* connective; all eight visions are an integral sequence
- "...he showed" - a verb of perception; a marker for a new vision
- "...me" - Zechariah
- "...Joshua the high priest" - here, Joshua, as high priest, stands as the representative of Israel (Cf. v9)
- "...Joshua" - *yehoshua*, means "YHWH saves" (Cf. Num 11:28; 13:16; Deut 1:38). This is obviously not the same Joshua who led the Israelites into the land...that was 1000 years earlier.

- During the time of the returns from exile, God was working through two men:

- Joshua, the high priest, from a spiritual/religious angle
- Zerubbabel, the governor, from a political angle
- "...Satan standing at his right to accuse him" - Satan constantly tries to accuse and paralyze God's children. He frequently reminds us of our guilt and inadequacy. While Satan is right about what we deserve, he does not want us to remember God's undeserved grace and mercy.

— Anytime God uses us to do something, Satan will always come against it. Here, God is using Joshua and Satan is standing right beside him in an attempt to disrupt what God is trying to do.

— Sometimes we're shocked at how much warfare we're going through, but we really shouldn't be because Scripture is clear that Satan will also be at work to oppose or thwart what God is doing.

— "accuse" - literally "to satanize him"; Satan is the accuser (Cf. Rev 12:10; Luke 22:31). He loves to accuse God before man (making it sound as if God is holding out on you, or

distort the goodness and faithfulness of God in your mind, Cf. Eve, Gen 3:4-5). He also loves to accuse man before God (Cf. Job 1:8-11; 2:3-5), attacking our character.

(b) God's Rebuke (3:2)

2 And the LORD said to Satan, "**The LORD rebuke you, Satan!** Indeed, the LORD who has **chosen Jerusalem** rebuke you! **Is this not a log snatched from the fire?**"

2 The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

2 The LORD told Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan—in fact, may the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! This man is a burning brand plucked from the fire, is he not?"

2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: *is* not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

- "...The LORD rebuke you, Satan!" - the LORD rebuked Satan, not Joshua; God is the Defender of His people.

— This shows the futility of running around "binding" Satan, screaming and getting angry with Satan, or giving him a black eye and running him out of town. Here, clearly, the LORD is rebuking Satan, not man (Cf. Jude 9).

- "...chosen Jerusalem" - the LORD sovereignly decided to choose Israel to mediate (or be an instrument of) His blessings to the world (Deut 7:7-8)

— This is the third mention of God's choice of Jerusalem thus far in Zech (Cf. 1:17; 2:12)

- "...Is this not a log snatched from the fire?" - here is the explanation for why the LORD rebuked Satan's accusation of Joshua (Cf. Amos 4:11)

— The "fire" could've destroyed the Jewish nation in the Babylonian captivity, but God did not allow them to be destroyed but instead plucked them out of the fire. Specifically He plucked Joshua and Zerubbabel from the fire in order to use them.

— *The Lord...referred to Joshua as a burning stick 'plucked from the fire,' evidently for His future use (Cf. Amos 4:11). If Joshua represents Israel, then the fire must refer to the Babylonian Captivity from which Israel had emerged almost destroyed, and the stick refers to the surviving remnant. Israel had experienced another brush with extinction at the Exodus (Deut 4:20; 7:7-8; Jer 11:4), and she will do so again in the Tribulation (Cf. 13:8-9; Jer 30:7; Rev 12:13-17). [Constable]*

— Since God has done so much, not only is His love proven, but the continuance of it is assured and guaranteed. A piece of timber is only plucked from the fire if the owner sees an additional purpose for it...

— God went through the trouble to preserve Judah, Joshua and Zerubbabel from Babylon and bring them back to the land because He wants to use them. Since He's done this, why would God sit there and allow Satan to malign them in front of Him?

- If God wanted to destroy Israel, He would not have brought them out of the Babylonian captivity
- *For the figure of the brand plucked from the fire we can be referred to Amos 4:11. It is most meaningful here. It speaks of Israel snatched from the Babylonian Captivity, for the wrath and fire of God have not been permitted to do their complete work of destruction.... Would Jehovah have delivered Israel from Babylon if His ultimate purpose was to destroy her? [Feinberg]*

(c) Joshua's Cleansing (3:3-5)

- 3 Now Joshua was clothed in **filthygarments** and was standing before the angel.
- 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.
- 3 Now Joshua was wearing filthy clothes as he stood in the presence of the angel.
- 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.
- "...filthy garments" - in Israel, filthy garments symbolized someone polluted by sin (Cf. Is 4:4; 64:6). Even though Joshua had been delivered from the Babylonian Captivity, it was still possible for him (and Israel) to be defiled as far as acceptable priestly ministry was concerned.
- This was not just ritual uncleanness because of their prolonged stay in Babylon, but also moral uncleanness. The "filth" spoken of here is the worst physical kind, representing moral pollution. Israel had been delivered but not cleansed.
- Joshua was unclean not only because of his unrighteous deeds, but also because of his righteous deeds (Is 64:6). Anytime we rely on religiosity to gain standing before God, that's a righteous deed in man's eyes yet God looks at it as a filthy garment.
- This is what Adam and Eve did in the Garden after their sin; God changed their "clothes" (Gen 3:21) because the only clothing that God accepts is the clothing that He provides.
- So Joshua is standing before God in his own works of righteousness, and Satan capitalizes on it by bringing a bunch of accusations against Joshua
- So what does God do...He takes care of the problem (v4-5)

- 4 And he responded and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "**Remove the filthy garmentsfrom him.**" Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your guilt away from you and will **clothe you with festive robes.**"
- 4 He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes."
- 4 So the angel continued to tell those who were standing in his presence, "Remove his filthy clothes." And he told Joshua, "Look how I've removed your iniquity. Now I'm clothing you with fine garments."

4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment

- Because Joshua was helpless to bring about his own cleansing and purification, the Angel of the LORD commanded His attending angels to remove the filthy garments. This was clearly God's work without help from man.

- "...Remove the filthy garments" - the first thing God does with Joshua is the same thing He does with us: He removes Joshua's sin (doctrine of expiation, the permanent renewal of the consequences of sin, Cf. Ps 103:12).

- "...from him" - notice that Joshua was not told to remove the filthy garments from himself; the angel of the Lord ("I") removed Joshua's guilt and sin and put on him festive robes

- "...clothe you with festive robes" - the second thing God does with Joshua (and us!) is replace filthy clothes with "festive robes" (doctrine of imputation, Phil 3:9); for Joshua, this indicates reinstatement into the priestly office.

5 Then I said, "Have them put a clean **headband** on his head." So they put the clean headband on his head and **clothed him with garments**, while the angel of the LORD was standing by.

5 Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the Lord was standing by.

5 Then I said, "Let them place a pure diadem on his head." So they placed the pure diadem on his head and clothed him with fine garments while the angel of the LORD was standing beside them.

5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre (turban) upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by.

- "...headband" - a turban, which had a plate of gold engraved with the words "Holy unto the LORD" (Ex 28:36-38)

- "...clothed him with garments" - when God saves us (justification), it's not only "just as if I've never sinned"...that is only half of the picture (subtraction). God removes our sin (expiation), but He also transfers to us His righteousness (imputation).

— This is why Satan's accusations about me fall flat in front of God, because when God looks at me, He sees the righteousness of Christ, not my own righteousness (Cf. Phil 3:9).

— Justification is getting our dirty clothes taken away (subtraction, expiation), and getting new clean clothes given to us (addition, imputation).

Joshua's cleansing is a type of what God will do for the entire nation of Israel. This future cleansing is described in v6-10. There will be four things over the nation:

1. A King-Priest (v6-7)

2. A future Branch (v8)
3. Cleansing (v9)
4. Peace (v10)

(B) Jerusalem's Future Cleansing (3:6-10)

(a) King-Priest (3:6-7)

6 And the angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying,
6 And the angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying,
6 Then the angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua:
6 And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying,
- A cleansed high priest needs a renewed commission...

7 "The LORD of armies says this: 'If you walk in My ways and perform My service, then you will both **govern My house** and be in charge of My courtyards, and I will grant you **free access** among these who are standing *here*.

7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing *here*.

7 "This is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies says: 'If you will live according to my ways, and if you will keep what I have entrusted to you, then you will also administer my Temple, and you will also guard my courtyards. And I will give you access to these who serve here.

7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.

- Once Joshua had been cleansed, then he was commissioned to service
- "...govern" - a regal term; if Joshua obeyed the Lord and served Him, Joshua would govern the temple, have authority over the temple courtyards, and enjoy free access into the Lord's presence. Quite a promise!
- This does not mean a share in government; it refers to the Temple then under construction. The duties of the priests included deciding between clean and unclean.
- "...free access" - freedom of entrance and exit, which speaks of direct and immediate access to the Lord. This was possibly only to priests who were ritually and morally pure (Cf. Ex 40:30-32).

(b) Future Branch (3:8)

8 **Now listen**, Joshua, **you high priest**, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you —indeed they are men who are a **sign**: for behold, I am going to bring in **My servant the**

Branch.

8 Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.

8 "Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and those companions of yours who sit with you, for these men are a sign that I am presenting my servant, the Branch.

8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch.

- "Now listen" - the call to hear indicates the importance of what is about to be revealed

- "...high priest" - Joshua, who was currently functioning as the high priest of Israel; "your friends" (the other priests) symbolize believers.

- "...sign" - a symbol; Joshua's cleansing is symbolizing what God is going to do for the whole nation, namely to bring in Jesus ("the Branch") to rule Israel and the world, functioning as a servant (Cf. Is 42:13; Mark 10:45)

— Joshua, in his righteous state, is prefiguring the King-Priest Jesus Christ during the millennium. Being both a king and a priest is something that man has never been able to do.

- "...My servant" - a characteristic designation for the Messiah (Cf. Is 42:1; 49:3; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11; Ezek 34:23-24; Phil 2:6-8)

- "...the Branch" - a proper name for the coming Messiah (Cf. 6:12; Is 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Luke 1:78, where "dayspring" [KJV] can be substituted with "branch")

(c) Cleansing (3:9)

9 For behold, the **stone** that I have put before Joshua; on one **stone** are **seveneyes**.

Behold, I am going to engrave an inscription on it,' declares the LORD of armies, 'and I will remove the **guilt of that land in one day**.

9 For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes.

Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

9 Look, the stone that I put in place in Joshua's presence—on that one stone are seven eyes. And look, I will do the engraving myself,' declares the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, 'and I will remove the perversity of that land in a single day.

9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone *shall be* seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

- "...stone" [2x] - a common figure of God and the Messiah in Scripture (Cf. 10:4; Ex 17:6; Num 20:7-11; Ps 118:22). God had promised that the "stone" would be a secure, never-failing refuge for His people (Cf. Is 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6)

- However when Christ appeared, He proved to be a "stone" over which the Jews "stumbled" and an offensive "rock" to them, that they rejected (Ps 118:22-23; Is 8:13-15; Matt 21:42; 1 Peter 2:7-8)
- Today, He is the "foundation stone" and the "chief cornerstone" of the Church (Eph 2:19-22). In the future, He will be the "great stone" that smites the nations (Dan 2:35,45).
- "...seven eyes" - symbolizing complete divine intelligence (omniscience) (Cf. 1:10; 4:10; 2 Chr 16:9; Is 11:2; Ezek 1:18; 10:12; Col 2:3,9; Rev 5:6)
- "...land" - Israel
- "...one day" - Israel will be saved in one day (Cf. Is 66:8; Hosea 6:1-3). This could also be a reference to the cross, where in one day Jesus would take on the sin of all mankind. However, the scope here is more narrow ("remove the guilt of *that land*") and refers primarily to Israel's ultimate redemption.

Ezek 36:24-28:

- 24 For I will take you from the nations, and **gather you from all the lands; and I will bring you into your own land.**
- 25 **Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean;** I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.
- 26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and **put a new spirit within you;** and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
- 27 And I will put My Spirit within you and bring it about that you walk in My statutes, and are careful and follow My ordinances.
- 28 And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

Ezek 37:7-11:

- 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a *loud* noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.
- 8 And I looked, and behold, tendons were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but **there was no breath in them.**
- 9 Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'The Lord GOD says this: "Come from the four winds, breath, and breathe on these slain, so that they come to life."'"
- 10 **So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath entered them, and they came to life** and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.
- 11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, **these bones are the entire house of Israel;** behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.'

ISRAEL'S TWO REGATHERINGS	
THE PRESENT (FIRST) REGATHERING	THE PERMANENT (SECOND) REGATHERING
Return to part of the land	Return to all the land
Return in unbelief	Return in faith
Restored to the land only	Restored to the land and the Lord
Sets the stage for Tribulation (discipline)	Sets the stage for Millennium (blessing)

Adapted from: Price, *Jerusalem In Prophecy*, 219

Zech 12:10: "And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of pleading, so that they will look at Me whom they pierced; and they will mourn for Him, like one mourning for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

Is 66:8: "Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? **Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be given birth all at once?** As soon as Zion was in labor, she also delivered her sons.

(d) Peace (3:10)

10 On **thatday**, declares the LORD of armies, '**every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.**'"

10 'In that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.'"

10 At that time,' declares the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, 'you will invite each of your neighbors to join you under the vine and fig tree.'"

10 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree.

- This verse describes the peace that will one day be experienced under His glorious reign during the millennial kingdom

- "...that day" - Israel's national "Day of Atonement," the day when they recognize that Jesus is their Messiah
- "...every one of *you* will invite his neighbor to *sit* under *his* vine and under *his* fig tree" - a kingdom characteristic passage (Cf. Micah 4:4; Is 65:21-22)

Micah 4:4: Instead, each of them will sit under his vine And under his fig tree, With no one to make *them* afraid, Because the mouth of the LORD of armies has spoken.
[Note: this was George Washington's favorite verse. He used it or referred to it over 40x in his writings.]

Is 65:21-22:

- 21 "They will build houses and inhabit *them*; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
- 22 "They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat; For as the lifetime of a tree, so *will be* the days of My people, And My chosen ones will fully enjoy the work of their hands.