

## VI. *The Cleansing of Joshua*

06-Jan-08            Zechariah 3:1-10

*Theme:* Jesus Christ – the Servant, the Branch, the Stone – is our priest-king who accomplishes salvation for His people and reigns over us.

*Key Verses:* Zechariah 3:3-4 <sup>3</sup>Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. <sup>4</sup>Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, “Take away the filthy garments from him.” And to him He said, See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.”

### Review

Last week we studied the third Night Vision of Zechariah – “The Man with the Measuring Line.” Zechariah saw a man, presumably the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, going out to measure the city of Jerusalem. As Zechariah looked on, he learned that the future growth of the city would be so great that no walls could contain the inhabitants of God’s kingdom. The oracle which followed the vision explained to Zechariah that this growth would come about through the work of Messiah and the ingathering of the nations into the people of God. This *expansion* of God’s people was the first of three wonderful promises made by God in this vision.

The second promise was of the *security* of God’s people. The church does not need to rely on human means of protection, like city walls, to remain safe against her enemies. Instead, God promises to be a wall of fire around her, just like God’s pillar of fire which protected ancient Israel from their Egyptian pursuers. In the oracle, God promises to shake the nations who touch “the apple of His eye” – the church – spoiling them and enriching His people.

The third and final promise is the greatest – the reality of *divine indwelling*: “I will dwell in your midst.” To make sure we hear this promise, God repeats it three times (2:5, 10, 11). This is the mark of the church that the glory of God dwells there. All of these promises – expansion, security, indwelling – are fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming and in the subsequent history of His church.

### Introduction

Today and next week, we turn to the heart of the Night Visions. The first three visions began by looking at Israel’s place among the nations. Israel was pictured as a grove of myrtle trees within the midst of the ravine of the nations, whose horns of power had been arrayed against the people of God. But the good news of the first three visions was that God was in the midst of His people, and would return to them in mercy, protect them, and cause them to prosper, meanwhile dealing with the nations at ease.

But there remains a significant question to be answered. How can God dwell in the midst of His people, since they are sinful and unclean? The temple has not been rebuilt yet, and although the burnt altar of sacrifice has been re-established, the rituals of the Day of Atonement – the most solemn date on the Hebrew calendar – cannot be performed, because there is no temple.

The Day of Atonement was the one day each year in which the high priest could enter the holy of holies, to make intercession for the people of God and to cleanse the land from sin: “for on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD” (Lev. 16:30). Since this ritual had not been performed for almost seventy

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years, the people of God were defiled and unclean. Furthermore, the priesthood itself was defiled and unclean. How could they ever be made acceptable in the presence of the LORD? To answer this question, we turn to the fourth Night Vision – “The Cleansing of Joshua.”

### Exposition

#### A. The Fourth Vision (3:1-5)

##### 1. The Accusation (3:1)

<sup>1</sup>Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him (Zechariah 3:1).

Zechariah’s vision opens up in what appears to be a courtroom, but in all likelihood is the temple of the Lord. In addition to Zechariah and the implied presence of his guide, the interpreting angel, we have three main characters in the drama before us: the Angel of the LORD, Joshua the high priest, and Satan the accuser. The courtroom or throne room of God is crowded, because we later learn that there are many attendants to the Angel of the LORD (v. 4, 7), and that Joshua is also accompanied by companions (v.8).

Once again, the Angel of the LORD, the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, is at the center of Zechariah’s vision. From context, it is clear that this Angel is one and the same with God because of the words that He says and the actions He performs. Only God has the power to cleanse and forgive sin. We’ve already seen the Angel of the LORD as the Captain of the host and as the builder and architect of His city. Now we see Him in the role of Judge and of Savior.

The second main character is Joshua, the high priest. His grandfather was Seraiah, who had been the high priest at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (*cp.* Jer. 52:24). Joshua’s father, Jehozadak, was taken into captivity into Babylon (1 Chr. 6:14-15), and thus never served as high priest. Joshua was born in Babylon, and along with the prince Zerubbabel, was one of the leaders of the remnant who returned to Jerusalem to reestablish the worship of the LORD (Ezra 2:2; 3:2; 4:3; 5:2).

Joshua is said to be “standing before” the Angel of the LORD. He is not merely standing up in front of God; he is standing in his official role as high priest in the performance of his duties. To “stand before” God means to serve Him or wait on Him. For example:

<sup>8</sup>At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to *stand before* the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day (Deuteronomy 10:8; *cp.* 2 Chronicles 29:11; Ezekiel 44:15).

So, Joshua is waiting upon the LORD in his capacity as high priest, representing the entire people of God. Since the high priest could only enter the throne room of God once a year to stand in His very presence, the context of this vision is very likely the Day of Atonement. This connection is strengthened later in the passage, when it refers to the removal of iniquity in one day (v. 9). However, Joshua has a real problem, a problem that is disastrous for him in his role as mediator between man and God – he is unclean (v. 3), and therefore unable to fulfill his responsibilities.

The third character in this courtroom drama takes full advantage of Joshua’s dilemma. Satan, which is actually a title meaning “The Adversary” or “The Accuser”, is standing at Joshua’s right hand to oppose him. The “accuser of the brethren” (Rev. 12:10) has taken up his function as prosecuting attorney. He is reprising the role of the accuser of God’s people that he played in the

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story of Job (Job 1:6-12). Satan seems to have an airtight case, and his position at Joshua's right hand reinforces that impression. The "right hand" is the position of power, strength, and protection. "When the LORD is at our right hand, He stabilizes, helps, supports, and protects us (*cp.* Ps. 16:8; 121:5; 109:30-31)" (Jordan). But now, instead of God at Joshua's right hand to support him, he finds The Accuser, ready to oppose him (*cp.* Ps. 109:6).

How is it that Satan has heavenly access, entrance into the throne room of God to oppose God's people? Why does God allow Satan in? This is a difficult question, one that people struggle with, especially in the case of Job. Kline explains that in comparing the Old and New Testaments, it appears that for a time God permitted Satan heavenly access as a "council member" (*cp.* Job 1:6). That is what is happening here in Zechariah 3. However, since the enthronement of Jesus Christ once His priestly work was done, Satan was cast out of heaven and his access to God's council was terminated until the time appointed for his end (Rev. 12:7-12).

What was the accusation of Satan? It is not stated, but can be inferred from context. First, he clearly was denouncing Joshua as an unfit representative of the people of God. His very attire disqualified him from service. Furthermore, since the priesthood was defiled, it was clear that the temple could not be rebuilt. A defiled priesthood could not serve in a new temple; therefore, the whole temple project was useless. But even beyond that, Satan was accusing the entire nation of Israel, of which Joshua was their representative. All of Israel was unfit and unworthy – they were all unclean and sinful. How could God ever accept these people? How could God receive their worship and service? How could God have anything to do with them?

But as in all the plays of the Serpent, there is also a subtle attack against God here. Kline writes:

[Like in Job], Satan is attacking the Lord for accepting the ministry of an allegedly unfit priest at His altar-throne. Satan challenges the presence of Job and Joshua; filthy and false, they defile the holy temple. To challenge them was in effect to call into question the holiness of the God who consorts with such sinners. His ultimate point of attack is seen to be not the defendant but the Judge, not Joshua but the Christ-Angel. By establishing the fact that Joshua was unclean, unacceptable on the holy hill of Zion, Satan would demonstrate that God's announced program of redemption had proven a failure. Further, he would make the case that the Angel of the Lord was not worthy to sit as judge in the holy council, for in countenancing the priestly service of defiled Joshua He was responsible for the contamination of God's holy courts.

All in all, it seemed an open and shut case. Joshua did not say anything in his defense. How could he? He was manifestly guilty, as were the people of Israel whom he represented. There was nothing to say. Or was there?

### 2. The Rebuke (3:2)

<sup>2</sup>And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" (Zechariah 3:2).

Joshua may not have had anything to say, but the Judge did. Jesus Christ rebukes Satan, not once but twice as an emphatic denial of the charges that The Accuser has brought against His people.

When the LORD rebukes something, it is not merely a strong expression of disagreement like you or I might mean. Rather, God has the power to back up His rebuke with action, whether it is the rebuke of the Red Sea in the exodus (Ps. 106:9), or Jesus rebuking the wind and the waves of

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the sea (Mk. 4:39). Thus, the Angel's rebuke here has the power to overcome or reverse the accusations of The Accuser.

What is the basis for the rebuke, for the reversal of charges? Zechariah tells us: it is the election of God. God has "chosen Jerusalem" – that is, placed His divine love upon His church. He did not do so because they were worthy, because they were clearly not; but rather, God chooses His people because He loves them (Dt. 7:7-8; Eph. 1:4-6). Phillips points out that God's promised affection toward His people has never been based on their own worth, but is rather based on the sovereign purpose of the Lord.

In describing Joshua as "a brand plucked from the fire," Zechariah is making a reference back to Amos, where that earlier prophet described God's mercy to His people in the midst of their sinfulness:

<sup>11</sup>"I overthrew some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; yet you have not returned to Me," says the LORD (Amos 4:11).

What a description of God's mercy! We are sinners, deserving of judgment and hellfire, and yet God in His electing love and mercy plucks us out of the fire and rescues us from the fate we deserve. Satan's case seemed unbeatable; Joshua and the rest of the people of God were doomed for destruction. And yet, Jesus Christ has defeated Satan, has snatched sinners out of the fire, and has rescued them from eternal punishment. Here we see the pre-incarnate Savior rescuing sinners on the basis of what He Himself would one day do, for it was Jesus Christ who suffered the equivalent of hellfire on the cross in our place, in order to pluck us like brands out of the fire.

The short epistle of Jude picks up on the imagery here in Zechariah chapter 3:

<sup>22</sup>And on some have compassion, making a distinction; <sup>23</sup>but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh (Jude 22-23).

<sup>9</sup>Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9).

Jude 23 clearly alludes to the image of the brand plucked from the fire (3:2b) as well as the filthy garments of Joshua (3:3). In addition, the reference to "The Lord rebuke you!" in Jude 9 apparently points back to this vision of Zechariah as well (3:2a). Several commentators (Jordan, Baron) have suggested that Jude 9, rather than referring to some apocryphal battle about the physical body of Moses, refers instead to this vision in Zechariah, where Satan is contending against the church. In this context, the "body of Moses" would be the Old Testament analog to the New Testament "body of Christ"; in other words, referring to Israel, the people of God. If this is so, then Michael the archangel would be a reference to the Angel of the LORD. In any event, this vision of Zechariah was obviously on the mind of Jude when he wrote his epistle.

### 3. Cleansed, Clothed, and Crowned (3:3-5)

<sup>3</sup>Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

<sup>4</sup>Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes." <sup>5</sup>And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on

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his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the LORD stood by (Zechariah 3:3-5).

In verse 3 we are given the description of Joshua’s garments to which we have already alluded. But to really understand how unacceptable Joshua was in the presence of the LORD, we need to realize that the Hebrew word translated as “filthy” actually suggests that Joshua’s clothing was completely smeared in human excrement. It is a term which describes the most loathsome nature of pollution and uncleanness, and as such, is an apt picture of how God views our sinful natures:

<sup>6</sup>But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away (Isaiah 64:6).

But as the vision proceeds, we see how the Lord’s verbal rebuke of Satan has the power to effect real change in the status of Joshua. The first step in the process is the removal of the filthy robes, which is symbolic of removing iniquity and sin. Justification is a legal process where the guilt of our sins is removed. Of course, Jesus Christ accomplishes our justification on the cross, where the guilt of our sins is removed from us and placed on Him as our sin-bearer.

Notice that Joshua does not remove his own filthy garments; it is only at the command of Jesus Christ that His angelic attendants remove them. This reminds us that we cannot cleanse ourselves; we cannot do anything to remove the pollution of our sin and the guilt that it brings. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, C. S. Lewis pictures this truth in the form of the spoiled brat Eustace, who is transformed into a dragon after he puts a stolen magic ring on his arm. Try as he might, he is unable to remove the ugly scales of his dragon flesh, which is a picture of the sinfulness of his soul. It is only when the lion Aslan – the Lord Jesus Christ – comes and tears off the dragon scales with his great paws, that Eustace is freed from his dragon nature and reclothed in fresh garments.

Like Eustace in “The Chronicles of Narnia,” Joshua is not only freed of his filthy garments, but he is also reclothed in new finery. It is not enough to be declared “not guilty” by the Judge. That does not earn us access to God; it only avoids the punishment. To be accepted by God, we need to be clothed in righteousness pictured by these “rich robes” (*cp.* Job 29:14; Ps. 132:9; Is. 61:10). Although the imagery is of the high priest being reclothed in his high priestly garments, the Hebrew word used here is unusual, and only used one other time in the Old Testament, referring to, ornate, elegant clothing used for special occasions (*cp.* Is. 3:22).

Phillips points out that this righteousness which we receive from the Lord Jesus Christ is not *infused*, but rather it is *imputed*. “Infused righteousness” would be something that is inherently inside of us, meaning that God would have to justify us because we were in fact righteous. However, the Bible clearly does not teach this viewpoint. Rather, in this vision, as elsewhere in Scripture, the picture is of “imputed righteousness”; a righteousness which is alien to ourselves and is given to us wholly apart from any worth that we have. Thus, these rich robes, freely given by the grace of God to Joshua, point us to the righteousness of Christ which we receive when we place our trust in Him.

The prophet Zechariah is so engaged in the scene in front of him that he cannot help himself. He interjects himself into the unfolding drama and asks for a “turban” to be placed on Joshua’s head. In context, this refers to the miter or headdress described in Exodus chapter 28, although the Hebrew word used here is different than in Exodus (*cp.* Is. 3:23):

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<sup>36</sup>You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO THE LORD. <sup>37</sup>And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. <sup>38</sup>So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD. <sup>39</sup>You shall skillfully weave the tunic of fine linen thread, you shall make the turban of fine linen, and you shall make the sash of woven work (Exodus 28:36-39).

The key to understanding the turban or headdress of the high priest is in the engraved golden plate which is attached to it by a blue cord, situated on the forehead of the high priest. This golden plate declared the priest to be "holy to the LORD" and it was a necessary requirement for him to wear that turban with the golden plate on it if he were to come and stand before the Lord in His holy presence. If you didn't wear the golden plate on your head, you were unable to stand before the Lord. Just ask Uzziah, who in his arrogance tried to add the priestly function to his kingly role. When he offered incense inside the temple, God struck him with leprosy on his forehead, the very place where the golden plate should have been. Uzziah was not "holy to the LORD" and he paid the price because of it (2 Chr. 26:16-21).

So, Zechariah's request was crucial for the completion of Joshua's cleansing and acceptance before God. Now Joshua was properly outfitted to stand before God on the Day of Atonement and make the necessary sacrifice for sin. Now the people of God, represented by their high priest, had standing and access before God. They are no longer under condemnation and judgment, but are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and declared "holy to the LORD."

This change in status is indicated by the last phrase in verse 5: "And the Angel of the LORD stood by." At the beginning of the vision, Joshua was standing before the LORD with Satan at his right hand. But now that has all changed. Satan is gone, driven from the courtroom of heaven by the rebuke of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Angel of the LORD has stepped down from the bench, as it were, and now stands beside Joshua to support and aid him. No longer is Satan at the right hand to accuse us – instead we have Jesus Christ to protect us.

### **B. The Message (3:6-10)**

As in the first and third visions, following the visual element we have an oracle which expands upon the themes already presented. The message which follows is composed of two parts. The first is an admonition directed toward Joshua, who has now been cleansed and re-consecrated for his role as the high priest of Israel. The second is a "premonition" that uses Joshua and the other priests as a type of the greater high priest to come – Jesus Christ, expanding on the Messiah's priestly work which has already been demonstrated in the vision of the cleansing of Joshua.

#### *1. Admonition (3:6-7)*

<sup>6</sup>Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying, <sup>7</sup>"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My command, then you shall also judge My house, and likewise have charge of My courts; I will give you places to walk among these who stand here'" (Zechariah 3:6-7).

The admonition to Joshua is usually translated as two conditional clauses (starting with "if") and three resulting clauses that will occur if the two conditions are met. Alternately in Hebrew, the construction of this admonition could be considered as four conditional clauses and one resultant

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clause. In either rendering of the Hebrew, the obvious intent is to describe what Joshua is required to do now that he has been cleansed.

This is an important point and we should not overlook it. Jesus Christ has not saved us through His grace to live our lives any way we please. The constant refrain in the exodus is “Let My people go, that they may serve Me” (e.g., Ex. 8:1), not “Let My people go so they can have a wild party and do whatever they want!” Our salvation is always the prelude to service. We have been saved by grace that we may do good works (*cp.* Eph. 2:8-10).

Here, Joshua is admonished to “walk” and to “keep.” To walk in the ways of the Lord describes a lifestyle of moral obedience to the revealed will of God. This is an exhortation to maintain personal piety and holiness. The second condition, to keep God’s commands, most likely refers to ritual obedience in his role as the high priest. He is to observe all of the requirements in the law pertaining to his religious duty. Thus, in all his life, inside of worship and out, he is called to obey God’s word and place it as his highest priority.

What are the rewards for faithful obedience? The next two clauses say that Joshua will “judge My house” and “rule” or “have charge of My courts.” If Joshua obeys God, he will remain in and be confirmed in his leadership role among the people of God. To judge the house of God may refer to the high priest’s judicial calling over the entire nation of Israel (*cp.* Dt. 17:8-10), or it may simply refer to his leadership over the temple and the worship of God’s people. The courts of God here are not referring to judicial courts, but to the precincts or courtyards around the temple area – again signifying Joshua’s leadership in the worship of God. Notice that these promises imply that the temple will be rebuilt, another assurance to the people of God in Zechariah’s day that their work would succeed.

The final promise that Joshua is given for faithful obedience is to gain access to the throne room of God: “I will give you places to walk among those who stand here.” In context, “those who stand here” should be identified with “those who stood before” the Angel of the LORD in verse 4 and obeyed the Lord’s instructions to cleanse Joshua. In other words, Zechariah is referring to the angelic assembly of heaven. What exactly does this promise mean? According to Baron, the Jewish Targum suggests it means that once Joshua’s earthly work was completed, he would gain access to heaven after his death.

However, most commentators see this promise as the ultimate fulfillment of the high priest’s ministry and work, to be granted access to the heavenly courts through his service. Joshua as the high priest had the privilege that very few others in the Old Testament had – to come into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement and stand before the presence of God in His throne room. Before, Joshua could not come before God because he was filthy, covered in excrement; but now, robed in the righteousness of Christ, he has access to God.

We experience this access to the throne room of God through Jesus Christ. We are seated right now in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). We can now enter the throne room of grace boldly through prayer (Heb. 4:16; *cp.* Eph. 3:11-12). Jesus Christ is our high priest and grants us access to heaven. As a result, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to be heavenly-minded:

<sup>1</sup>If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup>For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:1-4).

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### 2. *Premonition (3:8-10)*

#### a. *Servant and Branch (3:8)*

<sup>8</sup>Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are a wondrous sign; for behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH' (Zechariah 3:8).

This additional saying from the Angel of the LORD is addressed not only to Joshua, but also to his "companions." Likely this is referring to the other chief priests, of which Zechariah's grandfather Iddo would have been a member. These priests are sitting, probably in the sense of judgment (*cp.* Ex. 18:13-14; Is. 28:6), and thus represent the judicial nature of their calling as priests.

I call this announcement a "premonition", because Joshua and these priests are "a wondrous sign" or a type of something yet to come in the future. What do they prefigure? These priests are a picture of the work of the Messiah to come. Zechariah uses three different images to describe the Messiah. The first two are in verse 8: He is called "My Servant the BRANCH."

Zechariah compounds two Messianic titles together in this announcement. The first title, "My Servant," was made famous by the prophet Isaiah 200 years before Zechariah. In passages such as Is. 42:1-4 and 49:1-7, Isaiah described the ministry of the suffering Servant of the LORD. "As delineated in Isaiah's climactic passage (52:13-53:12), the Servant's ministry is priestly: He presents an offering for sin, He sprinkles many nations, He makes intercession for transgressors. Central to the portrait is His passive obedience unto death during His state of humiliation as He fills the role of priest and sacrifice" (Kline). Thus, the priests of Israel are a fitting symbol as a type of the greater priest to come.

The second title, "the Branch," is used by both Isaiah (Is. 4:2; 11:1) and Jeremiah (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-18). Unlike the title of "My Servant," which is primarily a priestly name, "the Branch" is a decidedly royal title. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah describe "the Branch" as a Davidic king who will come and rule in righteousness and execute judgment upon the earth. Thus, when Zechariah uses both of these titles together, he truly is proclaiming something "wondrous": the Messiah is both priest and king, He is the priest-king of His people.

#### b. *Stone (3:9)*

<sup>9</sup>For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day' (Zechariah 3:9).

A third description of Messiah is given to us in verse 9: He is also a "stone." This verse is difficult to translate from the Hebrew, and even potentially more difficult to understand. The meaning of the "stone" here is confusing; Robertson cites at least 15 possible interpretations. Some feasible options include: the cornerstone of the temple, a capstone of the temple, a stone that replaced the lost Ark of the Covenant in the holy of holies, a precious stone in a crown or on the vestments of the high priest, an altar stone, or a memorial stone.

However I believe, along with Robertson, Jordan, and Kline, that the reference here is to golden plate that hung from the high priest's turban and covered his forehead. Although the Hebrew word "stone" used here is not normally used of the gold plate, Zechariah has already demonstrated in this passage that he is willing to use alternate Hebrew words from the ones

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normally used to describe the clothing of the high priest. Robertson points out that whatever interpretation we make of this stone, it must satisfy the four conditions in verse 9, which the golden plate does. First, the golden plate on the turban would certainly be considered “before Joshua,” since it rested on his forehead.

Second, upon this stone are “seven eyes” or “seven springs,” seven being the symbolic number of perfection or moral completeness. In Hebrew, the word “eye” can also mean “springs of water” (*cp.* Gen. 16:7; Num. 33:9). Commentators thus take this reference to the “seven eyes” either to refer to the complete watchfulness of God upon the stone, or to the presence of the Holy Spirit as symbolized by the living water of the seven springs. In his vision of the Apocalypse, John also refers to the seven-fold Spirit of God (Rev. 1:4; 5:6) who is connected with the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. While the application of the Spirit of God to the stone who is Christ is apparent, the connection with the golden plate is less obvious. Jordan suggests that the seven eyes, in addition to the presence of the Holy Spirit, correspond to the seven Hebrew letters in the inscription “Holy to the LORD.”

In the third place, the stone is said to be engraved. This was certainly true of the golden plate, whose inscription “Holy to the LORD” was its most prominent feature. Typologically, commentators going back all the way to the early Church Fathers point to the suffering of Christ on the cross as His “engraving.”

Finally, the stone is connected with the removal of the sin of the land in a single day. Clearly, the fulfillment of this promise points to the Atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ in His death. But typologically, this promise is connected with the yearly observance of the Day of Atonement, when the high priest, wearing the turban with the golden plate, entered the holy of holies to atone for the sins of the people.

Thus, here in this description of Jesus Christ as the stone who removes iniquity, we have the connection back to the vision of the cleansing of Joshua. Just as Joshua was cleansed and equipped to serve as high priest and wear the priestly turban with “Holy to the LORD” engraved upon it, so Jesus is the one who accomplishes that cleansing. He is the Holy One whose righteousness Joshua wears. He is the one who accomplishes true Atonement, of which the Day of Atonement only pointed toward. He is the greater high priest, of which Joshua was only a type or symbol.

### *c. Security (3:10)*

<sup>10</sup>“In that day,” says the LORD of hosts, “everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree” (Zechariah 3:10).

Zechariah concludes his third vision with an idyllic picture of peace and security. This proverbial saying goes back to the days of prosperity under King Solomon:

<sup>25</sup>And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon (1 Kings 4:25).

Later on, the prophets used it as a picture of the future kingdom of God (*cp.* Is. 36:16; Mi. 4:4). Peace and security are assured to all believers in Jesus Christ. We are already at peace with God, and we also have internal peace through our union with Jesus. But the final fulfillment of this promise awaits the consummation of all things, when Christ ushers in His eternal kingdom.

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### Conclusion

What a wonderful, rich vision! Historically, this vision must have greatly encouraged Zechariah and the remnant of Jerusalem. God was telling them that not only He had accepted them, but that He also had dealt with their sin problem. Their sinfulness and uncleanness was no obstacle to God's sovereign power to cleanse them from all unrighteousness. By re-investing the high priest, God was telling His people that the way of access to the Lord was once again open to them, that the temple would be rebuilt, and that the services of the Day of Atonement would once again begin. In the previous visions, God had declared that His mercy was once again with His people. In this vision, He showed them how His mercy was actually applied to them.

Of course, this vision is clearly Christological in nature. It starts with the work of Jesus Christ in justifying the people of God, symbolized by the cleansing of Joshua. But it goes much further, in presenting three different Messianic images to us. Jesus Christ is the Suffering Servant of God, the one who is both priest and sacrifice, the mediator between God and man who secures salvation for His people. He is also the Branch of David, the royal king who sits on His throne forever. Like Psalm 110, which combines the priestly and royal functions of Messiah, Zechariah is describing for us the greatness of our Savior. The final image that Zechariah gives us for Jesus is the stone that takes away sin in a single day. He is "Holy to the LORD", the Holy One of Israel, the One who imputes His righteousness to us:

<sup>21</sup>For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Eschatologically, this vision describes the justification that each Christian receives through faith in Jesus Christ. The portrayal of the cleansing and re-robing of Joshua is a beautiful picture of what God does to every believer – removing his sinful, filthy rags and giving him the rich garments of Christ's righteousness. Satan no longer can accuse us, because Jesus Christ is our advocate, our helper at our right hand. In response to such a great salvation, God charges us to walk in His ways, living lives of moral obedience; and to keep His commands, worshiping Him as He desires. Our ultimate reward for faithful service still awaits us – the peace, prosperity, and eternal security of heaven:

<sup>3</sup>And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. <sup>4</sup>They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:3-5).

The high priest needed the golden plate with the engraving of "Holy to the Lord" on his forehead to come into the presence of God once a year. Our eternal destiny is much more glorious: we will live forever in the presence of God with the name of Jesus – the Holy One – on our foreheads.

Next week: Lesson 7 – The Golden Lampstand – Zechariah 4:1-14

Close in Prayer.