

The first three visions were about God's people and the rebuilding of the temple. I hope that I conveyed clearly that the second and third visions emphasized the move of God from God's influence in the world via a theocratic nation to that of individual servants who do God's work. God was declaring the craftsmen building the spiritual kingdom were more powerful and effective than nations. The craftsmen working on the temple were a physical representation of this spiritual reality. Except for a brief period under the Maccabees Israel would not have national sovereignty again until 1948. With the coming of the Messiah and the outpouring of the Spirit, this change became even more evident, and shortly after that Israel ceased to exist as a nation. The building of the temple was a step toward preparing the people for the coming of the Messiah.

The fourth and fifth visions focus on the leaders: Joshua the high priest, and Zerubbabel the governor. To rebuild the temple, the leaders had to be anointed instruments of God. The reconstruction needed God's direction through His leaders. For God to work through willing vessels, there needs to be a consecration of those vessels to the Lord. You can't mix the flesh and the Spirit and still get God's desired results (Philippians 3:3<sup>i</sup>).

*<sup>1</sup> Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.* Zechariah 3:1-10 The chapter opens with a courtroom drama. Joshua is standing before the judge (John 5:22<sup>ii</sup>) who is the angel of the LORD, whom I believe we can refer to as Jesus. He is a manifestation of the invisible God and referred to as God in several passages (Genesis 16:13<sup>iii</sup>; 22:15,16<sup>iv</sup>). At the right hand of Joshua is Satan, also known as the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10<sup>v</sup>). He is the prosecuting attorney.

*<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 plucked from the fire?"* Zechariah 3:2 The second verse is in enigmatic language of what appears to be God speaking to Himself. The LORD who spoke, which I believe is referring to the angel of the LORD, is asking the LORD, the heavenly Father, to rebuke Satan. We also see the Lord Jesus praying to the Father in the New Testament. Skeptics ask, "If Jesus is God does He pray to Himself?" They refuse to accept the fact that the Trinity consists of individual persons who are one (Isaiah 9:6<sup>vi</sup>).

I find that in the Scriptures God the Father and God the Son are both referred to in Hebrew as YHWH which is rendered as LORD. Who was speaking in the burning bush? It was YHWH. And yet there was a visible manifestation which Paul tells us must be Jesus, for God the Father is a spirit (John 1:18<sup>vii</sup>). He wrote that Jesus is the visible manifestation of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15<sup>viii</sup>). Who chose Israel to be His people? God the Father, for there was only a voice that spoke to Abraham. He is referred to as the God of our fathers (Deuteronomy 26:7<sup>ix</sup>; 2 Chronicles 20:6<sup>x</sup>). But these two are one (John 10:30<sup>xi</sup>) and yet are separate persons, both of whom can be referred to as YHWH or LORD, the eternal God of Israel.

Speaking of Joshua, the angel of the LORD asked, "Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" The prophet Amos used the expression "brand plucked from the fire" to represent the remnant of Israel that survived the judgments of God upon them for their idolatry (Amos 4:11<sup>xii</sup>). They were the ones chosen to continue the line that was leading to the Messiah and restore the nation for His coming. John Wesley's mother used this verse to describe young John when he was plucked from a house fire. Jesus is asking if Satan understands that Joshua is a chosen vessel brought out of captivity for God's purposes.

*<sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments.* Zechariah 3:3 Of course Satan understood. That is why he is accusing Joshua. He wants to stop the work of God any way he can. One way to do that is to find the vessel of God unfit for service. He is standing in filthy clothes. What Satan is saying is that Joshua is unfit to be high priest because of his sins represented by his filthy clothes.

We must understand the role and requirements of the high priest to see why Satan had a case. Once a year the high priest would bring the blood of the sacrificial lamb into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle it on the Ark of the Covenant so that the sins of the nation would be atoned, or we could say covered for a time. He had to go through a set of very detailed instructions to be as holy as is possible to come before His holy God. A week before the event he would move into the temple grounds. He had certain washing requirements and prayers he would pray. On the Day of Atonement he would wear special all white linen robe and a turban on which was a golden plate engraved with the words, "Holiness unto the LORD" (Leviticus 16:4<sup>xiii</sup>). Upon his shoulders and on his breastplate were the names of the tribes of Israel which he represented. If he was rejected, atonement for the people was rejected. If he took it lightly or was defiled in some way, he could be struck dead when he entered the manifest presence of God. Satan is saying, "Look at this guy! You can't use him!"

As a priest of the LORD, Joshua was probably not guilty of any obvious sins, but rather he had a sin nature like that into which we all are born. He had a propensity to sin. Standing in the light of the holiness of God we would all say with Isaiah, "I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5<sup>xiv</sup>). We would all say with Peter, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8<sup>xv</sup>). Joshua's inner nature is pictured in his clothing, and like all human nature, it is filthy (Hebrews 4:13<sup>xvi</sup>). How can he represent the people to a holy God in that condition? How can we?

*<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."* Zechariah 3:4 All the ritual in the world will not change the inner man. Only God can do that work, and He did on the cross. Because Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8<sup>xvii</sup>), because there is no time in the heavenly realm, the LORD applies the blood of Jesus to people who lived before the cross according to their faith. There is no other way to have our iniquity taken from us, whether before or after the cross. All the temple rituals were only illustrations of what Jesus would do. The only way for the inner man to be

sanctified is by accepting the work of Jesus upon the cross for our sins. Then we are clothed with the righteousness of God in Christ (Galatians 3:27<sup>xviii</sup>).

*<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.* Zechariah 3:5 Zechariah asked that a pure turban should be placed upon his head. That was part of the priestly attire. I think this is an illustration of how God invites us to participate in His work through intercessory prayer as Zechariah was allowed to participate in the vision. While Joshua's thoughts will not be utterly pure, they are covered with the helmet of salvation. His sins of any future thoughts are covered with that white turban of righteousness merited by Jesus.

If any man is in Christ he is a new creation. The old is gone and the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17<sup>xix</sup>). Now Joshua cannot be accused by Satan. His priestly attire declares he is holy before God and can oversee the rebuilding of the temple and intercede for God's people.

*<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.* Zechariah 4:6-7 Sins forgiven (verse 4), Joshua is now given a conditional promise. IF he will walk in God's ways and keep his charge, which is to obey the Laws of God and faithfully fulfill the duties of the high priest, THEN three things are promised. He will rule over the temple, have charge of God's the courts of the temple, and the right of access to the heavenly courtroom.

Though sins were forgiven, to have the privilege to be the mediator between Israel and God, and the highest of honors, to go into the most holy place on the Day of Atonement and access heaven's court, he must walk in God's ways and must fulfill the priestly duties. The right of access is the privilege of prayer, of coming before the throne of God represented in the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:22<sup>xx</sup>).

Why would God give him this charge? Joshua is a man. When men have authority, they often see themselves as special and make excuses for compromising. God is using the vision given to Zechariah to remind Joshua the honor and duty that is bestowed upon him. It reminded Joshua that it is God who makes him holy and holiness was required for the work he was called to do. He will fulfill God's assignment only by the power of the Spirit (Romans 8:4<sup>xxi</sup>). That is the only way we will fulfill our God given tasks.

Now consider this, redeemed children of God: while only one man in the nation had the privilege at that time, we all have that privilege today! The veil was torn when Jesus died (Matthew 27:51<sup>xxii</sup>). You have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. The white robe of Jesus' righteousness has been put over you (Isaiah 61:10<sup>xxiii</sup>). The mind of Christ represented by the white turban has been placed on your head (1 Corinthians 2:16<sup>xxiv</sup>). The golden plate that declares, "Holiness unto the LORD" is on that turban. You are set apart from the world and given the most wonderful honor IF you will walk in God's ways and keep His charge. The difference is that today God's ways are not the Law but

the spirit behind the law, holiness, love, gentleness, truthfulness. Keeping God's charge is not the duties of routine, but to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27<sup>xxv</sup>). Then you have access to the very throne of God to intercede for people, and to pray God's will into the earth. The vision to Zechariah for Joshua/Yehoshuah is to us in Jesus/Yeshua (an abbreviated form of Yehoshuah). Jesus is the Aramaic name of Joshua in the Old Testament. Do we see the wonderful privilege that is ours in Jesus?

*<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.* Zechariah 3:8 The angel of the LORD continues with a mysterious statement that He commands them to hear. Joshua and his friends that sit before him are a sign. Another translation is they "are symbolic of things to come."(NIV) Those who sit before you is a way of referring to one's disciples. Then the angel gives the sign's meaning. See, I will bring my servant the Branch.

In Scripture God's servants are His prophets. However, in the book of Isaiah, "my servant" is the Messiah, the Branch is a descendant of Jesse through the line of David (Isaiah 11:1<sup>xxvi</sup>). The Branch is another way of referring to the Messiah. God is clarifying that it is not an ordinary prophet Joshua is a sign of but the Messiah. If Joshua will be faithful, he will not only have the privileges of the high priest, but he and his disciples will foreshadow Jesus and His disciples. That is the clear meaning here to those who understand biblical terms. Joshua and his disciples would rebuild the temple. Jesus builds the eternal temple (Matthew 16:18<sup>xxvii</sup>). Joshua intercedes for God's people, and Jesus ever lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25<sup>xxviii</sup>).

*<sup>9</sup> For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.* Zechariah 4:9 Verse 8 began by demanding that Joshua listen. Verse nine demands that he observe. God set before Joshua a stone with seven eyes or facets. Some interpret this to be a gem stone that was given to Joshua to remind him of this vision, a stone that he perhaps wore in his turban. But remember, this is a vision. What is set before Joshua is the promise. The promise is compared to a stone with seven eyes. We find the meaning in Revelation 5:6: *<sup>6</sup> And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.* The Lamb of God, Christ Jesus, is the stone. He is the rock on which we stand. Paul declared that He is the rock Moses struck in the wilderness that followed them (1 Corinthians 10:4<sup>xxix</sup>). He is omnipresent, seeing everyone at every moment throughout time. Nothing escapes Him.

God declares He will engrave an inscription on Him. Now we must look again in Scripture to see what that inscription is. God is once again referring to a passage in Isaiah: Isaiah 49:15-16 *<sup>15</sup> "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. <sup>16a</sup> Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...*

The promise declared through Isaiah was that God would never forget His people. He is like a mother with her wayward child. She can't stop loving them. But now look at the end of verse 9 to see the application. God will remove the sins of the land in a single day with this engraving! Just as God removed Joshua's sins, the sins of the whole land would be removed by the engraving in the Messiah's hands. Now is it clear to you? This is the reason Joshua could be forgiven. The Messiah was coming to justify the removal of sins, but not just from Joshua but from all people who trust in His sacrifice for them.

We read the verse from Revelation that showed the Lamb in the eternal realm "as though it had been slain." The nail scars in the hands of Christ are forever a reminder that the sins of the world were removed in a single day. He can't forget that He redeemed you. Your name is engraved on His hands. Like a mother with her child, He will love you forever. But not only that, He will perfect you to be His beautiful bride (Philippians 1:6<sup>xxx</sup>; Revelation 19:7,8<sup>xxxi</sup>).

*<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.*" Zechariah 3:10 This is a picture of the peaceful abundance we have in Christ. Instead of concern for ourselves, the spiritual abundance we have turns our hearts to the needs of others to invite them to taste and see what we have been given in Christ Jesus (Genesis 49:10,11<sup>xxxii</sup>). We invite them to this place of peaceful communion with God.

Jesus told Nathaniel He saw him under his fig tree (John 1:48<sup>xxxiii</sup>). It was a place of prayer and meditation on the Word. I think Nathaniel had been praying there that morning and had a special encounter with God. Jesus was there in spirit hearing his prayer. Nathaniel answered. "You are the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel!" I wonder if Nathaniel had been meditating on this very verse, Zechariah 4:10, that morning?

Our passage today tells us that our salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus was planned in love long before we were born. It tells us we have an adversary, but we also have the greatest defense attorney ever! It also tells us how greatly we are loved. We can go about our lives in our old natures and still expect to see heaven because Jesus paid our sin debt. But how much more blessed, joyful, and fulfilling to live in communion with the Spirit? If we are daily experiencing the love and peace we find under our own vine and fig tree, we will invite others to come and experience the love and peace we experience there for themselves.

#### Questions

- 1 What are the first five visions about?
- 2 What is the setting of the vision?
- 3 What is a brand plucked from the fire?
- 4 Why did Joshua need clean clothes? Us?
- 5 What is the clean turban?
- 6 What is access?
- 7 What is the sign?
- 8 What is the stone and the engraving?
- 9 How could it represent sins removed in a single day?
- 10 Are you experiencing verse 10?

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**i Philippians 3:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—

**ii John 5:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,

**iii Genesis 16:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."

**iv Genesis 22:15-16 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven <sup>16</sup> and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

**v Revelation 12:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

**vi Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**vii John 1:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

**viii Colossians 1:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

**ix Deuteronomy 26:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.

**x 2 Chronicles 20:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> and said, "O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.

**xi John 10:30 (ESV)**

<sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."

**xii Amos 4:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> "I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning; yet you did not return to me," declares the LORD.

**xiii Leviticus 16:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.

**xiv Isaiah 6:5 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

**xv Luke 5:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

**xvi Hebrews 4:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

**xvii Revelation 13:8 (KJV)**

<sup>8</sup> And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

**xviii Galatians 3:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

**xix 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

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<sup>xx</sup> **Exodus 25:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

<sup>xxi</sup> **Romans 8:4 (NIV)**

<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

<sup>xxii</sup> **Matthew 27:51 (ESV)**

<sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

<sup>xxiii</sup> **Isaiah 61:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

<sup>xxiv</sup> **1 Corinthians 2:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

<sup>xxv</sup> **Luke 10:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

<sup>xxvi</sup> **Isaiah 11:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

<sup>xxvii</sup> **Matthew 16:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

<sup>xxviii</sup> **Hebrews 7:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

<sup>xxix</sup> **1 Corinthians 10:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

<sup>xxx</sup> **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

<sup>xxxi</sup> **Revelation 19:7-8 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; <sup>8</sup> it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

<sup>xxxii</sup> **Genesis 49:10-11 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

<sup>11</sup> Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> **John 1:48 (ESV)**

<sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."