

ZECHARIAH

Chapter 3

A Vision of Joshua the High Priest

Then he 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 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, 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.”

3:1–10 The fourth vision. Israel will be cleansed and restored as a priestly nation. (CSB)

3:1 *He showed me.* The Lord granted His prophet this vision (cf Am 7:1). (TLSB)

Joshua. The same person’s name is spelled “Jeshua” in Ezra and Nehemiah. Here he represents the sinful nation of Israel (see vv. 8–9). The names “Joshua” and “Jeshua” were common in ancient times. The Greek equivalent is spelled “Jesus” in English, and all three forms of the name mean “The LORD saves.” (CSB)

Along with the governor Zerubbabel, he was a leader in the temple rebuilding project (Ezr 5:2; Hg 1:1). “Joshua” is a form of the name “Jesus.” (TLSB)

This was the man who, with Zerubbabel, had been the leader of the people when they returned from exile. (Kretzmann)

standing before. Ministering before—as priest (see Dt 10:8; 2Ch 29:11; Eze 44:15). (CSB)

Satan. The Hebrew name which means “obstruct,” “oppose.” (TLSB)

right hand. See Ps 109:6. (CSB)

accuse. The Hebrew for this word has the same root as the Hebrew for “Satan.” (CSB)

As in Revelation 12:10, Satan plays the role of “accuser of our brothers.” Here he is about to accuse Joshua. (TLSB)

Satan is here to accuse the high priest, to have him condemned, if possible, Satan here appearing as the true adversary of the Church. (Kretzmann)

3:2 *rebuke ... rebuke.* Repeated for emphasis. (CSB)

This was a sharp rebuke and showed that the Lord was aware of the charges Satan planned to make. (TLSB)

chosen Jerusalem. He has accepted the believers in Him as His people and will not permit Satan to interfere with His choice. (Kretzmann)

a brand plucked from the fire. The Jews were retrieved from the fire of Babylonian exile to carry out God's future purpose for them (see Am 4:11; see also Zec 13:8–9). (CSB)

As one might pull a charred piece of burning wood from a fire, so Joshua was rescued from the fire of Babylonian exile. (TLSB)

The Lord's people had been at the very brink of destruction, but the Lord had interfered before it was too late; therefore Joshua also, standing before the Lord as the representative of the sinful people, is shielded from condemnation. The scene is now further elaborated in order to bring out its full meaning. (Kretzmann)

3:3 *filthy garments* – This was typical of the sinfulness which was still found in the Lord's people, Is. 64, 5. (Kretzmann)

Joshua was a descendant of sinful and impure people and had been living in Babylon, an unclean land. (TLSB)

3:4 *the angel.* The Angel of the Lord, who speaks with full divine authority. (TLSB)

those who were standing before him. Probably angels (see also v. 7). (CSB)

remove the filthy garments. Thus depriving him of his priestly office. The act is here symbolic also of the removal of sin. (CSB)

Removal of the filthy garments symbolized the divine absolution Joshua received. God washes away our sin by the Word and water of Baptism (Acts 22:16). (TLSB)

with pure vestments – These were holy garments worn by the high priest, designed by the Lord Himself (Ex 28). So is the robe of righteousness worn by believers and the white robes of those in heaven (Rev. 7:9). (TLSB)

3:5 *I said* – This was a bold intervention by the prophet, who begged that the high priest be completely equipped for effective ministry. (TLSB)

Put a clean turban on his head. Thus reinstating him into his high-priestly function so that Israel once again has a divinely authorized priestly mediator. On the front of the turban were the words: "HOLY TO THE LORD" (Ex 28:36; 39:30; cf. 14:20). (CSB)

This was the official headdress of the high priest (Ex. 28:36-38), on top of which was set a "holy crown" (Ex. 29:6) (TLSB)

the angel of the Lord was standing by – Having arisen from His judge’s chair to see that the prayer of Zechariah was executed in every detail. Thus Joshua, the representative of the people, particularly of its priestly character, was restored to the full dignity of the olden days, and thereby the people were likewise restored to their position as the Lord’s people. But all this was significant also for the future. (Kretzmann)

3:7 If Joshua and his priestly associates are faithful, they will be co-workers with the angels in the carrying out of God’s purposes for Zion and Israel. (CSB)

Joshua could only carry out his office of governing God’s people if he diligently followed the Lord’s will. (TLSB)

these standing here. An assurance that the petitions Joshua offered on earth would be heard in God’s presence. (TLSB)

That is, he would have open and unhindered access between the holy angels to the very throne of Jehovah; for in the New Testament all human mediators have been discarded, so that every believer may draw nigh to the Throne of Grace without hesitation. (Kretzmann)

3:8 *and your friends.* Fellow priests. (CSB)

men who are a sign – Priests of Aaron’s line point to the coming High Priest descended from David (Heb. 8:1-2). (TLSB)

Branch. A Messianic title. (CSB)

Two strands of messianic prophecy are beautifully tied together; the Branch will be a king of David’s line (Is. 4:2; Jer. 33:15) and the Servant of the Lord (Is. 42:1; 53:11), who by making atonement for sin will undo the damage done by Adam (Is. 53:2-12). Christ is the content of Scripture. Chemnitz: Zechariah is referring to the passages of earlier prophets, where the Messiah is called an offshoot.” (TLSB)

3:9 *stone.* Probably another figure of the Messiah (cf. Ps 118:22–23; Isa 8:13–15; 28:16). (CSB)

May symbolize the restored temple and its seven eyes, God’s perfect watchful care (Zec 9:8; 12:4). It is also a sign of that living stone, our Lord Jesus Christ (1Pt 2:4). (TLSB)

seven eyes. Perhaps symbolic of infinite intelligence (omniscience). (CSB)

That is to say, seven eyes, the number of perfection, would be directed upon him, the loving care of Jehovah being indicated, as He observes His people, the believers in Him. (Kretzmann)

will engrave – Though the wording of the inscription is not stated, the engraving on the plate fastened to the high priest’ turban would be most appropriate: “Holy to the Lord” (Ex 28:36). (TLSB)

I will iniquity of this land. The symbolic act of v. 4 is now explained. “Land” stands for the people of Israel. For the cleansing spoken of here see also 12:10–13:1. (CSB)

in a single day. Ultimately Good Friday, though some believe that the reference also includes Christ’s second coming. (CSB)

Messianic prophecy foretelling the work of the Branch on Good Friday, when the perfect Priest Himself secured eternal redemption (Heb 9:11–12). (TLSB)

3:10 *that day.* The day of the Lord. (CSB)

come under his vine...and fig tree. A proverbial picture of peace, security and contentment (see 2Ki 18:31). (CSB)

Figures of speech capturing the peace and safety of prosperity, but esp of the messianic kingdom (Mi 4:4). Here God's peace, the fruit of the atonement, is presented as something to be actively shared through evangelism. (TLSB)

This means inviting him in the communion of Christian fellowship, doing mission-work in calling others to enjoy the blessings of the Gospel. We thus have the entire period of the New Testament in outline in this one vision, a Gospel-message which might well be heeded by all men in our days. (Kretzmann)

3:1–10 The Joshua of Zechariah's day would have sunk under Satan's accusations if a greater Joshua (Jesus) had not stepped forward to reverse a grim situation. The first Joshua was no private person but represented his whole people in the filth of their sin. But the promised Branch was on the way, who on Good Friday removed the iniquity of Joshua and his people. We are all like brands plucked from the fire of sin; we all wear filthy garments. But because of the greater Joshua, we have been robed in righteousness. We enjoy the peace and safety of His kingdom. • Holy God, give me eyes to see and confess my filthiness and a heart to believe Your perfect cleansing, through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen. (TLSB)