

CHAPTER XXX

A VISION OF THE HIGH PRIEST

ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER 3:1-10

RV . . . And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: as a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take the filthy garments from off him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with rich apparel. And I said, Let them set a clean mitre upon his head. So they set a clean mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments; and the angel of Jehovah was standing by. And the angel of Jehovah protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou also shalt judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by. Hear now, I Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men that are a sign: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch. For, behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; upon one stone are seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall ye invite every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig-tree.

LXX * . . . And the Lord shewed me Jesus the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and the Devil stood on his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said to the Devil, The Lord rebuke thee, O Devil, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: behold! is not this as a brand plucked from the fire? Now Jesus was clothed in filthy raiment, and stood before the angel. And the Lord answered and spoke to those who stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy raiment from him: and he said to him, Behold, I have taken away thine iniquities: and clothe ye him with a long robe, and place a pure mitre upon his head. So they placed a pure mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments: and the angel of the Lord stood by. And the angel of the Lord testified to Jesus, saying, Thus saith the Lord

Almighty; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and take heed to my charges, then shalt thou judge my house: and if thou wilt diligently keep my court, then will I give thee men to walk in the midst of these that stand here. Hear now, Jesus the high priest, thou, and thy neighbours that are sitting before thee; for they are diviners, for, behold, I bring forth my servant The Branch. For as for the stone which I have set before the face of Jesus, on the one stone are seven eyes: behold, I am digging a trench, saith the Lord Almighty, and I will search out all the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the Lord Almighty, ye shall call together every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree.

COMMENTS

Zechariah's fourth vision continues the growing Messianic crescendo of his prophecy. Here the attention shifts from the city and temple to the high priest. Both the high priest and his fellow priests are presented as a sign to be revealed in the coming of The Branch.

(Verses 1-3) Joshua the high priest (the Septuagint calls him Jesus) stands before the angel of the Lord as representative of his people. Satan stands in the position of accuser. This is the first time in the Bible that the Devil is mentioned by this name.

The filthy garments with which Joshua is clothed are symbolic of the sins of the people. They are still contaminated by the idolatry of their fathers to which is added their own present rebellion against rebuilding the temple. Satan may rightly charge that they are not fit to be God's people or to do God's work.

Jehovah's answer to Satan's accusation is that these are His people not by their merit but by His choice. He has brought them back from near extinction.

The ten northern tribes are gone. The generation which went into Babylon is dead. Those who have returned are but a handful compared to the numbers who elected to remain in Babylon. Unless God had plucked them as a brand from the fire they would no longer be a people.

(Verses 4-5) At this point in the vision the angel commands that the filthy garments be removed from Joshua and that they be replaced with rich apparel. A clean mitre, or turban, is to be placed on his head so that he will stand clean before both the angel and Satan.

The intent is to show that God is not going to hold the

guilt of past sins against His redeemed remnant. Their sin will be forgiven in order that they may get on with His work.

(Verses 6-7) Having cleansed the high priest, symbolic of the forgiveness of the people, the angel now addresses him directly. What he says to Joshua is intended to be heard and heeded by the people. He makes two emphatic points.

First, their forgiveness was conditional. *If* Joshua will walk in His ways and *if* he will keep His charge, *then* as high priest he will judge God's house and keep His courts.

The instrumental relationship which the Israelites held to God as His people was always conditional. (cf. *Exodus 19:5-6*)

(Verse 8) *Second*, Jehovah's angel makes it quite clear that His willingness to forgive His people is related to the fulfillment of a larger purpose and is therefore not arbitrary.

The entire priesthood, both the high priest and those who sit with him are a sign. The justification of the sins of the people and the ultimate meaning of the priesthood are to be found in the coming Branch.

The Branch is identified as the servant of Jehovah. This is a significant title given the Messiah by both Isaiah and Ezekiel. (cp. *Isaiah 42:1, 49:3, 50:10, 52:13, 53:11* and *Ezekiel 34:23, 24*) It was primarily the failure of the Jews to see the Messiah in this light that caused their rejection of the Messiah when He came.

The term Branch also has prior establishment as a Messianic term. It refers to the Messiah as a tender shoot of the almost extinct royal Davidic line. (cf. *Isaiah 4:2, 11:1* and *Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15*) Luke's term "day spring" refers to this term (*Luke 9:78*)

(Verses 9-10) To encourage the people toward the building of God's house, the vision now identifies the Messiah as the chief corner stone of the temple. Upon the stone in the prophet's vision are seven eyes. It is to be engraven by the Master Architect Himself.

The stone which is the chief corner stone of the true temple is not a lifeless, senseless stone. It has seven eyes. It is living and has intelligence illuminated by perfect vision. (The figure seven is the apocalyptic symbol for completeness or perfection.)

I Peter 2:4-5 speaks of Jesus much as Zechariah's vision describes Him. He is the living stone chosen of God upon which God's people are built as a spiritual house.

Peter also alludes to the ideal priesthood typified in Zechariah's vision by Joshua and his attendant priests. The living stone is also the

high priest of the real priesthood. The people of God are at once the temple of His dwelling and the priests of His service.

It is in that day, *ie.* the day of the coming of the living stone and the true priest, that God will actually remove the sins of His people. In that day also the people of God will invite their neighbors to share in the bounties of the Messianic kingdom.

The language here is reminiscent of *Micah 4:4* in which the Messianic age is presented in terms of spiritual idealism.

Two characteristics of Messiah's day stand out in this passage. It is the day of cleansing from iniquity and it is the day of inviting others to share the blessings of God. Surely Jesus must have had this passage and others like it in mind when He said that the entire message of the Old Testament is summed up in His death and resurrection on the one hand and the preaching of repentance and remission of sins in every nation on the other. (*Luke 24:44-49*)

Chapter XXX—Questions

A Vision of the High Priest

1. In the fourth vision, the attention shifts to_____.
2. Describe the fourth vision.
3. The forgiveness of the Jews was conditional upon their_____.
4. Jehovah's willingness to forgive His people is related to what larger purpose?
5. Discuss the Biblical significance of the term "The Branch."
6. Who is identified as the chief corner stone in the temple?
7. Discuss Zechariah's fourth vision in relation to I Peter 2:4-5.
8. What two characteristics of Messiah's day stand out in Zechariah, chapter three?

CHAPTER XXXI

A VISION OF A MENORAH AND OLIVE TREES

ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER 4:1-14

RX . . . And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. And he said unto me,