

Zech. 3:1-10 “Dirty Washing”

For the Children: When you are younger, your parents wash your dirty clothes for you. You cannot do it yourself. Afterwards, they might warn you not to run outside and get all dirty again. Sin makes God’s children dirty in a spiritual way. We cannot clean ourselves, so He makes us clean through the work of the Lord Jesus – just as in the vision Joshua had angels give him clean clothes. But once God has made us clean, He does not want us to run back to our sins to make ourselves dirty again. **Questions:** How did the Lord Jesus’ death make us clean? Why do we need to be clean to serve the Lord? How do God’s promises help us to live godly lives?

Introduction:

First Point: The Accusation

- 1) Satan’s Accusation: Joshua, the High Priest among the Returnees, was not a perfect man. Satan accuses him before God in this vision – as he loves to do to believers (Job 1-2; Rev. 12;10). Moreover, Joshua’s sins mirror those of the people he represents (v. 9).
- 2) The Lord’s Rebuke: Joshua has no defense, but the Lord does. He rebukes Satan for seeking to harm those whom He has graciously chosen (1:17, 2:12, 3:2), and whom He has just plucked from the fire of Babylon. Ultimately, Christ’s death for His sheep answers Satan’s accusations, as Rev. 12:10 shows.

Second Point: The Cleansing

- 1) Clean Clothes: Nevertheless, Joshua – and Judah – need to be cleansed if they are to keep serving the Lord. This happens by the Lord’s initiative and grace. In the vision, His angels remove Joshua’s filthy garments, and replace them with festal robes. This is fulfilled in Christ’s cleansing work on the cross (Mt. 22:11-13, Heb. 10:22, Rev. 3:4,5).
- 2) A Clean Turban: Joshua also needs a clean turban. The High Priest’s turban had to have a golden plate affixed, reading “Holy to the Lord.” “Holy” means that God has made His priests holy so that they can serve Him in a holy way.

Third Point: The Cleanser

- 1) The Servant: The cleansing of Joshua, Judah and all God’s people, was to be carried out by the Suffering Servant (Is. 53), who suffered in order to justify us.
- 2) The Branch: The Servant is also the Branch, the Davidic King from the line that looked to have been almost destroyed, but would be re-vitalized (Is. 4:2, 11:1; Jer. 23:5, 33:15; Zech. 6:11-15). He alone has the power to cleanse.
- 3) The Stone: Joshua had a stone in front of him, with an inscription, and with 7 eyes. This symbol may refer to the stones placed in the priest’s breastplate, to represent Israel. Rev. 2:17 represents the believer as having a white stone with a name inscribed on it – indicating that we belong to Christ, who has made us pure. The 7 eyes may indicate God’s all-seeing care and protection. As we can see, there is much symbolism connected with the OT priests and Temple (Zech. 3:8).

Fourth Point: The Service

- 1) The Admonition: The fact that Christ cleanses us despite our sins does not mean that we can ignore personal holiness. Joshua is given *clean* clothes. His turban says, “Holy to the Lord.” He is admonished to live in a holy way (v. 6-7), walking in God’s ways and performing his priestly service faithfully. The same is true for all who serve God as “priests” in Christ today.
- 2) The Great Blessings: Joshua and his successors are encouraged to holy service by the promise of authority in God’s Temple, and free access to the Lord during the OT era (v. 7). They, and we, are also encouraged with the promise of great blessings, peace and prosperity, when Christ returns (v. 10). Meanwhile, we, as “priests” in God’s service, have even greater access to the throne of grace than they did (Heb. 4:14-16) – if we walk in His ways.