

A Window Into the Most Holy

Zechariah 3:1-10

Hymns 1, 177

A Window Into the Most Holy

The Vision of Zechariah 3

INTRODUCTION

Whether you agreed with him or not, Donald Trump was, without question, never afraid to change course if he thought he could achieve a better outcome on something. This was especially true with personnel. You may recall that he parted ways with five attorneys in his legal team shortly before he faced the record setting second impeachment trial. Reportedly he did this because of what sources referred to as a lack of chemistry between the former president and the lawyers. While we might consider this a risky move, I guess it's hard to argue with success. He was acquitted.

Friends, regardless of our feelings about the former president and his acquittal, I want to remind you that we all face an upcoming trial, and that we are all hoping for a verdict of acquittal in the heavenly judgment. I am so thankful that we have an advocate in heaven whose commitment is unquestionable. We never need to wonder whether he will do the right thing for us or not. In our Scripture reading today, we see an effort of the devil to impeach, if you will, God's people - to remove them from their God-appointed office as kings and priests. But we also see the efficacy of Christ, our heavenly Attorney, who argues conclusively for acquittal.

Because it may have been awhile since you read Zechariah, I feel like I should say a little about it from a general perspective. Other than the book of Daniel, Zechariah bears the greatest resemblance to the NT book of Revelation. Here's why - Zechariah prophesies of visions that are highly symbolic. In fact they are so symbolic that an angel has to come to him

and interpret them for him. This is exactly what happens in the books of Daniel and Revelation. And though his visions are not panoramic sweeps of history as are those of Daniel and John, the manner in which Zechariah receives them is quite similar. In addition, we should understand that Zechariah prophesied just after the 70 year Babylonian exile. His prophecies center on the return of the Hebrews to their homeland, and the restoration of the temple and the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. He called the true people of God to depart from the place of their exile, and to return home to this work. Are we not called to do the same thing, friends? Haven't we been given the same message to share? "Come out of her (Babylon), My people!" - Revelation 18:4 - isn't this the very message we are to give at this present time? Note what one writer said about the chapter we are going to consider this morning -

"Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the angel applies with peculiar force to the experiences of God's people in the closing up of the great day of atonement." RH Jan 9, 1908. Friends I believe that these words are true! As we consider the passage we read for our Scripture reading today, I believe that you will be convinced of their truthfulness as well. Let's read it together once again:

Zech. 3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.

Zech. 3:2 And 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. 3:3 ¶ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

Zech. 3:4 ¶ 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 from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

Zech. 3:5 ¶ 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. And the Angel of the LORD stood by.

Zech. 3:6 ¶ Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying,

Zech. 3:7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If you will walk in My ways, And if you will keep My command, 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. 3:8 "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.

Zech. 3:9 For 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. 3:10 In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, "Everyone will invite his neighbor Under his vine and under his fig tree.' "

(Zechariah 3:1-10 NKJV)

Now I don't intend to try to do an exhaustive commentary on the passage today. To state it plainly, that attempt would exhaust me, and would certainly exhaust you. Besides, there is no exhausting of the infinite thoughts of God anyway. So let me address the text simply by making five observations about it.

OBSERVATIONS

The Reality of the Great Controversy - The first thing with which we are confronted in this passage is the reality of the Great Controversy. The hero and the villain are shown in vision in direct confrontation. Note the word "oppose" near the end of verse 1. This is exactly what the Great Controversy is all about. It is the history of our loving Creator whose government is being assailed by an opposition movement. This opposition movement is being led by a former insider - we see him here called Satan, which is not a proper name, but rather a term that means "adversary", or "enemy". Yes, if you want to really trace back the origins of the "deep state", it began in heaven. Throughout the Bible, this enemy appears, always attempting to thwart God's plan for the human race. I point this out to you, as I have in times past, because I think that this background understanding is most vital for us to consider. If we are ignorant of what the Bible says on this particular point, or if we fail to give it proper

consideration, we are bound to go wrong in our whole theology. How can we understand the true nature of sin apart from this? How can we understand the meaning and scope of the atonement that Christ came to make unless we understand how the need for it arose in the first place? This is what makes the nominal churches of today so theologically weak. This is why their view of the gospel and its impact in our individual lives so truncated. I would submit to you that they have failed to take seriously all that the Bible teaches us regarding the reality of the Great War in heaven and its continuation here on earth. So many churches have accepted the devil's deceptions and don't even believe in his personal existence! Or, if they do acknowledge his existence, they have accepted a distorted view of his character and activity. In other words, many who call themselves Christians have been duped by Satan's propaganda campaign. Friends, we must not fall for the fake news. Let's not fail to recognize the importance of this great teaching found in all the Scriptures.

The Personal Nature of the Great Controversy - But having said all that, we must go on to see a second point that is directly related to the first. You see here in verse 1 that there is another person in the vision. It is Joshua - the high priest. What his presence and the subsequent discourse in the vision teaches us is this - that the Great Controversy is not a war of which we are merely casual observers. You understand what I mean. . . I remember as a child watching the CBS evening news with Walter Cronkite - seeing Dan Rather over in Vietnam talking about the war over there. I knew that bad things were happening, but it had nothing to do with me. I was just a little boy growing up in a small town in Pennsylvania. It was all over there in a place that I would likely never visit. Now that is the very attitude that many have today about this Great Controversy. Yes, yes - we know that there was a war in heaven, but I have a life to live - they say. Yes you do - we all do, but before we decide how to live that life we must recognize one thing. *The Great Controversy is not only real - it is personal. This is the second observation.* All of us are personally involved in this thing. Not only are we involved, but we have become the focal points of the war. We are not merely correspondents; we are combatants! If you don't believe that, just go ask the patriarch Job! If he were alive today, he would explain to you just how personal things can get. My friends, there is no Geneva Convention when it comes to the Great Controversy, no rules of

engagement . What I mean is - in war the combatants aren't supposed to target civilians. But in the Great Controversy, it is we civilians that have become the targets. Satan can't do what he wanted to do to God, so he has turned his attention to you and I - to each and every individual. And so we see here in verse 1 Satan standing at the right hand of Joshua to oppose HIM! This same enemy is the one who accuses each one of us before God day and night. His hatred and opposition for each of us is as real as it gets. And apart from the gracious actions of the Angel of the Lord, not one of us would be safe for a moment.

We Have an Advocate In the Judgment

But this brings us to a third observation. As momentous and as personal as this Great Controversy is, we are not left to fret over the fact that we have this adversary that is bent on our destruction, for the moment that our opponent is introduced in the vision, he is immediately countered by our Advocate - this Angel of the Lord. Note verse 2. We should not miss who speaks here. It is the LORD. When you see the word LORD in your Bible with the ord in small caps, it indicates the use of the personal name of God in the original Hebrew text. The speaker here is none other than Yahweh Himself. So this Angel of the LORD is also, Himself, Yahweh. So who is this? Who is the Messenger (Angel) of Yahweh (the Godhead)? Which member of the Godhead is the One who speaks to humanity? Clearly this is the One Scripture calls the Son of God, or, calling Him by His New Testament name, Christ. So what does Christ say to Satan here. Well it is interesting to note what He does not say. He makes no excuses for Joshua. He does not plead his ignorance. He does not try to put some positive spin on Joshua's condition. He does not even dispute the charges against Joshua. All he says is - "the LORD rebuke you!" TWICE! "He is one of mine," says Christ. "He is a brand plucked out of the fire. You accuse him of things he has done, but I rebuke you, for though he is guilty of all that, in my death he has already suffered the penalty, and he is no longer the man that he was, all because of my grace! He has chosen to return to loyalty to the government of heaven, the government of liberty." Now I am about to tell you the really interesting part, so listen carefully. Notice something - to the argument of Christ, our defense Attorney, Satan presents no counter argument. It is not that he has his mouth duct taped shut, but there is nothing else he can say. Christ is right. His testimony is true, and cannot be

refuted. What a cause we have for rejoicing to see and hear this encounter, for this is representative of what will be in the future for all who are ultimately acquitted in the judgment.

The Great Exchange

Now there is also a fourth point that we absolutely must consider here. It is found in verses 3 and 4. It points out what some have called "the great exchange." As Joshua stood before the Angel of the Lord he was clothed in filthy garments. Now you know what this represents in the Bible - it represents the record of a sinful life. In that sense, every one of us this morning could insert our names where we find Joshua's name in this vision. Isn't this true? Again, as I mentioned a few moments ago, there is no denial here of Joshua's condition as a sinner. Christ doesn't pretend like He didn't see what was happening. Note too that Joshua himself says nothing in the vision. Nor would we, or could we if we could appear before God in person in the pre-advent judgment. So what is the declaration in verse 4? "Take away the filthy garments from him!" Please see what is happening here - Christ does not leave the filthy garments on Joshua and just throw the rich robes overtop to hide them. No way - instead, He removes the filthy garments (again, representing a character defiled by sin) and replaces them with the rich robes which represent Christ's own righteousness. Here we see what the heavenly judgment involves - it is a cleansing of the record of sin in heaven, so that every true believer will stand before God with a perfect history - the holy history of Jesus Christ Himself. Note too that this transaction in heaven is accompanied by a practical reality in the life of every true believer here on earth. It is accompanied by a forsaking of sin and a transformation of the life by the grace of God. All who wish to have their record cleansed in heaven will be found cooperating with Christ here on earth in the work he desires to do in their hearts and in their everyday lives. Their history in heaven will be a history of perfect obedience, and they will ultimately be found to possess the same character here on earth.

The Final Outcome

Now as I move on to this final observation that we will look at today, let me remind you again of what I said at the beginning - there is more here in the passage than we can cover

today. Every phrase, every word is significant. We will have to save some things for another time. But in closing, let me point out that there is an important outcome of this activity, this act of judgment, this Day of Atonement. What does God say now to Joshua after his opponent has been rebuked, after his filthy garments have been removed, and after he has been clothed with the rich robes, and the clean turban (vs. 5)? Verses 6-10 contain a beautiful exhortation and declaration of future privileges and responsibilities that will be enjoyed by Joshua, and by all who allow the Divine Advocate to plead their case. **Zech. 3:6** ¶ Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying,

Zech. 3:7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If you will walk in My ways, And if you will keep My command, 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. 3:8 "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.

Zech. 3:9 For 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. 3:10 In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, "Everyone will invite his neighbor Under his vine and under his fig tree.' "

What an amazing statement this is! To walk among the angels, to have charge of God's courts, to judge His house - what incredible privileges are brought to view. And notice verses 8, 9 - What will happen when the judgment is finished? Friends, like Joshua, we will be a wondrous sign. Why? Because there has never been such a wondrous thing that has happened in all history - that a people who were rebels and sinners have now been cleansed and redeemed - ready for the reintroduction into heavenly society. Thus the the Lord of Hosts says - I am bringing forth my Servant, the Branch. This is a prophecy of Christ's first advent, to be sure, but it has even greater application to His Second Advent. He will come, brothers and sisters, and when He comes, He will remove the iniquity of the land. Those who are

redeemed will enjoy the reality of this quintessential portrayal of peace and prosperity in Old Testament Scripture - we will invite our neighbors under our vine and under our fig tree. Sin and suffering will be forever banished.

APPEAL

But what about you friend? We have a pending trial at the judgment bar of the Almighty God! We have seen in our passage today what is going on at this very moment in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary in heaven. The very same Angel of the Lord - Christ Himself, who is the great I AM has pledged Himself to represent you there, without cost to you. This is the very One who made Satan back down in this vision, the very one who clothed the guilty Joshua with the spotless garments representing His own righteousness. This Advocate is the one who oversaw the placement of this beautiful crown on Joshua's head. The question is, are you satisfied with your legal team? Or are you looking to make a last minute change before the case goes to trial? What could be the reason why so many people will ultimately part ways with their Advocate? I think it comes down to this simple fact - there is no chemistry. Jesus means nothing to them. They have no feelings for Him. They don't appreciate what He's done for them, and they see no need of His help. They feel that they could get along just fine before the Judge without Him. They feel that their lives are sufficient to be judged on their own merits - they see no need of His. How terrible will be their awakening when they realize what they have done by parting ways with their only sure Defender - the heavenly Attorney who has never lost a case. How many here today would like to express their commitment to not only retain Christ, but to also get to know Him, whom to know is life eternal?