

Zechariah 3 • The Work of the Son

Introduction

In Zechariah's first three visions in chapters 1-2 we are presented with a picture of the work of God the Father. In this vision we see the work of God the Son. We learn that the Son has been at work in Heaven during every period of history and will one day work directly on earth. This vision further affirms that there are greater spiritual representations of the high priest, priesthood, and Temple that are far more meaningful than their simple, earthly operation. It confirms that once we become citizens of God's Kingdom, although we may continue for awhile in these earthly bodies, our lives are already beginning to contribute to a greater work from a heavenly perspective.

¹Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. ²The 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?"

[Read v.1-2]

Q: What is particularly significant about to whom it is that Satan presents his accusations?

A: It is "*the angel of the LORD*". (v.1) This is a very powerful confirmation by Scripture that throughout the Old Testament references to "*the angel of the LORD*" are indeed appearances of Christ Himself. It also shows the contrast between Satan as our chief accuser and Christ our chief Advocate.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
— 1 Peter 5:8

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

— 1 John 2:1-2

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

— Romans 8:33-34

Q: How do we know that Joshua is not just being individually singled out but also representing something greater than just himself?

A: Because in standing up for Joshua the Lord says He "*has chosen Jerusalem*". Joshua not only represents Jerusalem as the elect being restored to God but is probably the embodiment of the state of the whole priesthood at that time as well.

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

— Romans 9:16

"You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

— John 15:16

Q: What is the meaning of “a brand plucked from the fire”?

A: Fire is most often associated with judgment. Satan is accusing them of sin to which God is replying that He has not overlooked their sin at all, but has just concluded seventy years of judgment for that sin and is now bringing that judgment to a close. It is a reference to God’s grace at work.

Application: *The issue of sin and judgment is not strictly limited to something that takes place on earth; it is a core issue in heaven between Satan and Christ Himself. While there will ultimately be a Final Judgment, in the mean time there is a struggle between Satan the Accuser and Christ our Advocate. The first work of Christ is salvation.*

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

⁴He 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.”

⁵Then 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.

[Read v.3-5]

Q: What is the greater spiritual meaning of Joshua being “clothed with filthy garments”?

A: It is the biblical symbol of sin. This is plainly explained in v.4 when they are removed and the Lord says, “See, I have taken your iniquity from you”.

*For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
— Isaiah 64:6*

Q: What is the greater spiritual meaning of being clothed with clean garments?

A: It is the biblical expression of the removal of sin and being made acceptable for service in God’s presence.

*I will rejoice greatly in the LORD,
My soul will exult in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
— Isaiah 61:10*

*“But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;
— Luke 15:22*

*“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
— Revelation 19:7–8*

Q: Why would Zechariah suggest placing “a clean turban” on Joshua’s head?

A: The clean garments are probably given to Joshua in his being the representation of all the elect, but the turban is probably given in representation of his role as high priest and on behalf of the priesthood in general. The headdress of the high priest included a gold plate on which was written “Holiness to the Lord”. It is a picture of being spiritually

restored to God's service.

Application: *The subsequent work of Christ is sanctification, the process of making us holy and acceptable for God's service.*

⁶And 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.

[Read v.6-7]

Q: What are the conditions of service provided in v.7?

1. “...If you walk in My ways...”
2. “...if you will perform My service...”

This is a conditional promise that is based on obedience to God's Word and ways.

Q: What is the promise if the conditions are met?

1. “...then you will also govern My house...”
2. “...and also have charge of My courts...”
3. “...I will grant you free access among these who are standing here.”

It is a dual promise of not only serving in the earthly Temple but in the heavenly one as well. True service to God on earth is also a reflection of spiritual service.

In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

— Hebrews 6:17–18

Application: *The expectation that once someone has come into a personal relationship with Christ that they will no longer live according to their old way of life but by putting His Word and ways into practice. Spiritual faithfulness reflects the believer's position both in the earthly and heavenly scheme of things.*

⁸Now 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. ⁹For 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. ¹⁰In 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.’”

[Read v.8-10]

Q: What is the contrast in how Christ is represented in v.1-7 versus how it changes beginning in v.8?

A: Whereas Christ is first shown working on our behalf in heaven, He is now shown to be coming to work on our behalf on earth.

Q: In the context of the ancient world, what might be particularly powerful about describing the Messiah as “My servant the Branch”?

A: In the ancient world many cultures called their heroic figures “branches of the gods” as a way of associating their accomplishments with the will and work of those gods. Such were counterfeit shadows of the real work of the Messiah.

Q: In the historical context of what was going on in Zechariah's time, what is particularly powerful about the Messiah being referred to as “the stone I have set before Joshua”?

A: The foundation for the Second Temple was just completed. Here was have an allusion to a much greater foundation (the Messiah) which will result in a much greater Temple (the Church).

Q: What is the significance of the stone having “seven eyes”?

A: Christ is not only a Living Stone but all-seeing.

And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

— Revelation 5:6

Q: What might be the importance of God stating “I will engrave an inscription” on Christ the Living Stone?

1. It could be a reference to Christ as the Word.
2. Since Joshua the high priest is here representing Christ **THE** High Priest, it should be remembered that the high priest wore on his shoulders stones with the names of the tribes of Israel engraved upon them which could represent Christ’s burden for God’s elect.
3. Whereas the stones of the earthly Temple bore manmade engravings this could represent the greater Temple to come through the Messiah whose heavenly markings are of far greater consequence.
4. Other possible explanations?

As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!”

— Mark 13:1

Q: Why might this reference to engraving be particularly powerful to the people of Zechariah’s time?

A: It is recorded in Ezra 3:12-13 that although work on the Second Temple was proceeding, its physical appearance (engraving was a big part of the architecture) did not match that of the Solomon’s Temple. This further affirms that God is promising that although this is an inferior earthly building that something (or rather Someone) much greater is going to come about in spite of this.

But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

— 2 Corinthians 3:7–8

Q: How will God “remove the iniquity of the land in one day”?

A: Through Christ’s work on the cross. Whereas the high priest and the priesthood had to make repeated, continual sacrifices, the Messiah as the final High Priest will fulfill all the requirement of the Law in one ultimate sacrifice.

For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

— Hebrews 7:26–28

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

— Hebrews 10:11–14

Q: What is the meaning of v.10, of inviting one's neighbor "to sit under his vine and under his fig tree"?

A: This is an Old Testament image of peace and tranquility.

So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.

— 1 Kings 4:25

*Each of them will sit under his vine
And under his fig tree,
With no one to make them afraid,
For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.*

— Micah 4:4

Application: *The work of the earthly priesthood and the earthly temple foreshadows the greater work of Christ the High Priest and the priesthood of all believers to come. Service in the Kingdom of God is not limited to events on earth but reflects a greater heavenly work.*

Overall Application

Through Zechariah we have the Old Testament foundation for what will come and be described in the New Testament...

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

— Ephesians 2:19–22

But one of the greater lessons to be learned here is that things are not limited to their impact on earth, but are already being reflected in heaven. Sometimes we differentiate between the daily grind of life on earth from what "will come" in the future in heaven. But how well do you recognize that your service is already being reflected in heaven? How might you change your approach? Your commitment? The way you treat things on earth? What Christ is already doing on your behalf?