

Book of Zechariah

Chapter 3:1-10

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. 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?”

The Eight Visions of Zechariah			
Vision	Passage	Description	Meaning
1	1:7-17	Man among the Myrtle Trees	God Promises Prosperity to Israel
2	1:18-21	Four Horns and Four Craftsmen	God Judges the Nations that attacked Israel
3	2:1-13	Man with a Measuring Line	God Rebuilds Jerusalem
4	3:1-10	Cleansing of the High Priest	God Purifies both High Priest and People
5	4:1-14	Golden Lampstand and Two Olive Trees	God Rebuilds the Temple
6	5:1-4	Flying Scroll	God Removes Imparted Sin/Idolatry
7	5:5-11	Woman in a Basket	God Removes the System of False Religion
8	6:1-8	Four Chariots	God Brings Peace and Rest to Israel
Appendix	6:9-15	Coronation of the High Priest	Messiah assumes of the office of both King and Priest

The MacArthur Bible Commentary
by John MacArthur

Wiersbe > Zechariah 3 and 4 focus on Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two leaders of the Jewish remnant who knew how tough it is to lead. Joshua was high priest and had the concern for the spiritual life of the people, while Zerubbabel was governor and had the responsibility of managing the civil affairs of the nation. But their work wasn't easy. Zerubbabel was trying to motivate people who were discouraged and selfish, and Joshua was trying to educate people who were disobedient and sinful. Is there any hope for a defiled and discouraged nation, or a defiled and discouraged church or individual? Yes, there is! God gave the prophet Zechariah two visions that speak to us today and encourage us to keep serving the Lord no matter how difficult the people or circumstances may be.

Joshua the High Priest > (Constable) As will become clear, Joshua, Israel's high priest, represents Israel in this vision, specifically Israel in her divinely appointed. Similarly, Israel's high priest represented the nation each year on the Day of Atonement. In this vision and the next, Israel's standing before God and her resources are in view. This vision presents Israel's restoration as a high priestly nation.

Before > (Strong's) the face (as the part that turns)

The angel of the LORD > (Clarke) The Angel of the Lord is the Messiah, as we have seen before

Satan > (Strong's) an opponent; especially (with the article prefixed) Satan,

Barnes > Etymologically*, the enemy, as, in the New Testament, "your adversary the devil" 1 Peter 5:8, etymologically, *the accuser*. It is a proper name of the Evil one, yet its original meaning, "*the enemy*, was not lost.

***Etymology** > (Webster) the history of a linguistic form (such as a word) shown by tracing its development since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where it is found

Accuse > (Strong's) to attack, (figuratively) accuse

Constable > The writer made a play on the Hebrew word in its noun and verb forms, here translated "Satan" and "accuse."

The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you > (Barnes) > Jerome: "This they so explain, that the Father and the Son is Lord, as we read in the **Psalm 110:1-7**, "*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand.*"

Constable > "The LORD" may be distinct from "the angel of the LORD," but they seem to be synonymous. Most conservative commentators equate them and believe "the angel of the LORD" is the second person of the Trinity.

Rebuke > (Strong's) to chide ... corrupt, rebuke, reprove.

The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem > (Peterson) God's choice of Jerusalem has been mentioned in 1:17 and 2:12. The background of the 'choice' language is Deuteronomy, where Yahweh will 'choose' the place where he will 'put his Name there for his dwelling' (i.e. the temple in Jerusalem; e.g. **Deut. 12:5**). The phrase also emphasizes that God's sovereign purposes for Jerusalem will come to pass. Hence opponents like 'Satan' will be silenced.

Deuteronomy 12:5 > ⁵ *But you shall seek the LORD at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.*

Brand > (Clarke) The Jews were nearly destroyed because of their sins; a remnant of them is yet left, and God is determined to preserve them. He has had mercy upon them, and forgiven them their sins.

Plucked > (Strong's) to snatch away, whether in a good or a bad sense

³ Now Joshua was clothed with **filthy** garments and standing before the angel. 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**."

Filthy > (Strong's) meaning to issue; soiled (as if excrementitious)

(Petterson) The adj. 'foul' occurs in the OT only here and in v. 4. The related noun can mean 'excrement' or 'vomit'.

Petterson > There is an interesting connection between these ideas in the Hebr., not clear in my translation: just as the foul garment is taken mē'ālāyw (lit. 'from upon him'), so also Joshua is told that his iniquity will be taken mē'āleykā (lit. 'from upon you'). This reinforces the symbolic link between sin and defilement.

Taken ... away > (Petterson) The declaration of Yahweh that he has 'taken' (he'ēbartî) Joshua's iniquity from him uses a verb that elsewhere always refers to forgiveness (e.g. 2 Sam. 12:13; 24:10; Job 7:21; 1 Chr. 21:8)

2 Samuel 12:13 > ¹³ Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has ^[a]**taken away** your sin; you shall not die.

^[a]Lit **caused your sin to pass away**

2 Samuel 24:10 > ¹⁰ Now David's heart ^[a]troubled him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please ^[b]**take away** the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly."

^[b]Lit **caused to pass away**

Job 7:21 > ²¹ "Why then do You not pardon my transgression and **take away** my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust; and You will seek me, but I will not be."

I Chronicles 21:8 > ⁸ David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please **take away** the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

Festal robes > (Strong's) a mantle (as easily drawn off) ... changeable suit of apparel, change of raiment

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**.

Then I said > Zechariah said!!!

Merrill > What is unique here is the command of a mere man to bring about a purpose of God.

While the angel of the LORD was standing by > (Constable) The Lord observed all that was happening, sovereignly approving and directing all the changes in Joshua's condition.

Clean > (Strong's) pure (in a physical, chemical, ceremonial or moral sense)

Turban > (Strong's) a head-dress (i.e. piece of cloth wrapped around)

Keil and Delitzsch > The turban of the high priest was that portion of his dress in which he carried his office, so to speak, upon his forehead; and the clean turban was the substratum for the golden plate that was fastened upon it, and by which he was described as holy to the Lord, and called to bear the guilt of the children of Israel (Exodus 28:38).

⁶ *And 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 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.***

Admonished > (Strong's) to duplicate or repeat; by implication, to protest, testify (as by reiteration); intensively, to encompass, restore (as a sort of reduplication)

If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service > (Barnes) The charge is given to Joshua, and in him to all successive high priests, while Israel should continue to be God's people, as the condition of their acceptance.

Constable > The Lord specified two conditions and promised three results.

- The first condition was Israel's practical righteousness; she had to walk in His ways faithfully with heart and hand.
- Second, she had to carry out her priestly duties faithfully.
 - If Israel did these things,
 - She would govern God's house
 - Have charge of His courts—keeping them pure
 - And enjoy free access to God.

And I will grant you free access among these who are standing here. (Peterson) Hence 'walkings among the standing ones' indicates 'admittance' to the divine presence. Sweeney (2000b: 599) captures what it means in earthly terms: 'it appears to refer to the exclusive right of the high priest to enter the holy of holies in the Jerusalem Temple to appear before YHWH as the representative of the Jewish community to make atonement for the people's sins on Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement

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**.

Listen > (Strong's) to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience, etc.; causatively, to tell, etc.)

Friends > (Strong's) an associate (more or less close) ... brother, companion, fellow, friend, husband, lover, neighbor

Symbol > (Strong's) a miracle; by implication, a token or omen

Constable > sign; Heb. *mopheth*, token of future events, prophetic sign; cf. Isa. 8:18

The Branch > (Constable) This is a double title of Messiah

Isaiah 11:1-5 > ¹ Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a **branch** from his roots will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³ And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; ⁴ But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. ⁵ Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist.

Jeremiah 23:5 > ⁵ "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous **Branch**; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land.

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.**

The stone > One recurring quote from the commentators is that the "Stone" represents Jesus. An illustration would be that of **Adam Clarke** > Alluding no doubt to the foundation stone of the temple: but this represented Christ Jesus: "*Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried stone, a precious Corner Stone, a Sure Foundation,*" **Isaiah 28:16**. This means Christ, and none other; on him his whole Church rests, as a building does on its foundation.

And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day > THIS is why He could so graciously forgive their sins (And ours!) Jesus paid the penalty of all of our sins that day!

Petterson > Christians know the single day Zechariah foresaw – the day when the Messiah ('Shoot') Jesus was hung up on a cross outside Jerusalem, suffering the judgment of God and taking sin on himself. As the great high priest he offered the superior sacrifice, the once-for-all sacrifice of his own body. If the cleansing of Joshua fitted him for service, 'How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!' (Hebrews 9:14)

Hebrews 9:14^{>14} *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

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.'*"

To sit under his vine and under his fig tree > How many times have we seen this comment in our earlier studies?? It speaks of peace, no war, no enemies, no danger ... simply peace. As we opened this chapter we saw the chart from John MacArthur laying out the eight visions and the meaning of each. His comment under "Meaning" was that this vision shows the Lord purifying both the High Priest and the People. Only when the leadership and the people are right before the Lord can He bring us the peace we long for.

NLT > *And on that day, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, each of you will invite your neighbor to sit with you peacefully under your own grapevine and fig tree."*

Petterson > There are a number of lines of application of this passage to Christians today. Joshua is cleansed by God and given a specific commission to serve as the high priest in the temple when it is built (vv. 6–7). It is very important to **see the order** in which this happens – Joshua is **cleansed, clothed** and **then commissioned to serve God**. Joshua does not have to obey in order to be cleansed and accepted – that is religion, not grace. There is nothing Joshua can do to be forgiven and cleansed. He cannot even offer sacrifices to be cleansed since his clothing marks him as unfit for priestly service. His cleansing is an act of God's grace. Joshua is commissioned to serve because he has been accepted by God.

If we go back to Isaiah 6 we find another example of the above – take a look at the next page:

Isaiah 6:1-9 > ¹ In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ² Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. ⁵ Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷ He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven." ⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" ⁹ He said, "Go, and tell this people..."

Let's turn to the New Testament and find yet another example:

The first 12 chapters of the Book of Romans

Chapters 1-3 >	The sin found in every individual
Chapter 4 >	The example of righteousness by faith
Chapter 5 >	Salvation by faith
Chapter 6, 7 >	The Christian life lived by faith alone
Chapter 8 >	Our acceptance by the Lord
Chapters 9-11	The Jewish parenthesis
Chapter 12	Our commission

Petterson > The end of the vision must not be neglected. When the Messiah comes and removes the iniquity of the land, those who have experienced this cleansing will invite their friends to share in it with them. It is a picture of God's blessing. This is a chief reason why Christians tell others about Jesus – it is because of the desire for others to enjoy God and enter heaven. Those who know the forgiveness of sins and the blessings of God should be inviting others to share in it. This is the book of Zechariah's 'Great Commission'! Zech. 3 is a wonderful vision of cleansing for God's people. It is a vision that has found its fulfilment in Jesus, the great high priest, and the forgiveness he offers through his death on the cross.