

Thursday Bible Class Zechariah Chapter 3 20th January 2022

As we continue our study of this little book, we remind ourselves that Zechariah was shown 8 visions, all in one night. These are recorded in the first 6 chapters of this book. In this study of chapter 3, we are to look at the fourth of these 8 visions. This vision was of the high priests being given clean clothes to wear instead of dirty ones which he was wearing. Like all previous and subsequent visions, these were symbolic and were given to Zechariah, for him to then pass on to the nation. In fact we read of how effective Haggai and Zechariah were in encouraging the nation recently in our daily readings. This was in the book of Ezra 5:1: *Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.* Prior to this the enemies of Judah and Benjamin had written to the ruler Artaxerxes and persuaded him to order the Jews to cease work on building the temple. Some time passed, even to the second year of Darius king of Persia. Ezra 4:4. *Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.* These 'people of the land' were not Jews, but were Gentiles who had been transported there from other nations under the reign of Esarhaddon (and became later known as



the Samaritans). Trying to rebuild and restore that which is broken down, is hard enough, but the returned exiles had to do so with these enemies trying to undermine them at every turn. Because of this, everyone had a part to play. Everyone helped out, even

the high priest helped with the building. Eventually the house of God was finished in the 6th year of Darius the King. We remember that Zechariah received this fourth vision of this 3rd chapter, in the second year of Darius. So when he received this vision, the temple had not yet been finished, the work had only just recommenced. The process of building was slow, because of the constant interruptions, of the enemies of the Jews. It is important to look at the historic context of the time, as recorded in scripture. Some people can't be bothered, and so get all kinds of strange ideas, about what this chapter is about. Looking at the various books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Haggai, we are able to learn also a little about the high priest of the time, who Haggai 1:1 informs us is Joshua the high priest the son of Jozadak. His name also appears as Jeshua, and in Nehemiah 7:7 he is listed as one of the group who returned from Babylon. The prophet Haggai also records that when the Jews returned from Babylonian exile, they began building their own homes, but they didn't think to rebuild the temple. Through a message from Haggai the prophet, God called Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor to lead the rebuilding of the temple. Haggai 1:14, and Ezra 5:2 records how the high priest himself also worked by way of example in this rebuilding.



When people read this chapter of Zechariah without reading the background and context provided in scripture, they use this scripture

to back up their understanding of Satan, as some kind of fallen angel. (see Puritan Board, and Baptist websites as a starter if you have time to waste). But being aware of the background, everything becomes clear:

Zechariah 3:1-2: And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

This Joshua the high priest, is the one working with his people to rebuild the temple as we have shown, and Satan – (or the adversary as it means, if the translators were consistent) – was *Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai and their companions*, see Ezra 5:3. These adversaries were *resisting* both the high priest and the angel of the Lord. See Ezra 5:3 where they challenged the will of God: *Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?* Ezra 5:5 describes the presence of the angel: *But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews ...*

The reply came back from the Lord... It would have been via the angel of the Lord, as His representative, as the Lord did not speak directly to men: (In fact a parallel passage in the New Testament Jude 9: in referring to this incident says Yet Michael the archangel, ... said, The Lord rebuke thee.) Michael means who is like God. archangel means chief messenger. Historically the message came from Darius the king over 137 provinces, the man in the most powerful position, the chief messenger no less! In the form of a decree, Ezra 6: 6,7:... *be ye far from thence: Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.*



Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? The Hebrew word for brand is *ood*, which is a rake, or a poker, to rake the embers together, a tool to manage a fire. The nation had been sent to Babylon, and like Daniel, all had endured the furnace

of affliction see Isaiah 48:10 *Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.* God described the nation in this way in Amos 4:11 *I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*

The angelic message to the enemies of Israel and of God, is that this nation may have been in the fire of affliction, but God still had a purpose for them, they would be withdrawn from the burning, and would be used to rake the embers of the nations, the enemies of God, to be fully consumed.

Filthy garments

3 -4 *Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.*



Recalling the historical background, we are reminded that this high priest was working in a way not normally expected from such an important personage. He was working hard in construction, in the

rough and physical work of masonry, stone work and leading by example. In time he was told, the temple would not only be completed, but the sacrifices reinstated, and institution of the priesthood fully inaugurated again, and the nation would be acceptable to God once more. The vision continued:



5 – 7: And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by.

The transformation of the lowly dusty workman to a intercessor for the nation would be complete. Such an elevation was conditional however: *And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my*

charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.

Although Zechariah was sent to encourage people, and this was surely an encouraging message, it was a vision, surely it meant more than just that? It certainly did, for then Zechariah was informed in verse 8: *Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at:*

Men wondered at.. literally means men of sign. So this high priest designate, and those who had been around him, working with him, clothing him, all were men of sign. Yes the vision had a deeper

meaning, and the meaning is immediately revealed... 8...*for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch.*

The old Jews who had watched the temple being built again, had wept as they saw it was much smaller than the one Solomon had built, they recognised that the nation would not attain the same glory as before. This vision was demonstrating that returning from exile and drawing nigh to God, true reformation was not about such shallow things, as size, glory, the outward appearance, but it was the reformation of the character.

I will bring forth my servant the Branch. Both titles – my Servant, and The Branch, belong to Jesus Christ. The Title Branch is used in Jeremiah 23:5; and 33:15: *In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.* The Branch, from which all the other branches would grow, which would shelter all the beasts of the forest, - the tree of Israel in the Kingdom of God. The high priest Joshua the son of Jozadak in the vision was being used as a symbol of the servant and Branch to come. A Servant first and then a Branch. Here the high priest began as a tradesman, working alongside others, but then being elevated above his brethren. Just as the Lord Jesus who began life as a carpenter, the son of a carpenter, but who was transformed by dint of his inheritance, and his own hard-work and supreme example he set to others, leading the battle against the adversary. The Satan, the adversary for Jesus was not just those who stood against the people of God, but those who were willing to destroy the house of God (Jesus Christ)

Working with, and alongside his fellows, Jesus was like unto his brethren, and touched with the feelings of their infirmities, he was clothed in filthy garments, even though he hated the garments spotted by the flesh.(Jude 23) The word *filthy* here in Zechariah 3 is not dirty as in the dust from the rubble and mortar of the building site. The Hebrew word is *tso*. This means issue, soiled, as in human

refuse. This changes the whole understanding. It is referring to this body of humiliation, that which issues from man is sin. It is this which characterises all men, and those Jews back in the day of Zechariah were being reminded why they needed to reform! They learned how one would be taken from their number and clothed with a change of raiment, with garments of glory and beauty. Mortality replaced immortality.

In the vision, Zechariah heard the angel continue:



9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

What was this stone laid before Joshua the high priest and his fellows at the time of Zechariah. Reading through the scriptures of Ezra, and Haggai, it can be none other than the foundation of the temple which had been laid by the workmen, but God described it as the stone that I have laid... well it had been laid ultimately by Him, it had been arranged, and permitted by the Kings of Persia – overruled by the hand of God. But in line with the revelation of My Servant The Branch, this Stone was also symbolic: Isaiah 28:16 *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.* The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:6 teaches us that this is referring to none other than Jesus Christ. The Stone. Another title of Jesus. Peter explains that built upon that sure foundation are: *lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

Upon this stone shall be seven eyes. (This is either saying that seven eyes are watching the stone, or that seven eyes are engraved on the stone.) We recall that when the Adversary was standing against the High Priest and other rulers of the Jews, the Adversary was rebuked, and Ezra relates this moments and says 5:5: *But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease....* This overruling power, all seeing, all compassionate God through His angelic messenger preserved the Jews that day. But upon the Stone – the Foundation of the Ecclesia, the Temple of the Living God, would be Seven eyes. This same symbol is used in Revelation 5:6 *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns (complete power – omnipotent) and Seven Eyes (all seeing – omniscient), which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.* What was the message? As the small band of exiles had continued in faith, and the eye of the Lord had enabled them to overcome the far greater and stronger adversaries, so would the Lord in an far greater way ensure a resounding victory over all His enemies, especially using His Servant, His Branch, His Stone – 2 Chronicles 16:9 *For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him...*

I will engrave the graving thereof... The stones of the temple were to be fashioned off site, so that no noise of an engraver, or cutting would be heard on site, but the stones to be perfectly fitted and suited, shaped in the quarry before being lifted up to the mountain of the Lord. That is how the living stones are fashioned for use in the House of God, out of sight they are carefully fashioned through the hard knocks and blows of life's experiences, and with skill, if they have no inherent faults can be of use in the Masters House. But with the chief corner stone, he was fashioned in a special way: Psalm 139:15-16: *My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, he was*

the stone cut out of the mountain without hands. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. God did it all. He ensured it would happen. It did happen. The foundation was laid, and has been built upon. This is the day that the Lord has made, it is marvellous in our eyes... Psalm 118. In that moment of changing the garments, of laying the foundation, the way of salvation was provided through the intercessor, the Great High Priest, and so *I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day*

10 *In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.* A bucolic and idyllic vision of peace and safety, in the Kingdom of God established on earth, there will be *no adversary of evil occurrent*, no satans to resist, as all enemies will be made His footstool, everyman man will be a neighbour, not a potential enemy or satan. The Jew, in Judah and Jerusalem in Zechariah's day, or the Gentile in a far off land in our day, can clearly see through this little vision, that the Lord God of hosts is in control, and has confirmed His promises through His Son, and will fulfil them, and this is the word of encouragement to us all.

Brother Terry