

**Visions of the Restoration of Jerusalem [chapters 1-8]**

As we saw last time, from 1:7 through chapter 6 all comes under one “time stamp.”

All of the “night visions” of Zechariah came on the night of February 15, 519 B.C.  
(the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month).

The two visions of chapters 3-4 fit together – but they are too much for one sermon.

Chapter 3 on Joshua and the Forgiveness of Sins

Chapter 4 on Zerubbabel and the Gift of the Holy Spirit

These two visions come together at the Day of Pentecost

when Peter declares, “repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

**1. Joshua and the Forgiveness of Sins (3:1-10)****a. The Cleansing of the High Priest (3:1-5)**

*3 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan<sup>[a]</sup> standing at his right hand to accuse him. <sup>2</sup> 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<sup>[b]</sup> plucked from the fire?” <sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments.*

Zechariah sees a vision of Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD – with Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

We do not hear the accusation –

but the substance of the accusation is revealed in verse 3:

“Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments.”

The word translated “filthy” is probably not quite precise enough.

There is an English word for it:

“Excrementitious”!

His garments are covered with dung (and perhaps with vomit) –

since the word refers to substances that issue forth from the body!

The high priest is supposed to stand before the LORD in fine linen –

with exquisite garments, representing Israel before the LORD!

On the Day of Atonement –

the one day in the year that the High Priest could enter the presence of God –

he would prepare thoroughly to make sure that he was *spotless*.

And there would be many people present to watch and make sure that he did everything right!

After all, the High Priest represents the whole people of God!!  
You don't want this guy messing up!

But instead, Joshua comes before God,  
clothed in garments covered with *his own filth*.

Instead of a glorious high priest who goes before his people into the Holy of Holies,  
we have a picture of a deranged tramp who soils himself and stinks to high heaven!

No wonder the Accuser stands ready to accuse him!  
Satan would only be stating the *truth* in his accusation:  
"This is not a worthy high priest!"  
"Will you allow a man covered in his own filth to enter your presence?!"

But the LORD himself declares:  
"The LORD rebuke you, O Satan!  
The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!  
Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"

The fire of God's wrath had come upon Jerusalem.  
The temple had been destroyed – and the people had been dispersed.  
Joshua – the high priest – is spoken of as a burning stick –  
a brand plucked from the fire.

If he looks like a tramp soiled by his own filth –  
it's because he is!  
If he smells a bit like fire and brimstone,  
it's because he's been salvaged from the suburbs of hell!

Now, it's important for us to remember that Joshua is *the high priest*.  
He's not just an "ordinarily Israelite."  
He is supposed to be an *exemplary Israelite!*

We aren't supposed to think – ah, he's just like me!  
Rather, we're supposed to think:  
if *Joshua* – the *high priest* – is a filthy tramp,  
then what am I?

If the greatest and most glorious representative of God's people  
is unworthy of entering God's presence,  
then we are all doomed!

But then the angel of the LORD speaks:

<sup>4</sup> 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.” <sup>5</sup> 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.

Now, it’s tempting to think that the angel of the LORD is clothing Joshua in priestly garments. But the words used here are *not* used elsewhere for priestly garments!

The term translated “pure vestments” would be better translated “festal attire.” These are not *priestly* garments – but the clothes worn by any Israelite on special occasions.

In other words, Joshua is not yet ready to enter into his high priestly duties! He must first be *cleansed!*

Verses 4-5 give us a clear picture of *imputed righteousness*.

Joshua the high priest – in himself – is filthy and unable to stand before God. So the LORD must remove his iniquity and clothe him with clean garments.

And of course, Joshua is the same name as *Jesus*.

And Jesus, our Great High Priest, took to himself our humanity – he bore our filthy garments – so that we might be clothed in his glorious garments!

Verse 4 – “I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with festal garments.”

We are clothed *not* in our own righteousness – but in the festal garments of another. (Think of Jesus’ story of the wedding feast – and how the King gave festal garments to all the guests – and so the man who was present in his filthy garment was noticeably out of place!)

But while Joshua is given festal garments and a clean turban, that is not the end of the story!

(Because imputed righteousness is only the *beginning* of salvation! Justification is essential –

but our salvation includes both our justification *and* our sanctification!)

#### **b. The Iniquity of the Land Removed in a Single Day (3:6-10)**

<sup>6</sup> And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, <sup>7</sup> “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.*

If verses 1-5 show the justification of the High Priest,  
verses 6-7 focus on the sanctification of the High Priest!

Not only does God cleanse us from our iniquity,  
he also sanctifies us.

“Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace  
whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God  
and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.”

Sanctification includes both our inner renewal – whereby we are *made holy* –  
we are no longer what we once were!! –  
*and* therefore we are enabled to more and more die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

If God didn’t actually change us –  
then we wouldn’t actually be able to change!!

Think about verse 7:

“If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge...”  
If there is no change in our inner man,  
then we are doomed.

Someone recently asked me, “Are we sinners, saved by grace?”  
In one sense, the answer is plainly “*yes!*”  
We are sinners – and we have been saved by grace!!

But if we have been *saved* by grace –  
then there is another sense in which the answer is *no* –  
*we are no longer sinners!!*

If sanctification is the work of God’s free grace,  
whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God...  
well, then, if you have been renewed in the whole man after the image of God,  
then you are no longer a sinner!!

Too often, when someone says, “I’m just a sinner, saved by grace...”  
what they mean is, “I just keep on sinning – because that’s who I am,  
and there is nothing I can do about it!!”

But if sanctification is a work of God’s free grace,

whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God,  
then *that means* that we are now *able* to do something about it!!  
We are no longer under bondage to sin!  
We are no longer *enslaved* to sin!

We have been *enabled* more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness!

So, yes we can say honestly, “I am a sinner, saved by grace” –  
but never as an excuse for remaining in our sin!

And what we see applied to Joshua in verses 1-7 is then applied to the whole of Israel  
in verses 8-10:

*<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes,<sup>[c]</sup> I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. <sup>10</sup> 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.”*

Joshua and his friends – his colleagues –  
were a sign – a pointer – to the One who was to come:  
“my servant the Branch.”

This is a reference back to the promise of Isaiah 11.

Isaiah 11 had spoken of the Branch of Jesse  
and the sevenfold Spirit that would be upon him.  
Now Zechariah tells us that there will be a stone with seven eyes (or seven sides).  
This is somewhat like the 12 stones on the high priest’s breastplate.

But at the same time, this is plainly a different stone than what God commanded Moses.  
Because Joshua is a sign of a new covenant –  
and a priesthood with new garments, a new stone, a new inscription!  
The inscription on the Mosaic turban was “Holy to the LORD.”  
We are not told here what the inscription will be –  
but since the Mosaic covenant has been broken,  
there is a need for a new covenant –  
one in which God himself will make all things new!

The book of Hebrews explains this thoroughly –  
but Zechariah (and many others of the prophets) had already shown it!

But God says that he will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.

And in that day – God promises –  
every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and fig tree.

In other words, the new covenant will fulfill  
the promise of the Davidic covenant.

1 Kings 4:25 had described the kingdom of Solomon as a place  
where each man sat under his vine and fig tree.  
And the prophet Micah had spoken of the latter days  
as a time when each man would sit under his vine and fig tree (Micah 4:4)

Now Zechariah uses the same phrase –  
but with a stronger emphasis on community and hospitality:

“every one of you will invite his neighbor  
to come under his vine and under his fig tree.”

In other words, the point of the New Covenant is *not* that everyone will get his own blessing!  
The point of the New Covenant is that the blessings of God  
are for the sake of each other!

The gifts and blessings that God has given you are not to be enjoyed selfishly!  
They are to be enjoyed *together* with your neighbors!

Nowadays we tend to operate with a false dichotomy.  
We tend to think that there are two (and only two) economic systems –  
there is capitalism with its view of “private property” –  
and there is socialism with its view of “government property.”

But for most of human history, neither of those systems actually existed!!  
Certainly you cannot find either of them anywhere in Scripture!

Christians can live peacefully and contentedly in either a capitalist economy (like the US)  
or a socialist economy (like China),  
because we recognize that ultimately, all things belong to Jesus!  
I do not *own* property.  
I merely have *use* of this property.  
I hold it as a steward for the service and benefit of my King Jesus.  
And because Jesus used all that was his for the good of his people –  
therefore, I follow him in using all that I have for his honor and glory –  
and thus for the good of his kingdom –  
and so I invite my neighbor to come under my vine and under my fig tree.

Fifteen years ago, when we moved into our house on Arbor  
I didn't really understand what that meant.  
Yes, I preached on community and the importance of living as the body of Christ –  
but I didn't really understand how to *do it*.

Fifteen years later, as we are moving into our house on Navarre  
I am *beginning* to understand.  
This time we have a clearer sense of the importance of welcoming others  
into our home, our lives, and our increasingly single-minded focus  
on seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.