

ZECHARIAH

Chapter Three

Introduction

It had been an ordinary day in Jerusalem for Joshua, the high priest. In preparation for his ministry in the Temple, he would have dressed himself in his priestly garments. The garments of the high priest are described in Exodus Twenty-eight. Let me read a few excerpts describing the garments of the high priest:

Exodus 28:4 “And these *are* the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and a sash...

Exodus 28:5 “They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and the fine linen,

Exodus 28:6 “and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, *and* scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, artistically worked...

Exodus 28:8 “And the intricately woven band of the ephod, which *is* on it, shall be of the same workmanship, *made of* gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen.

Exodus 28:9 “Then you shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel...

Exodus 28:11 “With the work of an engraver in stone, *like* the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall set them in settings of gold...

Exodus 28:13 “You shall also make settings of gold,

Exodus 28:14 “and you shall make two chains of pure gold like braided cords, and fasten the braided chains to the settings.

Exodus 28:15 “You shall make the breastplate of judgment. Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, you shall make it...

Exodus 28:17 “And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: *The first row shall be* a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; *this shall be* the first row;

Exodus 28:18 “the second row *shall be* a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond;

Exodus 28:19 “the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

Exodus 28:20 “and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings.”

These were elaborate, exquisite garments. The high priest would look magnificent as he performed the tasks of the Temple.

But he didn't look that way to everyone! You're told in verse three that Joshua was clothed with “filthy garments.” The word “filthy” means *smearred with human excrement*.

Did he fall into sewage rushing to the Temple? Why would he enter the Temple in such stained and spoiled garments?

He didn't fall – **but Adam did!** You are being shown the same man, in the same garments, from two perspectives. From the natural and earthly perspective, his garments were fine; from the supernatural and heavenly perspective, his garments were filthy.

As high priest, Joshua represented and stood for all Jews. Their finest was filthy.

Joshua can also be seen as **your** representative! In a much beloved verse, Isaiah said “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags...” (64:6). The entire human race is filthy when seen from the supernatural and heavenly perspective.

Two things happened to Joshua in our text: He was **dressed**, and he was **addressed**, by the Angel of the Lord.

Those same two things can happen to you! We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Dresses You And You Are Able To Stand In Heaven, and #2 Jesus Addresses You And You Are Enabled To Serve On Earth.

#1 Jesus Dresses You And
You Are Able To Stand In Heaven
(v1-5)

The vision of the high priest is the fifth of ten visions that Zechariah received in a single night. It is one of Scriptures most precious pictures of how God is able to save someone for eternity.

Zechariah 3:1 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.

The “Angel of the Lord” is a recurring character in the Old Testament. The word “angel” can mean many things – *angel, ambassador, messenger, or king*. **The** “Angel of the Lord” is not an angel; He is not a created being in the order of angels like Michael and Gabriel. We know this because when He appears He is often worshipped as God. The “Angel of the Lord” is God – He is none other than Jesus Christ before He came to earth as God and man in His incarnation.

Satan - the devil - is *not* confined to Hell. He is *not* the ruler of Hell. In fact, *he's not even been to Hell yet!* Scripture teaches that he has access to heaven and earth, and that he appears in heaven. His accusations and attacks against Joshua are typical of those he brings against all believers.

Satan stands before God to undermine you; He is the “accuser of the brethren.” Jesus stands before God to uphold you; He is your “Advocate” with the Father in heaven.

Zechariah 3:2 And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! /s this not a brand plucked from the fire?”

The “Lord,” short here for the “Angel of the Lord,” calls upon “the Lord” to rebuke Satan. Jesus calls upon God the Father. Satan is a prosecutor, accusing Joshua, and Jesus is the defense attorney, the Advocate for Joshua, presenting their cases before the Judge, God the Father.

Don't ever get the impression that God the Father would rather bring His gavel down upon you, but Jesus convinces Him otherwise. God the Father **and** God the Son love you – but sin cannot be ignored by the thrice-holy God.

One commentator noted that when Satan talks to you about God, he lies; but when he talks to God about you, *he tells the truth!* There **is** much to accuse you of before an infinitely holy God. You cannot really hope to stand before God. You deserve judgement.

Jesus said Joshua was a “brand plucked from the fire.” Jesus acknowledged Joshua deserved judgement; in so doing, He was acknowledging that everyone Joshua represented deserved judgement – the Jews *and you!* Somehow Joshua was rescued from the fires of judgement – “plucked from the fire.” The “somehow” is what comes next.

Zechariah 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

As high priest he represented the entire nation. They were **all** filthy. He also represents **all** who stand before God. You and I are **all** filthy.

No one can stand before God of the universe and not be exposed as filthy.

Here is the point of the garments: Joshua could do nothing to *change* his garments, so he must somehow *exchange* his garments.

Zechariah 3:4 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."

Zechariah 3:5 And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on 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.

Joshua could not change his own clothes. He already had on the finest clothes a human being could wear into the presence of God. Jesus told them to exchange Joshua's filthy garments for "rich robes." It was symbolic of removing Joshua's "iniquity," his sin, and receiving him into the presence of God.

Zechariah got so excited he said that Joshua should have a "clean turban on his head." The turban, or mitre, was part of the outfit of the high priest. Zechariah's exclamation tells us he understood that **all** of Joshua's garments must be exchanged by the Lord for garments fit for heaven. It was a total exchange with **no** effort or merit on Joshua's part.

Is this not therefore a precious picture of salvation? On your own, even with your best effort, even following the religion God has set forth, your best garments are filthy. Jesus must remove your filthy garments and clothe you with proper garments for heaven.

This heavenly garment is elsewhere called a "robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10). It is a picture of what happens when you come to Jesus Christ for salvation.

When you are saved, there is a spiritual exchange: Jesus takes your sin upon Himself and He gives you His righteousness. On the Cross, He took upon Himself the sin of the whole world; at the Cross, He gives you His righteousness. It is pictured by this exchange of garments.

Jesus dresses you and you are able to stand in the presence of God in heaven. But He leaves you on earth! So,

#2 Jesus Addresses You And
You Are Enabled To Serve On Earth
(v6-10)

Jesus had not spoken directly to Joshua. Now He did, saying

Zechariah 3:6 Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying,
Zechariah 3:7 "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.'"

Joshua was told to serve with success. He was told to serve by "walk[ing] in [God's] ways" and by "keep[ing] [God's] commands." Two things were paired here that must go together: God's Word and God's ways. God's Word is more obvious; God's ways are more subtle.

God's Word is before us in the Bible. It is not really all that difficult to understand. Yes, there are depths within it that can never be fully determined; yes, it is a vein of treasure that can never be depleted. **But it can be understood by a child in its simplicity.** I've often quoted Mark Twain who once said, "It's not the parts of the Bible I don't understand that bother me; *it's the parts I do understand!*"

God's Word does more than express how you serve; it **enables** you to serve. God's Word is itself God's enabling. In other words, God doesn't express anything in His Word, or expect anything from you, that He hasn't Himself enabled you to perform.

Serving God on earth is never a question of inability; it is a question of unwillingness. In my marriage... In my family... In my church... On my job... In my school... I am enabled to serve the Lord.

I said that God's ways were more subtle. God's ways include things like grace, mercy, love, longsuffering, and forgiveness. We are enabled to accomplish God's Word but ought to do it with grace, mercy, love, longsuffering, and forgiveness – and any other of the

“ways” that properly represents the heart and character and nature of God.

If he served by God’s Word and God’s ways, Joshua could expect spiritual success in every area of his life, and reward in heaven.

Zechariah 3:7 “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.’”

Joshua was promised success in his work in God’s “house,” in God’s “courts,” and everyplace else on earth.

Zechariah 3:8 ‘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.’

Joshua and the nation were a “wondrous sign” of things to come in the future for the Jewish nation. As they served their God, they were like a new branch growing in Jerusalem with its promise of life and fruitfulness. They represented to the world that in the future God would bring forth “My servant the BRANCH.” Isaiah 11:1 applies this name to Messiah in His first coming; Jeremiah 23:5 applies it to Him in His Second Coming. This speaks, then, of success in your witness.

Think of yourself as a witness for God. You are to be fruitful. It’s as if folks are to look at your life and want to draw from it – the way you reach out to take lush, ripe fruit off the tree.

Zechariah 3:9 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 3:10 In that day,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘Everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree.’”

Because the text says, “behold the stone,” we take this as a new vision Zechariah was being shown. It would be the sixth. He saw a “stone [with] seven eyes” and an “inscription.” This relates to Daniel’s picture (2:34-35) of the stone that came from heaven to topple the kingdoms of men and establish God’s kingdom on earth. The “seven eyes” speak of the completion of God’s plan for history.

What is the engraved “inscription?” There are many suggestions, but I like two of them most of all:

1. They are the names of all those who are saved. This fits in with the image of the high priest who carried the names of the tribes of Israel engraved on precious stones. Your name will be engraved on Jesus!
2. Or it could be the inscription forever engraved upon the Lord's body – the nailprints in His wrists and feet, the scars from the crown of thorns and the scourging, the spear-wound in His side.

The stone represents Jesus. It is His Second Coming to earth that will topple the kingdoms of men. When Jesus comes in His Second Coming, He “will remove the iniquity” of the Jews “in one day.” The Jews alive on the earth will recognize Him as their promised Messiah and turn to Him in repentance and faith. Then there will be peace and rest on the earth.

We would say that this promise of future reward gives makes you successful in your waiting. You are here on earth to work and to witness. The waiting can be brutal. You live in a fallen world, and in a fallen body in the world. Terror reigns in the world; tragedy often ravages you. But a future and a hope are yours as you wait through your life for the coming of your Lord.

Conclusion

You each got dressed for church this morning. Some of you dressed more elaborately, more exquisitely, than others. You look fine... But you're filthy unless Jesus has dressed you for heaven...

If you've been dressed for heaven, Jesus has been addressing you this morning...