

Grace to Walk in Leadership (Zech. 3:1-10)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Zechariah is known as one of the Minor Prophets of the Bible (520-475 BC). His name means “Yahweh remembers”. The book begins with the impassioned word of the Lord for the people to repent and turn again to their God. God then assures His people of His love and care for them through a series of eight visions. Zechariah’s fourth and fifth visions (Zech. 3-4) go together in a special way in the eight visions. They show that God will cleanse and anoint His people so that they may walk in the fullness of God’s promised destiny and blessings as set forth in the first three visions (Zech. 1-2).
1. In the first three visions, the Lord promises to manifest His zeal and mercy by returning to personally live in Jerusalem, to fill the temple with His glory, to take full possession of the land of Israel, and to draw all nations to worship and obey the LORD (1:16; 2:10-12).
 2. The question arises, ***how can a sinful and weak people like Israel walk in such promises?*** The Lord answers in the next two visions (Zech. 3-4) by revealing the abundance of His grace. He Himself solves the problem of how a holy God can dwell among a sinful people. His kingdom is not based on our merits but on His grace in us.
- B. These two visions focus on the two main leaders in Israel, ***Joshua***, the high priest (Zech. 3) and ***Zerubbabel***, the governor (Zech. 4). The spiritual condition and experience of the leaders in the kingdom impact and reflect the spiritual condition and experience of the people they lead. Zechariah saw the two main leaders of the temple in Jerusalem (Zech. 3-4). This vision presents Israel’s leadership and national calling as priests to all the nations (Ex. 19:6; Isa. 61:6). These two visions encourage the two leaders who are primarily responsible for rebuilding the temple.
- C. The Lord addresses the ***two main obstacles*** that hinder His people from enjoying their destiny. The first obstacle is ***our sin***; therefore He provides spiritual cleansing and renewal (Zech. 3). The next obstacle is ***our lack of resources***; therefore He gives supernatural provision (Zech. 4). In other words, we need His grace for continued ***spiritual renewal*** and ***supernatural provision***.
- D. In Zechariah 3, He ***cleanses their heart*** and leads them to wholehearted obedience (3:3-7). In Zechariah 4, He ***helps their work*** and values it even when it is small and difficult (4:6-10). In other words, He desires wholeheartedness and diligence from His sinful and weak leaders.
- E. The message of Zechariah 3-4 is the revelation of God’s grace to His sinful and weak leaders. The message is that God forgives and ***cleanses our hearts***, even from our greatest sins (Zech. 3). The message is that God provides for and ***uses our work***, even in our smallest tasks (Zech. 4).
- F. The first obstacle to overcome is the lie that we ***fail too much*** to be used by God (3:1-5). The next obstacle to overcome is the lie that we ***lack too much*** to complete God’s will (4:6-9).

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- G. The Lord's people are to be ***confident in His love*** that frees us from all condemnation (Zech. 3). The Lord's people are to be ***confident that He values*** our small and difficult labors (Zech. 4).

II. FOURTH VISION: THE CLEANSING OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST (3:1-5)

- A. ***Summary:*** In this heavenly scene (3:1-2), Zechariah saw Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord (the pre-incarnate Christ). Satan presented a case against Joshua accusing him of not being qualified for leadership. The problem was that Joshua was in fact guilty (3:4). Joshua was fully cleansed and then called to walk in wholehearted obedience to the Lord (3:7). He and his leadership team were to be a prophetic sign of the Messiah and of His grace (3:8-9). The whole nation of Israel will eventually partake of the Messiah's extravagant grace (3:10).
- B. The vision has four parts: the heavenly scene (3:1-2), a symbolic act (3:3-5), an exhortation to wholeheartedness (3:6-7), and a revelation of the coming Messiah and His salvation (3:8-10).
- C. Joshua was functioning here in his high priestly capacity as the official representative of Israel. The high priest represented the nation before God on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-10). As the sin of Joshua was removed, so the sin of Israel and the land will be removed (3:9; 13:1-2).
- D. What God did for Joshua, He will do for Israel as a nation and for each believer in Jesus.

III. THE HEAVENLY SCENE (3:1-2)

- A. Satan accused Joshua to the Lord of not being qualified for his leadership role in Israel (3:4).
¹Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose [accuse; NAS, NIV] him. (Zech. 3:1)
1. ***Joshua:*** He was Israel's high priest (6:11). Thus, he was the primary spiritual leader in the nation and represented Israel in her calling to be a priestly nation. He had returned from Babylon to Jerusalem with the other exiles about 20 years earlier.
 2. ***Satan:*** Satan stood next to Joshua to accuse him, or to present a case against him, before the Lord. The Hebrew word *satan* means "the accuser."
 3. ***Accuse:*** The phrase "to oppose" is translated "to accuse" (NAS, NIV). Satan continually accuses God's people (Rev. 12:10). Satan can only accuse; he cannot condemn.
¹⁰The accuser of our brethren, who accused them before God day and night. (Rev. 12:10)
 4. ***Angel of the Lord:*** Most conservative commentators believe that the Angel of the Lord is the preincarnate Christ, the second person of the Trinity. Zechariah had seen Him earlier that night in the first vision (1:11-12). The Angel is called "the Lord" (3:2).

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5. **Standing before:** This is an official term used for priestly ministry. The Lord called various ones to “stand before” Him to minister to Him, such as the tribe of Levi (Deut. 10:8-9), the high priest (Judg. 20:28), Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:1), and Elisha (2 Kgs. 3:14), etc.
- B. The Lord did not receive Satan’s accusation against Joshua, but rebuked Satan twice (3:2). The Lord said two things: He rebuked Satan and described Joshua as a brand plucked from the fire.
²And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” (Zech. 3:2)
1. **Rebuke you:** The Lord rebuked Satan, not because the accusations against Joshua were false, but because of God’s gracious love for and sovereign choice of Joshua and Israel. The Lord will not tolerate Satan’s accusation against us. Neither should we. We must make this same declaration of truth over our heart day by day.
2. Jesus’ intercession for us is far stronger than Satan’s accusations against us (Rom. 8:34).
³³Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us... ³⁸I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities... ³⁹shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ. (Rom. 8:33-39)
3. Jesus stands as our advocate with the Father, for He became the propitiation for our sins.
¹If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins... (1 Jn. 2:1-2)
- C. At the same time as Satan was accusing Joshua in the spirit realm, Tattenai, the Persian governor of Samaria, was accusing Joshua (Ezra 5:3), saying that he had no right to build the temple (Ezra 5:1-17). Tattenai governed the region beyond the River, west of the Euphrates to the Sea.
¹Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah...prophesied to the Jews... ²So Zerubbabel...and Jeshua...rose up and began to build the house of God... ³At the same time Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River...spoke thus to them: “Who has commanded you to build this temple?”... ⁷They sent a letter to him [King Darius]... ⁸Let it be known to the king that...the temple of the great God, which is being built with heavy stones, and timber is being laid in the walls... ¹⁷Let the king send us his pleasure concerning this matter. (Ezra 5:1-17)
- D. And just as the Lord rebuked Satan for accusing Joshua in the spirit realm, so the Persian King Darius rebuked Tattenai for troubling Joshua, and then commanded him to give financial provision to Zerubbabel to build the temple (Ezra 6:6-12).
⁶Now therefore, Tattenai... ⁷Let the work of this house of God alone... ⁸Let the cost be paid at the king’s expense from taxes on the region beyond the River; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered... ¹²I Darius issue a decree; let it be done diligently. (Ezra 6:6-12)

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- E. ***The Lord who chose Jerusalem:*** The God who chose weak and sinful Jerusalem is the God of grace who chooses those who do not deserve salvation and cannot save themselves. The Lord Himself answered the accusation as the God who chooses to redeem sinful and helpless people.
- F. ***Brand plucked from the fire:*** The Lord describes Joshua (and Israel) to Satan as a brand plucked from the fire (3:2). Israel had just been delivered from the fire of the Babylonian captivity. She was like a burning stick that God had pulled out of a fire to save her from total destruction. God will not allow Israel to be totally destroyed in the fires of His judgment. Israel has almost been destroyed several times in history, such as in 70 AD. It will happen again in the Tribulation (13:8; Jer. 30:7; Rev. 12:13-17), but God will intervene in mercy. Having snatched Joshua, or Israel, as a brand from the fire, He has no intention of allowing them to be totally destroyed.
1. The NIV translates this as: *“Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”* The imagery here suggests a narrow escape from a dangerous situation. Fire is a figurative expression for punishment.
 2. Amos uses this same phrase to describe Israel being snatched as a half-burned stick in a time of divine discipline. Amos recounts Israel’s rescue from a situation comparable to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, when fire fell from heaven to destroy them.
“I overthrew some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; yet you have not returned to Me... (Amos 4:11)
 3. The message is that the Lord has always supernaturally ***intervened*** in mercy to save Israel from total destruction. Therefore Israel can be sure that He has sovereignly chosen her and will intervene with mercy in the future and that she will survive any fire she suffers.
 4. The Lord emphasizes the ***fact of*** Israel being rescued and the ***timing of*** her rescue. Israel deserved the fire and was almost consumed, but God stepped in at the last minute and rescued them in His extravagant mercy. *The Lord speaks this to Satan as an argument against his accusations of Joshua.* The Lord is zealous for Zion. This is a statement about how the Lord sees Jerusalem. Though Israel deserved to be in the fire of Babylon, the Lord did not give up on her and He intervened in great mercy. He even let her experience “close to the fullness” of what she deserved before He intervened and saved her.
 5. Today, God is raising up leaders, who, like Joshua, are like brands plucked from the fire. If they received what they deserved, they would have no chance of being used in leadership. The Lord delights in mercy and deals gently with His people (Mic. 7:18; Ps. 18:35). If Jesus, in His mercy, had not rescued us as He rescued Joshua, then we would be utterly consumed by our sin and trials. When God calls people to serve Him, He knows that they are weak, sinful, and needy, that they are not yet whole. He delights in gathering “brands plucked from the fire” with defiled garments, giving them new clothing at their new birth, and continually reapplying the grace of cleansing day by day.

- G. The message is that Israel's destiny in God's promises rests on His sovereign choice of Israel, which depends on God's character and faithfulness. Paul made this point, "Has God cast away His people? Certainly not!" (Rom. 11:1). As we consider Jerusalem's history of rebellion against God and His refusal to end the relationship, it gives us confidence in the Lord and His ways.

IV. RECEIVING GOD'S GRACE: THE SYMBOLIC ACT (3:3-5)

- A. Joshua's dirty garments were removed and new ones were given to him (3:3-5). The Lord told the angels to take away his dirty garments, and then He spoke directly to Joshua, "See, I have removed your sin and will clothe you with rich robes" (3:4). The symbolic action of replacing Joshua's dirty garments with clean ones speaks of God's grace and Jesus' work on the cross.

³ *Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. 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...and I will clothe you with rich robes." ⁵ ...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. (Zech. 3:3-5)*

1. **Filthy garments:** Joshua was guilty, as shown by his filthy clothes. He also represents Israel. We, too, are guilty as charged. We have no hope of acquitting ourselves.
2. **Take away the filthy garments:** The Lord commanded the angels to remove Joshua's dirty clothes (3:4c). The Lord explained to Joshua that removing his filthy clothes symbolized removing his sin. Our sinful deeds are compared to filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).
3. **Rich robes:** The rich robes are symbolic of being clothed with God's righteousness and with priestly robes (Ex. 28:8-9; Lev. 8:7-9; Isa. 61:10; 2 Cor. 5:17, 21). The truths of the gospel of grace are set forth in this passage. In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus says that the father put the best robes on his son (Lk. 15:22)

²¹ *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:21)*

¹⁰ *For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments. (Isa. 61:10)*

4. **See:** The Lord exhorted Joshua to "see" that He had removed his sin and clothed him with rich robes (3:4). We must "see" these truths in our own lives and understand how they apply to Israel.
5. **Intercession:** Zechariah asked the Lord to put a turban on Joshua's head (3:5). His intercessory declaration was accepted. Perhaps the Lord purposely left out the turban to allow Zechariah to participate in the process through intercession. The expression "I said" in v. 5 indicates that Zechariah was standing in the heavenly council in this vision.

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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...the Angel of the LORD stood by. (Zech. 3:5)***

6. **Turban**: The turban is a symbol of Israel’s reinstatement as a priestly nation (Ex. 19:6). The Lord clothed Joshua in the rich robes of priestly garments to signify the grace that qualified him to be in leadership in God’s kingdom. The Lord will forgive, transform and equip Israel to fulfill her original calling to be a priestly nation (Ex. 19:16; Isa. 61:6).

V. AN EXHORTATION TO WHOLEHEARTEDNESS (3:6-7)

- A. The Lord admonished Joshua to walk in wholehearted obedience (3:6-7). This is the only reasonable response to receiving God’s extravagant grace. The Lord gave him two exhortations (to godly character and to diligent service) as the conditions for receiving three promises.

⁶***Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying, ⁷“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My command [perform My service; NAS], 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.” (Zech. 3:6-7)***

1. **Admonished**: The word *admonished* means to warn in an earnest way.
2. **Walk in My ways**: Joshua was to walk with *godly character* in his personal life.
3. **To keep My command**: He was to respond with *diligent service* by being faithful to the assignment the Lord had given him. Keeping the command meant fulfilling the *charge* that God had given him to keep the temple sanctuary and to perform the priestly duties related to it.
¹⁵***The priests...who kept charge of My sanctuary...shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood [animal sacrifices]. (Ezek. 44:15)***
4. To “keep My command” is translated as to “keep the charge” (KJV, RSV) or to “perform My service” (NAS), referring to his priestly responsibilities. This is made clear at the end of verse 7 where he was to have “charge of My courts,” i.e., responsibility in the temple.
5. The exhortation to keep God’s command, or charge, is to “not quit,” but to be diligent in the ministry assignment that God gave him. Some see their ministry assignment as a voluntary activity that they can quit when it gets hard, rather than a military assignment in a war zone that they must fulfill regardless of the opposition or difficulty they face.
6. He was exhorted “to see” (3:4), “to walk and keep” (3:7), and “to hear” (3:8).

- B. The Lord promised to bless Joshua in three ways for responding in wholeheartedness (3:7b).

⁷***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. (Zech. 3:7b)***

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1. ***You shall judge My house:*** To judge or have leadership in God’s house or His kingdom purposes. Faithful service leads to more opportunities for service.
 2. ***You shall have charge of My courts:*** To have leadership in the Lord’s court or temple (or the house of prayer). Jesus promised to make overcomers “a pillar in His temple” (Rev. 3:12), which speaks of receiving a position of authority in the Millennium.
 3. ***Places to walk among these who stand here:*** “These who stand here” refers to the angels who stood in God’s presence (3:4). The NAS says, “I will give him free access to stand among those that are with you now.” This promise includes experiencing nearness to God, access to the angelic realm and the heavenly council, and eternal rewards.
 4. Jesus promised that some of His servants would experience an open heaven (Jn. 1:51).
⁵¹You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending.
(Jn. 1:51)
- C. The “grace message” in Zechariah 3 emphasizes God’s extravagant grace that leads us to wholehearted obedience to Jesus in our personal lifestyle and our ministry assignment. The grace of God in the gift of righteousness is freely available to all (3:4), but we differ in the measure of our experience of His grace, according to how we respond to it (3:7). The Lord gave Joshua the free gift of righteousness, but left it to him to choose to walk in wholeheartedness. By choosing to obey, Joshua could affect some of the quality of his spiritual experience and that of those under his leadership. God’s grace offers us God’s love and the power to love Him in return.

VI. THE COMING MESSIAH AND HIS SALVATION (3:8-10)

- A. In this vision, Joshua and his leadership team stand as a prophetic picture to instruct and inspire others (3:8). They are a prophetic sign of the coming Messiah, and of His grace.
- 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. ⁹For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua... (Zech. 3:8-9a)***
1. ***Wondrous sign:*** They were to be a wondrous, or important, type, or picture, pointing to the Messiah as the “Branch” and the “Stone,” and of how to function in priestly ministry.
 2. ***You and your companions:*** Joshua and his leadership team were priests. Their priestly role was an imperfect type of Jesus and His priesthood.
 3. In their wholeheartedness and faithfulness (3:7) they were to be a picture that gave others ***insight*** into the Messiah, and ***inspiration*** to walk in His grace and to be priests as they were. They were “proof” that the priestly lifestyle is wonderful, attainable, and doable.

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4. These men were used to restore the priesthood and temple; they were prophetic signs that the fullness of both would come in the future. Their very existence as faithful priests was a sign of God’s favor on that generation, and that all Israel would be saved (3:9).
 5. ***Hear:*** They were to be careful to “hear” that as a prophetic picture, or model, they would give insight into what God is like and inspire others to imitate their faith. In other words, they were to “hear” that what they were doing mattered to God, and that it would affect their destiny and relationship with God, as well as many others who would imitate them.
- B. Joshua was shown a Branch and a Stone, which both spoke of the Messiah (3:8b-9). A stone is something that bears weight, and a branch produces food that we eat. Paul used the combination of building and plant metaphors to describe life in the kingdom (1 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:19-22; 3:17).
- ⁸“For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH. ⁹For 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.” (Zech. 3:8-9)***
1. ***Branch:*** The picture of the Messiah as the Branch of the Lord expresses various facets of Jesus’ glory (Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). Jesus’ work grows or branches out as His people are joined to Him as smaller branches (Jn. 15:4-5).
 2. ***Stone:*** Zechariah was to behold, or understand, the stone that was laid before Joshua (3:9). Jesus is the foundation stone of Israel’s salvation and the stone which she stumbled over (Mt. 21:42). Jesus is the rock on which the Church is built (Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:9). The stone, or rock, is a figure of God and the Messiah (Deut. 32:4, 15, 18; 2 Sam. 22:2; Ps. 18:2; 31:3; 62:7; 89:26; 94:22; 95:1; 118:22; Isa. 8:13-15; 17:10; 28:16; Dan. 2:35, 45; Zech. 3:9; 10:4; Mt. 16:18; 21:42; Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6-8).
 3. ***Seven eyes:*** On the stone were seven eyes symbolizing Jesus’ omniscience (Rev. 5:6). Jesus possesses omniscience—all knowledge and wisdom. In Zechariah 4:10, we learn that the seven eyes on this stone are God’s eyes going to and fro throughout the earth.
 4. ***I will engrave its inscription:*** God will engrave on the stone a declaration related to His removing Israel’s sin in one day (3:9c). It is not clear what the inscription specifically is. Stones in the ancient world had writings on them; they were memorials to commemorate significant events or to tell of the greatness of a king, etc. Since the national salvation of Israel is mentioned in the next phrase, the inscription is probably related to her salvation.
 5. ***I will remove the iniquity:*** In one day, the sin of the land of Israel will be removed (3:9). In one day, Jesus accomplished the redemption of Israel on the cross. And the day of His return will be the day of Israel’s national salvation (3:9; 12:10-13:2; Rom. 11:26). The way Joshua and his team received God’s grace in one day was both a sign and the assurance that in one day Israel would be saved and qualified for her priestly role.

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- C. ***Fig tree and vine:*** Israel will function as a community that enjoys prosperity and security (3:10). To sit under “his” vine and fig tree indicates that each one will personally be prosperous. This scene pictures the gladness of each Israelite as they invite friends to partake of hospitality under their vine and fig tree in the Millennium. Zechariah develops this idea (8:4-5).

¹⁰*In that day...everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree. (Zech. 3:10)*

⁴*“Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem...⁵The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.” (Zech. 8:4-5)*