



# ZECHARIAH, Being the People of God

## Walking in His Ways

### Lesson 3 Zechariah 3:1-10

#### FOURTH NIGHT VISION

3:1 “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.”

The angel now directs Zechariah to a new night vision. Zechariah sees Joshua the High Priest in a setting that is somewhat like a courtroom. Joshua is really the name “Jeshua,” which name means “Yahweh saves.” In the New Testament, Jesus’ name is the Greek form of Jeshua. Many Jewish Christians today refer to Jesus as Jeshua (pronounced Yeshua). Joshua is also mentioned in Haggai. He was the son of Jehozadak (2 Kings 25:18; 1 Chronicles 6:40-41) and grandson of Seraiah, who was the High Priest in 587 B.C. at the beginning of the exile into Babylonian captivity. Seraiah was executed by the Babylonians. Joshua was likely an old man by 519 B.C., the year of Zechariah’s night visions.

Those present in the courtroom are the angel of the LORD, Joshua, and Satan. The text does not say that God is present. That may be implied, but more likely the Angel of the Lord is acting on God’s behalf. Note that the word “*Satan*,” used here as a proper noun, is a generic word used elsewhere to mean an adversary or opponent (e.g., Numbers 22:22, 2 Samuel 19:22, 1 Kings 11:23). Satan is a deceiver and for the present time has some limited access to God. Ultimately, Satan will be eliminated from the earth (Revelation 20:2), but for the time being Christians need to have a sober awareness of who Satan is and how he works (see e.g., 2 Corinthians 2:11, 11:14; 1 Peter 5:8). This episode gives us great insight into the father of lies (John 8:44), namely that one of his methods of attack against the children of God (especially those who would serve God) is by resisting or accusing them before God. We can infer that what Satan is willing to do in the very presence of God he does elsewhere. When Peter speaks of Satan seeking people to devour like a roaring lion, we understand from this passage and elsewhere that his methodology will often involve accusations and deceit.

This courtroom scene is not unique, for it parallels the one found in Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-7. In Job 1, Satan makes a claim of dominion over the earth and all it contains (Job 1:7). God disputes Satan’s claim and offers as a counter-example to Satan’s dominion, the man named Job, “*a perfect and an upright man.*” As is his character, Satan then accuses Job of only serving God because of God’s protection and material blessings toward him. God disputes Satan’s assessment and gives Satan authority to test Job. The scene in Job 2 is similar.

An accusation is made here in Zechariah 3, but it is not specifically stated. Joshua is the High Priest of the remnant of Judah. If Judah is to regain its former glory as servants of the living God, it needs a spiritual leader. God has selected Joshua for this position. We can infer from this context, Satan’s name itself, and the statement that he is there to “*resist*” Joshua, that Satan accuses him of being inadequate for the task of being the High Priest. We need to also note that if Joshua is unfit, by implication the remnant is unfit to reconstitute Judah. In the first night vision, the gentile nations were at ease because of the condition of Judah. Now that God is bringing restoration to Judah, Satan is working in opposition to God.

## QUESTIONS

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1. Is Satan still in the business of accusing God's children? If so, to what end?
  2. What are some concrete ways in which God's children are being accused by Satan in 2010? What are the accusations and how are they made?
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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?”

I think Zechariah uses the first “LORD” to refer to the angel of the LORD. As indicated in the notes for chapter 1, this is probably Jesus, God the Son. Viewed this way, God the Son is pronouncing the ruling of God the Father, who rebukes Satan's accusations. Joshua is a brand or burning stick that God has plucked out of the fire, much as he rescued Lot from the destruction on Sodom and Gomorrah (Amos 4:11). Remember that Joshua, as high priest, stands in for the people. God initiated blessing toward Joshua and indeed toward Judah as a whole, and Satan opposes that blessing.

In every time, being the people of God requires Godly leadership. Today, God is spreading the gospel throughout the earth through local churches, and in those churches He establishes leadership. The spiritual leadership for national Israel was different than for churches today, but many of the principles are the same. A first principle that we see here is that the leader is the man God selects.

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

Satan's accusation was doubtless based in part on Joshua's wardrobe, for he wears “*filthy garments*.” The phrase literally means that Joshua's raiment is covered with excrement. This is symbolic of the fact that Joshua is a sinner. In the Bible, clothing is often symbolic of a person's sinfulness or lack thereof (see e.g., Luke 9:29; Revelation 3:5, 18, 6:11, 7:9, 19:8). This does not mean that Joshua is unsaved, but merely that he is still a sinner. He needs to be ritualistically clean for his office, which requires new clothes. This parallels the cleansing of the High Priest's clothing (and the High Priest) as part of the celebration of the Day of Atonement. The difference is that this cleansing is not for the one feast, but for the keeping of the office of high priest in general. Also, we must continue to bear in mind that Joshua's problem is representative of the problem for all Judah. Zechariah's contemporary, Haggai, presented the problem in Haggai 2:10-14, which God himself concluding that, “The people of this nation are unclean in my sight.” It is not as if Joshua might proclaim his innocence. He is “red handed” guilty and the vile stench of his raiment puts that beyond doubt. Like the scene that opens John 8, the guilt of the accused cannot be denied, and the accused can do nothing to fix the problem. We should also note that the angel here is probably the angel of the LORD.

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 LORD speaks and orders that Joshua be fitted with new, clean clothing. We need not guess at the symbolism, for God states that He has caused Joshua's iniquity to pass from him. God has declared Joshua cleansed, which is symbolized by the change of raiment (see Isaiah 61:10). It is interesting to note here “change of raiment” employs a Hebrew term used only here and in Isaiah 3:22, which means “especially fine, white garments.” Satan accuses Joshua of inadequacy to be high priest because he is a sinner and God makes his ruling. We might ask why God rules as He does since we know Joshua is guilty, for it is apparent from his dirty clothes. The reason is that in verse 3, Joshua “stood before the angel.” God recognizes the future redemptive work of Jesus, not only to save sinners but to provide a continual cleansing for them. This parallels the New Testament teaching in John

13:8-10 and 1 John 1:9 regarding the cleansing from sin in a believer's life, which is done on the basis of Jesus' shed blood. At this point, Joshua is not only the man God selected for leadership, but He is qualified because of the change in raiment that God gave him.

#### QUESTIONS

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3. What would it mean for a Christian today to stand before God in filthy garments?
  4. What should a Christian's attitude be toward the condition of his spiritual garments?
  5. Are concepts like personal confidence and self-esteem Biblical? Relate the answer to how a child of God should perceive himself/herself.
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**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.”

Upon hearing God's ruling through the Angel of the Lord, Zechariah speaks up for Joshua and participates in the vision. He understands that Joshua will receive new clothing and calls out to make sure that the new clothing includes a “*fair mitre*” (a head-dress like a turban). The new head-dress is fitting to the dignity of Joshua's position as high priest, whose mitres typically bore the inscription, “Holy To The Lord.” (Exodus 28:36; 39:30). Zechariah's participation here indicates that he both understands and supports what God is doing, and it may be that God allowed his participation for this reason. We are not told who the “*they*” are, but should probably understand that angels have clothed Joshua. Zechariah mentions almost in passing that “*the angel of the LORD stood by.*” This suggests that what is done is with His approval and under His direction.

**3:6** “And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, **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.”

We should not take the word “*protested*” in verse 6 to indicate opposition, but rather a charge or direction is given to Joshua. The angel of the LORD speaks on behalf of the LORD. This verse must be understood in its covenant context. Israel was covenanted with God under what is often referred to as the Mosaic Covenant. God made promises to Israel, but these promises required Israel's obedience (e.g., Deuteronomy 10:12-22, 28:9). Here, Joshua is promised three things:

- 1) That he will judge or govern “*my house,*” that is, the Temple (this means that God is saying the Temple will be reconstructed in Joshua's lifetime while he is still high priest).
- 2) He will govern the courtyards around the Temple (this indicates the completion of the courtyards under Joshua's leadership).
- 3) He will have access to God like the angels that stand by (“*these that stand by*”).

In order for Joshua to receive this authority, he must keep God's ways (“walk in My ways”) and must carry out his priestly duties (“keep My charge”). This explains the reason God gave Joshua the new raiment symbolizing his cleansing; it was preparatory for Joshua's role as high priest and the promises God has for him that require his obedience and therefore continued cleansing.

#### QUESTION

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6. What is the general principle taught in verse 7 and what are some concrete ways it plays out in a Christian's daily life today?
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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.”

God speaks to Joshua the High Priest and the other priests (these are Levites; “*thy fellows that sit before thee*”) that serve under him. God says that the priests before Joshua are a sign. It would not make sense to have a high priest and priests serving under him without a Temple. The presence of “*thy fellows*” surely indicates that the Temple will be completed. But probably, in view of the rest of the verse and the reference to the Branch, “*thy fellows*” means much more. They prefigure a future priestly Israel, consistent with the Old Testament promise to Israel and the New Testament teachings about all those that identify with Jesus Christ by faith being a priestly nation. (Exodus 19:5-6; 1 Peter 2:9). Related to that promise is God’s promise to bring forth “*my servant the BRANCH.*” The translation capitalizes “BRANCH” because the term is understood to be a specific reference to a person. It is a messianic title that speaks of the one that would come in the line of David as the Messiah, namely Jesus (Psalm 132:17; Jeremiah 23:5-6, 33:15-16). Zechariah will use the term again in 6:12 to indicate the Messiah. Thus, Joshua, and by extension all of Judah, will be given this prophecy to encourage him to live in view of what God is presently doing and in how that present work fits in with the future eschatological plans of God.

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.”

Identifying the stone has caused much debate about this passage. Leading explanations are that the stone (1) represents the future Messiah, (2) is a cornerstone or capstone for the Temple that is about to be built, and (3) that the stone is like the stones on the High Priest’s vest that represent the tribes of Israel. The reconstituted Judah must have a qualified high priest and a qualified temple. Central to the messages of both Zechariah and Haggai are the rebuilding of the temple. I think this chapter presents both a qualified high priest and temple, both of which point forward to Jesus Christ. Joshua would likely understand the stone as a stone use for construction, consistent with the earlier references to plumb lines. But this stone is unique. A stone is often a symbol of Messiah (see Psalm 118:22-23; Isaiah 8:13-15; Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:7-8). The cornerstone of large construction projects in the ancient world had inscriptions, typically to the ruler that ordered the construction.

We are not told what the inscription on this stone says, although some take it to be the latter phrase in the verse about taking away iniquity in one day. In any event, this inscription is done by God, it is His Word, etched in stone like the Decalogue (Ten Commandments), and speaks to the purpose of the Temple, namely the removal of sin from Israel. In a functional sense, that was one of the purposes of the Temple. The High Priest would annually enter the Holy of Holies as part of the Day of Atonement (or Yom Kippur) and in that one day Israel’s sins were removed until the Feast had to be repeated the next year. The Day of Atonement required a Temple. Surely Joshua was to understand that God was promising the completion of the Temple and the full reinstatement of the priestly work there.

Also note that this stone has seven eyes, identified later in Zechariah 4:10 as “*the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.*” In Revelation 5:5-6, God combines the ideas of Jesus as the Branch or Root of David, as well as having on Himself the seven eyes of God:

5:5 “And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. 6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”

In Revelation 5, the image is that of Jesus, with whom the Holy Spirit dwells (“*seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God*”), receiving from God the Father His inheritance of all of creation. The Temple to be completed in Zechariah’s day pictures the true Temple (Hebrews 8:2, 9:11-12, 24), whose cornerstone is none other than God himself in the person of God the Son. The true cornerstone promises a future purification of Israel from sin in one day as Messiah would go to the cross. More events about how that comes about will follow later in Zechariah’s prophecy. These promises of the future are purposed at Joshua, the other priests, and the nation as a whole, being the people of God. They are to live in view of the destiny of God’s people.

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

This is a picture of the future blessing, peace and security of God’s people when they can rest under the vine and the fig tree. That these are a source of shade is a picture of blessing also used elsewhere in the Bible (see 1 Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4). That every man is “*his neighbour*” pictures peace. Zechariah will later address in more detail how the fulfillment of this promise comes about, but for the moment, I will note that this looks forward to the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus Christ rules and reigns on the earth.

#### QUESTION

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7. Is world peace attainable, and if so, how? (see Matthew 24:1-22)

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