

“Joshua the High Priest”
Zechariah 3:1-10

Introduction: Zechariah chapters three and four 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?

Body: Haggai's first message (Hag. 1:1-11) and Zechariah's call to repentance (Zech. 1:1-6) are evidence that the spiritual level of the Jewish remnant was very low. Most of these people had been born in Babylon, where there wasn't much religious example or instruction to nourish their worship of Jehovah; and the difficult circumstances in their own land tested their faith greatly.

- I. The Accused Zechariah 3:1, 3
 - A. Joshua stood before the Lord as a representative of Israel, a people He had called to be a holy nation of priests.
 - B. Exodus 19:5-6- *“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”*
 - C. He wore filthy clothes, not because he was sinful personally, but because the people had sinned and were unclean in God's sight. Zechariah 3:3
 - D. To stand before the Lord means to be in a place of service, so the Jews became defiled while they were attempting to serve the Lord. Zechariah 3:3
 - E. According to Merrill Unger, the word can be translated “excrement-covered.”
 - F. Since the priests were commanded to keep themselves clean at all times, on penalty of death, Joshua's wearing filthy garments would be a terrible personal embarrassment and an offense against God's law. Those garments were for glory and for beauty, but the Lord saw neither glory nor beauty as He beheld His servant.

- II. The Accuser Zechariah 3:1
 - A. Zechariah has described a courtroom scene, in which Joshua is the defendant, God is the Judge, Satan is the prosecuting attorney, and Jesus Christ is the defense attorney.
 - B. The word Satan means adversary and refers to the enemy who resists God's work and God's people.
 - C. When Satan talks to us about God, he lies, but when he talks to God about us, he tells the truth!
 - D. God's throne is a throne of justice and God is a righteous Judge. Knowing this, Satan pointed out Joshua's defilement, which symbolized the defilement of the nation, and insisted that a holy God punish His sinful people. It seemed like an airtight case, except for one factor: the grace of God.

- III. The Advocate Zechariah 3:2-5, I John 2:1
- A. Christ's present ministry in heaven is twofold. He's our High Priest, interceding for us and giving us the grace we need for life and service here on earth and He's our Advocate, representing us before the throne of God when we do sin.
 - B. Romans 8:1- *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*
 - C. Satan cannot accuse us, nor God condemn us, for sins for which Christ died!
 - D. Romans 8:33- *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."*
 - E. The Lord rebuked Satan on the basis of His own electing grace: He had chosen Jerusalem and the Jewish nation in His own love and grace. He had not chosen them because of their good works, so how could He condemn them for their bad works?
 - F. Scripture often compares Israel's sufferings to going through the fire. Their trials in Egypt were like being in a furnace, and the exile in Babylon was compared to being refined in the fire. When Israel goes through the Tribulation in the end times, it will be an experience of refining. God had chosen Jerusalem and had plucked the Jews out of the fire. Zechariah 3:2
- IV. The Answer Zechariah 3:4-5
- A. The same Savior who died for our sins arose from the dead and now intercedes for His people at the throne of God.
 - B. Romans 8:34- *"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."*
 - C. God's reply to Satan's accusation was to say to the angels before His throne, "Take away the filthy garments from him." This is forgiveness.
 - D. I John 1:9- *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
 - E. But God in His grace goes beyond forgiveness and clothes us in His own righteousness.
 - F. Adam and Eve tried to hide their guilt under garments of their own making, but God killed animals and clothed them in skins.
 - G. Isaiah 61:10- *"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."*
 - H. Luke 15:22- *"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet"*
 - I. We have no righteousness of our own, but we come in the righteousness and merits of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.
- V. The Assurance Zechariah 3:6-7
- A. Joshua and his fellow priests weren't put on probation; they were cleansed and restored to service.
 - B. The continuation of their service depended on their faithfulness to the Lord and His Word.

VI. The Announcement Zechariah 3:8-10

A. This remarkable announcement to Joshua and his fellow priests focuses on Jesus Christ and presents three different images of the coming Messiah:

1. The Priest Zechariah 6:9-15

2. The Branch Zechariah 3:8

a. *Branch of righteousness for David*—Matthew, Gospel of the King

b. *My servant the Branch*—Mark, Gospel of the Servant

c. *The man whose name is the Branch*—Luke, Gospel of the Son of Man

d. *The Branch of the Lord*—John, Gospel of the Son of God

3. The Stone

a. Messiah is the cornerstone, a stone of stumbling, the rejected stone, the smitten stone, and the smiting stone.

b. At His first advent, Jesus was a stumbling stone to Israel who rejected Him, but He became the foundation stone for the church. At His second advent, He will smite the kingdoms of the world and establish His glorious kingdom.

B. What God did for Joshua symbolically He would do for Israel personally: the iniquity of the land would be removed in a day. Zechariah 3:9

Conclusion: We are very grateful for our High Priest that removes all accusations and sins away from His people. Saints are able to stand complete and innocent before the Judge of all of the earth.