

Zechariah Chapter 3

Zechariah 3:1 "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him."

Verses 1-13: The fourth vision is of "Joshua the High Priest standing before the angel of the Lord."

The scene is invested with a judicial character as Joshua, the High Priest of the restoration who came back in the first group with Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:2; 5:2; Hag. 1:1), was accused by Satan, who was standing at the right side, the place of accusation under the law (Psalm 109:6). That Joshua was representative of the nation is evident from:

1. The emphasis on the nation in these visions;
2. The fact that the rebuke (in verse 2), is based on God's choice of Jerusalem, not Joshua;
3. The identification (in verse 8), of Joshua and his fellow priests as symbolic of future Israel; and
4. Its application to the land (in verse 9).

"Satan": This could also be translated "adversary" and thus the person's identity would be unknown. However, because the activity of accusation is so in keeping with Satan (Job, chapters 1 and 2; Rev. 12:10), his identification is preferable. The malicious adversary stands in the presence of the Lord to proclaim Israel's sins and their unworthiness of God's favor.

The situation is crucial: If Joshua is vindicated, Israel is accepted; if Joshua is rejected, Israel is rejected. The entire plan of God for the nation was revealed in the outcome. Israel's hopes would either be destroyed or confirmed.

For the Israel of Zechariah's day, the significance of the vision is that sin is not a hindrance to the realization of God's program.

Because God has dealt with sin, Joshua and the priests indicate the restoration of the priesthood and stand representatively for the work that God will accomplish ultimately when the sin of the nation is permanently put away by the "Branch," the coming Messiah.

In this, Joshua represents the priesthood, and he also, represents the people. Standing indicates a judgment. The angel of the LORD has to do with the Judge of all the world, Jesus. Satan, the accuser, was standing at the right hand of Joshua. Satan was there to accuse Joshua to the Judge.

Notice, I said that Joshua represented all the people. It would have probably, been more accurate to say all the believers. We too, will stand before the Judge of all the world and give account. Satan accuses us constantly to the Father. Jesus is our intercessor. He pleads for us. He is our counsel.

Zechariah 3:2 "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 said”: The Angel of the Lord is identified as the Lord thus verifying this “messenger” as deity (see notes on 1:11; Judges 6:11). And the message was crucial in confirming that;

1. God had not cast off the Jews, but was consistent with His covenants with them in Abraham and David; and
2. His election takes their side against Satan’s accusations.

God will do this rebuking (as reported in Rev. 20:10; see note on Jude 9).

“Chosen Jerusalem”: God’s favor rested on Israel above any nation on earth (Deut. 7:6-11). He snatched them from potential disappearance in their captivity, like pulling a stick out of the fire just before it is torched (Amos 4:11). Thus, God confirmed His purposes for Israel, sweeping from Zechariah’s time to the consummation of human history (Rev. 12:3-17).

The LORD is over Satan. When we stand against Satan, it is the name of Jesus that actually rebukes Satan. He would not listen to any rebuke that we might bring, but he must bow to the name of Jesus. God has not turned from His people, just because they have sinned. They are still His people.

Rom. 8:33-34 "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? [It is] God that justifieth." "Who [is] he that condemneth? [It is] Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

God had plucked Israel out of the fire of captivity in Babylon. Satan tries to remind God of their sins. Jesus paid the price in full for their sins, and for ours. God had a plan of salvation.

Zechariah 3:3 "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel."

“Filthy garments”: Employing the most loathsome, vile term for filth. The phrase pictures the habitual condition of defilement of the priesthood and the people (Isa. 4:4; 64:6). Which became the basis of Satan’s accusation that the nation is morally impure and unworthy of God’s protection and blessing.

These filthy garments symbolize being clothed in sins.

Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all as an unclean [thing], and all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

The filthy garments are speaking of the sin of the priesthood, but it also speaks of the sins of the people. Any of us that stand before Jesus in the garments we have provided for ourselves, would be just like this Joshua.

Zechariah 3:4 "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."

The removal of filthy garments by the angels ("who were standing before him"), depicted the promised future forensic justification, the salvation of the nation (verse 9; 12:10 – 13:1; Rom. 11:25-27).

The High Priest was symbolically clothed with rich robes, which spoke of righteousness imputed (Isa. 61:10), and the restoration of Israel to her original calling (Exodus 19:6; Isa. 61:6; Romans 11:1-2).

The raiment here is Jesus' raiment.

Rev. 1:5 "And from Jesus Christ, [who is] the faithful witness, [and] the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,"

Rev. 7:14 "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

In a sense, Joshua is just like the believers in Christ. We gave Him our sins (filthy garments), and He gave us His righteousness (robe washed in His blood). The garment that the LORD provided made him worthy. It is a robe of righteousness. He took the priest's sins, when he took the stained garment. He robed him in His garment of righteousness.

Zechariah 3:5 "And I said, Let them set a fair mitre 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."

The "fair mitre" was the High Priest's turban, to which a golden plate was attached, engraved with "Holiness to the Lord" (Exodus 28:36-38).

The mitre, part of the High Priests dress (Exodus 39:30-31). Zechariah joined the scene, calling for this because it strongly symbolized that Israel's priestly place with God was restored.

The "head" symbolizes the mind. In receiving this fair mitre, he symbolically took on the mind of Christ. The LORD re-instated him to his authority and power.

Verses 6-7: Although God will keep His promise to justify Israel, reinstate the nation as His priestly people to serve in His house, keep his courts, and have complete access to His presence. All based on His sovereign, electing love and not by merit or works of man, that will not be fulfilled until Israel is faithful to the Lord. It awaits the fulfillment (of 12:10 – 13:1).

Zechariah 3:6 "And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying,"

"Protested": Proceeded solemnly to declare. This is a forensic term for an affirmation on oath (Heb. 6:17-18). God thus solemnly states the end for which the priesthood is restored to the people, His own glory in their obedience and pure worship, and their consequent promotion to heavenly honor.

This is saying that Joshua must walk in the salvation he has received.

Zechariah 3:7 "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."

For this Angel was no other than the Lord of armies in heaven and in earth.

"If thou wilt walk in my ways": Prescribed in the word of God, moral, ceremonial, and evangelical.

In Christ, the grand way and indeed the only way of salvation. And in the paths of faith, truth, righteousness, and holiness. In the ways of God's commandments, which are pleasant, and attended with peace. Such a walk and conversation, and such obedience, the grace of God teaches, and obliges to:

"And if thou wilt keep my charge": The things he gave in charge, all his commands and ordinances, particularly such as belonged to the priestly office and Levitical service (see Num. 3:7). All which might be expected after so many favors granted.

"Then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts": Preside in the temple, be governor in it, and have the care of all the courts belonging to the people and the priests, and the advantages arising from there.

The meaning is that whereas the office of the priesthood was in disuse through the captivity, and was become contemptible through the sins of the priests, it should now be restored to its former honor and glory.

To have a place in the house of God, the church, is a great honor, and still more to be a governor and ruler in it.

"And I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by": Either among fellow priests, or fellow saints. Or rather among the angels that stood before the Angel of the Lord, and ministered to him. Signifying that he should enjoy their company, be like unto them, and join in service with them in heaven, in a future state.

And "walking places" among them denote the pleasures of the heavenly state, as well as the safety and glory of it (see Isa. 57:2).

The Targum very agreeably paraphrases the words thus: "and in the resurrection or quickening of the dead, I will raise or quicken thee; and I will give thee feet walking among these seraphim."

The allusion is to those walks that were in the temple, such as Christ walked in (John 10:23), and the pavement in Ezekiel's temple (Ezek. 40:17).

This is possibly, one of the most important things for Joshua to remember, and for all believers to remember as well. Salvation is a daily walk with Jesus. The conditions of his power to judge depend on his steadfastness in Jesus.

Matt. 19:28 "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Rev. 3:21 "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

The key word (in verse 7 above), is "if". All of his ability to judge depends on whether he stays in God's path and keeps His commandments.

Zechariah 3:8 "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."

"Thy fellows that sit before thee": The companion priests sitting before Joshua were symbols of future Israel, foreshadowing the coming Messiah.

"My servant the Branch": Two messianic phrases are here combined. "My Servant" is used by earlier prophets to depict the Messiah (Isa. 42:1; 49:3, 5; 52:13; 53:11; Ezek. 34:23-24), and speaks of His complete obedience and His humble estate.

"Branch" also points to the Messiah (6:12-13; Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). And denotes His rise from humble beginnings (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5-6), and His fruitfulness (6:12; Isa. 11:1).

"The BRANCH" (Hebrew *tsemach*, literally, "a sprout"), is a proper name description of the Messiah, of whom it is used in prophecy (6:12; Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15), to indicate that genealogically He is a descendant of David, and He is the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:8-14).

"My servant" (Hebrew *ebed*, "servant", "doer," "tiller," "slave"), sets forth His function (Isa. 42:1; 49:3; 10:10; 52:13; 53:11; Ezek. 34:23-24).

The "BRANCH" is Jesus Christ. The High Priest always had priests who worked under him. This is the promise of the coming Messiah. Joshua is to begin telling the priests, that the coming of Messiah is near. Not only is Joshua to give his attention to this, but he is to spread the news to the priests, as well.

Isaiah 11:1 "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:"

Rom. 1:3 "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;"

Zechariah 3:9 "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."

“The stone”: Here is another reference to Messiah. (In Psalm 118:22-23; Isa. 8:13-15; 28:16; Dan. 2:35, 45; Matt. 21:42; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:6-8), He is a rejected stone, a stone of stumbling, a stone of refuge, a destroying stone, and a foundation stone. Here He is the precious foundation stone, with “seven eyes” symbolic of His omniscience and infinite intelligence (4:10; Isa. 11:2; Col. 2:3; Rev. 5:6).

The engraving may be a reference to the cornerstone of the temple building, on which will be engraved an inscription attesting to the Divine Builder and the purpose for which the building was erected. As such, it is closely tied to the removal of “the iniquity of that land in one day,” symbolized by the removal of filthy garments (in verse 4).

The phrase looks to the future day when there will be cleansing and forgiveness for the nation as a whole (12:10-13:1; Rom. 11:25-27), made possible through Christ’s redemptive provision at Calvary.

The “stone” (Hebrew eben) is frequently used throughout the Old Testament to refer to the Messiah (Gen. 49:24; Psalm 118:22; Isa. 28:16), and is so interpreted in the New Testament (Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:6).

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be established through this BRANCH. All sin will be abolished, when washed in the blood of the Lamb (Jesus).

"Eyes" denote wisdom, and "seven" means spiritually complete. This wisdom is so great, it is perfection. The iniquity is removed on the day when Jesus shed His blood for the sins of the world. Jesus actually took the sin of the world upon His body, and sin died on the cross. Jesus became our substitute. This stone is that Corner Stone (Jesus Christ).

Col. 2:9 "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Zechariah 3:10 "In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree."

“Shall ye call every man his neighbor”: A common expression in Israel for peace and prosperity (1 Kings 4:25; Mica 4:4), here depicting the peace during the millennial rule of Messiah.

There will be peace in that day when Jesus reigns as King. He is the God of Peace. There will be prosperity, as well. He will provide all our needs. Satan will be bound, and there will be no jealousy among neighbors. There will be plenty of everything for the physical man and for the spirit of man. The "vine" symbolizes Jesus.

John 15:5 "I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

The fig tree symbolizes Israel. We see in this, that salvation is offered to all of mankind in that day.

Zechariah Chapter 3 Questions

1. Who was standing before the angel of the LORD.
2. Who was standing at Joshua's right hand.
3. Who does Joshua represent?
4. What does the fact that he is standing indicate?
5. Who is the Judge of all the world?
6. Who is the accuser?
7. Who is the Christian's intercessor?
8. Who rebuked Satan?
9. The _____ is over Satan.
10. How can we rebuke Satan?
11. Where were they plucked from?
12. What does Satan accuse us of?
13. What do Joshua's filthy garments symbolize?
14. What is Joshua's new raiment?
15. Those who came out of great tribulation had washed their robes in what?
16. How are we Christians like Joshua?
17. The "head" symbolizes the _____.

18. In receiving this fair mitre, he symbolically took on the _____ of _____.
19. What is verse 6 saying?
20. The key word in verse 7 is what?
21. The "BRANCH" is _____.
22. What is Joshua to tell the priests?
23. The church is established through _____.
24. "Eyes" symbolize _____.
25. "Seven" is symbolic of _____.
26. The "vine" symbolizes _____.