



## Zechariah - Chapter Three

### I Zechariah 1:1-8:23 - Oracles and Visions (continues)

#### I.b Zechariah 1:7-6:15 - Eight Night Visions and a Coronation (continues)

##### Summary of Chapter Three

In this chapter, in which the Lord rebukes Satan, Zechariah sees Joshua, the high priest, allowed to represent the people before God and called to live faithfully, with the assurance that God is preserving his people for the messianic branch. What should not be missed in this account is that Joshua was the Hebrew version of the Greek word translated Jesus.

#### I.b.v Zechariah 3:1-10 - Fourth Vision: Joshua and Satan

Refer to the chapter summary above.

<sup>1</sup> Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a brand plucked from the fire?' <sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel.

##### Zechariah 3:1-3

The fourth vision is located in the heavenly courtroom, where the angel of the Lord is seated as the judge. Joshua the high priest, one of the leaders of the returned exiles: <<*In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest*>> (Haggai 1:1), and is spelt Jeshua in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah; is the defendant, with Satan, whose name means 'the accuser' or 'the adversary,' acting as the perpetual prosecutor.

The high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord. The phrase standing before has the idea of priestly service. Joshua is not in God's presence merely as a spectator but as a ministering priest.

Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. Satan hated the whole scene. He hates it when God's people come into the presence of the Lord. He hates it when they come into God's presence to minister unto the Lord. He will always oppose those who have chosen to follow Christ.

The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord's rebuke of Satan provides the most likely basis for the reflection on the nature of spiritual authority in: *<<whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not bring against them a slanderous judgement from the Lord>>* (2 Peter 2:11), and is confirmed by: *<<But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!''>>* (Jude 9).

God does allow Satan to attack and harass his people, but he always strictly regulates what Satan is allowed to do, as seen in Job Chapters 1 and 2. Satan wanted to destroy Simon Peter, sifting him like wheat (Luke 22:31-32), but Jesus prayed for Peter and stood beside him and did not allow Satan to carry out every evil intention of his heart.

The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! With this phrase, God reinforces the important standing of Jerusalem in his eyes.

Satan has a very strong case, for Joshua was not merely dressed in filthy clothes but, more precisely, clothed in garments soiled with excrement, which would automatically defile the wearer. Joshua's defilement posed a severe problem for the people, since he was the intermediary through whom their own defilement was to be removed on the Day of Atonement. Yet the Lord ruled Satan's charges inadmissible before he could present them. The Lord's election of Jerusalem and Joshua's position as one plucked from the fire: *<<And have mercy on some who are wavering; save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies>>* (Jude 22-23), i.e. brought safely from the holocaust of exile, means that Joshua is free from any possible condemnation.

A brand is a burnt, burning or smouldering stick in a fire. When John Wesley was only six years old, he was trapped in a burning house and was only rescued when one neighbour climbed on another's shoulders and pulled him out of window. A picture of the scene was drawn for Wesley and he kept the drawing until he died, and wrote under it Zechariah 3:2: Is this not a brand plucked from the burning?

<sup>4</sup> The angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.' And to him he said, 'See, I have taken your guilt away from you, and I will clothe you in festal apparel.'<sup>5</sup> And I said, 'Let them put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him in the apparel; and the angel of the Lord was standing by.

### Zechariah 3:4-5

I have taken your guilt away from you. The Lord also acts to cleanse Joshua from his iniquity. He commands his servants to remove the filthy clothes, so removing Joshua's iniquity, and to clothe Joshua in pure vestments, garments suitable for him to wear in the presence of the King of kings, i.e. festal apparel. Since the filthy clothes represent iniquity, these pure vestments represent a new righteousness imputed to Joshua. The Hebrew word translated filthy is the strongest expression in the Hebrew language for filth of the most vile and loathsome character.

Joshua not only enjoys having his iniquity removed, he also is given a positive righteousness by being clothed with rich robes. The thought of being clothed by God in righteousness runs from Genesis (Genesis 3:7 and 3:21) to Revelation (Revelation 7:13-14).

Even the great King David relied on God to take away his sins: <<David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' Nathan said to David, 'Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die'>> (2 Samuel 12:13).

Zechariah requests that the re-clothing be completed by placing a clean turban on Joshua's head, an act that has overtones of glory and royalty: <<You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God>> (Isaiah 62:3). Joshua's re-clothing in ceremonially pure festival garments in the presence of the angel of the Lord is a sign of God's gracious acceptance of him and of the people he represented.

<sup>6</sup> Then the angel of the Lord assured Joshua, saying <sup>7</sup> 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.'

### Zechariah 3:6-7

Joshua is charged with a task and granted a promise. The Lord commanded him to walk in my ways and keep my requirements, language that describes faithful behaviour within a covenant context. If he did these things, then he would also rule my house and have charge of my courts, which involved ensuring that the

worship in the temple was undefiled by idolatry, as confirmed by: <<*They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean. In a controversy they shall act as judges, and they shall decide it according to my judgements. They shall keep my laws and my statutes regarding all my appointed festivals, and they shall keep my sabbaths holy*>> (Ezekiel 44:23-24).

Joshua in Zechariah's day was admonished much the same way that the first Joshua was both admonished and encouraged: <<*Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go*>> (Joshua 1:7).

Joshua would also receive the right of access among those who are standing here, that is, in the heavenly council gathered before the Lord. The Lord would not be silent or distant from his people any longer.

<sup>8</sup> Now listen, Joshua, high priest, you and your colleagues who sit before you! For they are an omen of things to come: I am going to bring my servant the Branch. <sup>9</sup> For on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven facets, I will engrave its inscription, says the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day. <sup>10</sup> On that day, says the Lord of hosts, you shall invite each other to come under your vine and fig tree.'

### Zechariah 3:8-10

The promise of divine attentiveness in the present was a shadow of greater things to come. Joshua and his colleagues, the priestly class, were men who are an omen of things to come: their very existence after the exile was an indication of God's commitment to bless his people.

The future held an even greater blessing, the coming of my servant the Branch, which would result in the complete and instantaneous removal of the guilt of this land, and indeed a chance for everyone to be reconciled back to God.

The Branch refers back to the prophecies of Jeremiah. The Lord had declared in Jeremiah 22:30 that none of Jehoiachin's seed would sit on his throne, yet in Jeremiah 23:5 he nevertheless promised to raise up a righteous Branch for David, i.e. the Messiah, who would reign with justice and establish salvation for his people.

The engraved stone was probably part of the high priest's clothing, a gemstone with seven facets, fastened to the turban and inscribed with an inscription. These seven facets or eyes speak of the perfection and fullness of the knowledge and wisdom of the Messiah. A similar ornament on Aaron's turban was engraved with

the words 'Holy to the Lord,' which enabled Aaron to bear the iniquity of the people before the Lord (Exodus 28:36-38).

Early Christians saw the engraving on the stone to be a picture of Jesus' wounds but the engraving could also be a mark of identification or beautification. Jesus will return with such a mark: <<*On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, 'King of kings and Lord of lords'*>> (Revelation 19:16).

The coming Branch would definitively remove the guilt of this land, resulting in the blessing of restored fertility and peace for the people. As at the height of the Solomonic Empire, each man would invite his neighbour to come under his vine and under his fig tree: <<*During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees*>> (1 Kings 4:25), and: <<*but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken*>> (Micah 4:4). This is a proverbial expression that means prosperity and peace: <<*Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: "Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree, and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and honey, that you may live and not die. Do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, The Lord will deliver us"*>> (2 Kings 18:31-32); ultimately, the peace that the reign of the Messiah brings: <<*And you will have confidence, because there is hope; you will be protected and take your rest in safety*>> (Job 11:18). This vision and word from Zechariah shows how much God wanted to encourage and strengthen Joshua, and he does it in the best way: setting his eyes on the Messiah, Jesus Christ. That is the best encouragement of all.