

VIII. Zechariah in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel According to Zechariah
“Vision #4: The Gospel According to Zechariah”
Zechariah 3
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In this study we are in Zechariah 3 and looking at the fourth of eight visions Zechariah has in one night. Zechariah is having a dream and in this dream he finds himself in a series of different places. As I read Zechariah 3 I want you to ask yourself “what kind of a place are you finding yourself in this fourth dream of the night and what moment in the redemptive scope of history, do you think you are?” I have been greatly affected in the study of the minor prophets in general and Zechariah in particular by the influence of two Old Testament professors – one I actually had at Westminster Seminary and the other was one that after my graduation influenced me, but both of them greatly affected my view of this text. I have had a turn now on this text and hopefully I'll be able to describe it to you as clearly as I possibly can.

But I want to thank the Lord for Dr. O. Palmer Robertson for his insight in the minor prophets and also another very significant Old Testament Professor, Dr. D. A. Carson for their work in general in the Old Testament, specifically in the minor prophets, but in particular the book of Zechariah have been extremely helpful. Probably of all of the eight visions, this is the one that maybe they helped me the most and hopefully I can be of some help to you where you can see the implications of it, which are pretty extraordinary, at least in the filling of your soul in thanksgiving to God for your salvation and in a sense of understanding what God has done to redeem you and how God's sovereign grace is glorious – it must be defended and proclaimed.

In fact, as we end this book we will end with a call to evangelism. You would almost think that I had chosen this chapter in light of our ministry theme of evangelism as we get to the end, but I didn't for that was just a kindness of God's providence. So let's look at Zechariah 3.

Zechariah 3:1-10 says [1] *Then he (the angel of the Lord) showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. [2] And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand (burning stick) plucked from the fire?” [3] Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. [4] And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him he said, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.” [5] And 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. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.*

[6] And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, [7] “Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, 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. [8] Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. [9] For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes (facets), I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. [10] In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree.”

I want to take you to the place, then talk about the participants and lastly the point of it all – the place, the participants and the point. So where do you we find ourselves here in this text? What kind of a place is being described here? What is surrounding this place? What is the environment like that's being described here? You are in a courtroom. God willing after this sermon I will be at home sitting in my recliner with a bowl full of popcorn watching Perry Mason and then onto bed. But I love courtrooms and this is a courtroom, but where is this courtroom? When is this courtroom? It's a courtroom of judgment. Most people see it as the Divine courtroom of judgment on the Last Day and it's not. It's the Divine courtroom of judgment on the Atonement Day. It's not the last day, the Bema, of a courtroom in which those who are apart from the saving grace of Christ, are sent to condemnation. It's the courtroom of God on the Day of Atonement, where they elect of God are sent to justification and how they're being justified.

This is where I really am deeply appreciative of my Old Testament professors for in my early days of ministry, I began to just gravitate toward this being the day of judgment and that Joshua, the high Priest, is an example of me, but I didn't understand that there is no redemption on the day of judgment – you are either redeemed or you're not. In this passage this is someone being redeemed. When would that take place? The elect are redeemed on the Day of Atonement.

One of the reasons I encourage you to study this is because the book of Zechariah sends you first to the Gospels and then to the Book of Revelation with clarity, this particular vision, the fourth vision, does not do that. It sends you to the Gospels as the fulfillment of things that are found in the Pentateuch, not onto Revelation in the consummation, but to the Day of Atonement recorded in the Gospels, the day of Calvary, the Day of Christ, the LAMB of God who saves us, the Scapegoat of God who sends our sins away in expiation, who makes propitiation satisfaction, when He takes the filthy garments that are ours under the scrutiny and judgment of the Almighty.

We can see in the language he's sending us to a book of the Bible called Leviticus. He's sending us to Leviticus 16. Remember, at the end of Zechariah 3, Joshua ends up with a vestal robe and a clean, glorious turban on his head, but in the courtroom, his garments are filthy. Now, I want to look at Leviticus 16 but I won't read the entire text. This is the text that governs the Day of Atonement to tell us what happened once every year with the duty of the High Priest and what would take place on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. I will fill in what the chapter is basically saying but I'm just going to read the opening paragraph.

Leviticus 16:1-5 says [1] *The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, [2] and the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. (There is one provision as an exception, but if he goes where I dwell, he will perish. God will make a way for you to come in this way and in a certain time.) [3] But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. [4] He shall put on the holy linen coat (robe) and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. (That's what he wears into the presence of God.) He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on. [5] And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.*

Now here is what the rest of that chapter is about. He goes into this place at this moment, on this day, once a year, and it is there as priest, he brings the offering. Then he will step into the holy of holies, having put on the turban, the coat, the undergarments, having gone through the

waters of washing and purification as he comes with an offering as the text describes it. There are male goats, the bull and the ram. These are burnt offerings and these are sacrificial offerings. The point is made that the offerings will do two things. They are declaring the satisfaction of God to redeem/save His covenant people. Now, these offerings are not for the world, they are for God's covenant people. When these offerings are brought, He is showing them the only way for you to be redeemed as My people is a substitutionary sacrifice that is satisfactory to make propitiation. Then when he finishes, he places his hands upon a goat and leads him out to the wilderness and sends him out to take the sins away, to remove the sins from the people, so satisfaction to redeem them with the offerings of substitution. Then through the scapegoat of God takes the sins away having been placed upon him through the laying on of hands by Aaron.

Then when Aaron has done the scapegoat for expiation, the substitutionary sacrifices for propitiation, he is now filthy for he has borne the sins of the people to place them for the offerings of the scapegoat and the sacrificial offerings. So now he must again burn his clothes and purify himself again because he has touched the unclean to intercede for the people. In this chapter you can see the language of the garment and the language of the moment. This is why the text in Zechariah is not taking us to the last day of judgment that ends in the condemnation for the non-elect but it is taking us to the Atoning Day of redemption for the elect. But something is happening in the description in what is taking place.

Now, who are the participants in this drama in Zechariah 3? At first glance it's pretty simple. There is Joshua, the high priest. In the post exile era of Israel under the bondage of Babylon and the Medo-Persians, as they were sent back by Cyrus and now under Darius, they had leaders. Those leaders included Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, who was the governor, who, by the way, was of the line of David, but wasn't a king standing in a kingly position. Darius was king over them now, but Zerubbabel was appointed by Darius and Cyrus as governor. Another leader was Ezra, the great teacher, and then two prophets – Zechariah and Haggai. It Joshua the high priest that we see standing in this courtroom.

The second participant we see is the Angel of the Lord. Now, we've studied that, so I'm not going to go back through that. That is a pre incarnate appearance of Christ and Christ shows up in this vision three ways. The first way is as the Angel of the Lord, who is the defense attorney for Joshua, the high priest. It looks like he's got a losing proposition because the Angel of the Lord is the defender of Joshua, the high priest. Why does it look this way? Who is the prosecuting attorney, the accuser? It's Satan and Satan is accusing Joshua, who stands patently and by appearance as fully guilty. He's got filthy garments on.

Here I have to talk about something I'd rather not talk about, but it's so clearly in the text and needs to be understood. This word translated in your Bible 'filthy' is used in two cases that is human regurgitation and human excrement. It is clearly giving us a sense of odor and a sense of filth. It is the very thing that is used in Deuteronomy 23:14-16, when God's people are in the wilderness, God gives them sewage regulations about how to go outside the camp in terms of sitting, as it is euphemistically called. One is to take a spade when they go out. When He tells them this, it is obviously a health regulation that makes sense. We teach it, don't we? Latrines is what we call it, but it's not cast simply in terms of human health regulations. The text ends 'for the Lord your God is holy' for it is used metaphorically and symbolically as an expression of our odious sins before God Himself.

Here Joshua stands, not like in Leviticus 16 with the white linen turban, the white linen robe and the white linen undergarments, but with garments smeared with human excrement before God in its filth and its odor. The text is giving an external appearance before God that

tells us of our internal condition, before God as sinners. It is using a picture that we would readily identify with and understand of the external appearance of Joshua to describe to us what our internal appearance actually looks like. So here we see Joshua, the high priest is in this condition, the Angel of the Lord who is his defender, and there is the Lord as Judge.

This is where the text gets very challenging because who is the Angel of the Lord? It is a Christophany, a pre incarnate appearance of Christ, second Person of the Trinity. Who is the Lord? It is the Christ, the Judge of all humanity. So in this text, Jesus the second Person of the Trinity is both Judge and defense attorney. We see it in the language when it says, ‘the Lord said to my Lord, “Satan be rebuked.”’

Zechariah 3:1-10 says [1] *Then he (the angel of the Lord) showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. [2] And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand (burning stick) plucked from the fire?” [3] Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. [4] And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And to him he said, “Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments.” [5] And 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. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.*

Here we see right off three participants – Joshua, the high priest, the Lord and Satan. Now we find out that in this courtroom there are some other participants. In Zechariah 3:4 it says ‘to those who were standing before him.’ Who stands before the Lord in the Divine courtroom of judgment? It is the cherubim and they are there ready to do His bidding and His ministry. That’s not all the participants for there are more.

Zechariah 3:8 says [8] *Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for **they are men who are a sign**: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.* Joshua’s friends or colleagues or companions are standing in the courtroom. Who are the colleagues, companions and friends of Joshua, the high priest? It is the Levitical priesthood. This Leviticus priesthood exist to give direction. Joshua is the high priest over them in the Leviticus priesthood and the Leviticus priesthood is there as a sign. They are getting instructed in this moment as well as they see the high priest surrounded by all of the Leviticus priesthood that are with him. So in this heavenly courtroom is Joshua, the Angel of the Lord, the Lord as judge, Satan as the prosecuting attorney, the cherubim who are in the presence of the Lord and alongside of Joshua are the companions that belong to him and I believe that's none other than the Levitical priesthood of which he would represent at this particular moment.

So what is the point that we find out? Our point is that this clearly is not the judgment on the Day of Judgment, the last day, that sends those who are not elect and those who are the enemies of God to an everlasting condemnation. No, this is a judgment of God in the courtroom of God upon God Himself. The Lord rebuke you. It is the Lord who will be the Yeshua, the Joshua. It is the judgment of God in the courtroom of God and the judgment of God to save the elect of God. This is a salvation judgment, not a condemnation judgment. Those who are chosen of God, of which Joshua represents, are now being saved by God.

Who gets their sins atoned for? Efficaciously, it is the elect of God, the brands that have been plucked from the fire. Now, on the one hand, that would, of course, initially in a temporal sense, refer to the fact that they had been brought out of Babylon and now have been returned from the exile. But that temporal sense is looking now at an eternal sense in the Divine courtroom. This is the judgment of God in the courtroom, of God upon God himself to save the

elect of God, by the grace of God from the wrath of God. How? It is through the Son of God. When? It is on the D-day of Atonement. The day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 had to be repeated every year. On this Day of Atonement in this Divine courtroom, it is once and for all, because the One who is the high priest brings Himself as the sacrifice as our filthiness is covering Him, and the Lord pours out the judgment upon Him that it would not fall upon us. Here is the Son of God on the Day of Atonement, in the presence of God, bearing the wrath of God to save the elect of God.

Here, Joshua's external appearance is a picture of our internal condition and how we appear before God and the One who takes our place, now appears before the Father as one smeared with the odious of human excrement and regurgitation. "Eloi Eloi Lama Sabachthani," which means "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46) Jesus, who had gone through six trials on that day before He gets to the cross, as He was pronounced innocent in all six, is now pronounced guilty because He bears our filthiness. He bears it upon Himself, and without it we cannot be saved.

Here is Satan, the accuser and now Joshua's answer is another High Priest greater who will rebuke him saying, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan.' It is the Lord who redeems His people from their sins. The text is clear for on the day of judgment, the elect of God are saved and that is amazing grace because the text is also clear that we cannot save ourselves. God Himself must remove our filthy garments. God Himself must give us new garments. God Himself must intervene for the elect of God to be saved. God Himself has chosen not only to save His people, but has chosen to send His Son, who will take the sins of His people. Here is a Priest who needs not to be cleansed because He is the One who walks in obedience before the Lord.

Zechariah 3:6-7 says [6] *And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua,* [7] *"Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, 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.* How do these priests get saved? The same way you get saved. It is through the One who takes the place of all of us to save us – He is the Priest who not only brings the sacrifice, but is the sacrifice and bears our sins upon Himself so that when He pays for our sins, we are justified. Jesus didn't go to the cross to make us savable if we could remove our sins and come to Him. Jesus goes to the cross to save His people from their sins and the resurrection says it is finished and victory and the elect of God have been redeemed – not are redeemable but are redeemed.

Romans 8:33 says [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* God doesn't make us justifiable if we add something to it, but it is He who justifies us. This is why we have a doctrine of assurance of salvation. Our salvation is from the Lord, through the Lord, by the Lord and unto the Lord. That's why we can say with confidence, all who are in Christ are surely saved, because it was not by them. We cannot remove our garments. We cannot remove our sins, and we have no righteous robes to put on ourselves. He brings the garments of righteousness to us, having removed the filthy garments from us. He has cleansed us. He removes our garments. He has clothed us with the garments of His righteousness. Then this One who has made us right with God, now puts the turban on us, for we are joint heirs with this Savior forever and ever. We now have the crown upon us.

Have you ever seen someone at a play get so excited that they run up on the stage to start acting? That's what happens here. Zechariah 3:4-5 says [4] *And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him."* And to him he said, *"Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments."* [5] *And 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. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

Who says in verse 5 'Let them put a clean turban on his head'? It is Zechariah, for he gets in on it. Zechariah knows Leviticus 16 for he is not only a Prophet but a priest. He knows he is with those standing around Joshua, the high priest because he's a priest and he says, 'Don't forget the turban.' Put the turban on him that bears the plate, that God owns His people. So there's the removal of sin and the clothing with righteousness. When Jesus goes to the cross, we see Jesus' passive obedience where he doesn't sin because He's righteous, but He, obedient to God takes our sin upon Himself. So He then takes our sin away – the LAMB of God. Then as the Scapegoat, He goes outside the city to the hill to take our sins away from us and then propitiation and expiation. That only gets you out of hell, that doesn't get you to heaven. Heaven is for the righteous. You're not only dis-clothed with filthy garments removed, you're now re-clothed with His righteousness, His active obedience.

You're not only forgiven and Hell's Gates are shut, God can't send you there. I say this reverently. He can't send you there. Why? Jesus paid for it. God's holiness must be satisfied, but not twice. If He paid for it, it's paid for and then your ticket, as it were, into heaven, gets punched with the righteousness of Christ. You are accepted in the beloved. Romans 8:1 says [1] *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* It's been taken away. What's in its place? Justification. What does condemnation mean? Guilty. We don't have that. What does justification mean? Not forgiven, it means innocent. We are innocent before Him because it's the righteousness of Christ that cries out for us.

So Zechariah jumps from the spectator's seat in his dream up on the stage and says, 'Don't forget the turban. Put the turban on his head.' So now we've got another participant in the middle of the dream as he rises up. Now what? All of you are right with God. You not only have removal, re-clothed, the regal touch, the regal turban, reconciliation to God and one another – all of us together redeemed of the Lord. Now we are redeemed by the grace of God on that Day of Atonement that fulfilled all that God has said.

Zechariah 3:6-10 says [6] *And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, [7] "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, 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. [8] Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. [9] For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes (facets), I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. [10] In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree."*

This Joshua, the high priest, couldn't give us the right of access among those standing there but the One who is ruling, reigning and superintending over the courts of God is Jesus for that's the High Priest who does so here. Why did Joshua have this priesthood? It was point to Jesus, the Priest who doesn't just bring a sacrifice, but He is the Priest who is the sacrifice. They are pointing to the Messiah. There are three things here about the Messiah. One, the Messiah is a servant. You will see this clearly in Isaiah 53 – He is the servant who suffers by taking our iniquity away. Two, He is the Branch. We see in Jeremiah 33 that the Branch is the sprout of the line of David, the High Priest. Thirdly He is not only a Priest but He's a King who will provide the rock that cannot be broken that speaks comprehensively to everything and the hand of God signs it. The fullness, comprehensive Stone bears the Divine Imprimatur – He will engrave its

inscription. And on this Day (Day of Atonement) He will remove all the sins of all of my people for all of eternity.

Zechariah 3:10 is a call to evangelism – to invite your neighbor to come under His vine and rest under His fig tree. We don't know who the elect are but they are out there in every tribe and nation. We don't even know what's good soil. We just throw the seed everywhere for we go everywhere, inviting everyone, telling them that Jesus saves sinners. Guess what? You're one. So we invite you to Him who alone can save and He will lose not one of His people because of this day. On that day of judgment, the last day, they are in the Book of Life because of what happened on Yom Kippur, the day of our redemption at Calvary. He is the Prophet, the Priest and the King. Now go tell everyone there's hope for Jesus saves all who come to Him and His people. Let's pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You so much for Your Word. Thank You so much for the privilege to just dive into these glorious texts of Scripture. God, please minister to the hearts of all who are reading this. May they rejoice with the Gospel of Jesus, according to Zechariah, in Jesus' Name, Amen.