

Introduction Zechariah 3:1-10 “Our God Saves”

As the book of Zechariah begins the the first of the Jews had returned from their exile in Babylon. Prior to this, Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel had been exiled because of their sinfulness and disobedience to God. God had warned them to repent for years through the prophets of the Old Testament but they did not turn back to him. So eventually he turned them over to their Babylonian conquerors and most of Judah was carried off as prisoners of war. For 70 long years their lives were completely controlled by their captors. It was a dark time in the history of Israel. It was disgraceful. Families were torn apart. Children were taken from their families. Endless mistreatment and abuse was thrust upon them. They were yearning for home. All this because God was chastising them for being a wayward people who did not obey. They did what they wanted, ignoring God.

The feelings of being deserted by God and being worthless confronted them. How could this have happened? He had chosen them as his own people. Three to four generations had passed as they remained hopelessly trapped in captivity and no relief was in sight. Their hope wavered. They wondered if God had forgotten them and could he have forgotten his promise to rescue them?

But **Jeremiah 27:22** (New International Version) reminds them, 22 'They will be taken to Babylon and **there they will remain until the day I come for them,**' declares the LORD. **Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.'** "

But when would he come. They waited and waited. Had God forgotten them?

In his 1975 Ballad “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” Gordon Lightfoot the singer asks:

“Does anyone know where the love of God goes
When the waves turn the minutes to hours”

In the face of danger minutes feel like hours he is saying. In the face of our problems, the waves from the storms of life make time seem to stop. The suffering seems endless. The Jews have had the minutes turn to hours and in fact the years have turned to decades. When would their rescuer come and was he coming at all?

(slide #1) Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever felt so far from God or so lost that you could think he had forgotten all about you? It is a terrible feeling. When a child thinks his father doesn't care about him it causes terrible damage to the child. That must have been the feeling that these the exiled Jews experienced.

But God has not forgotten them. He will be there right on time.

I want you to keep this in mind, the name Zechariah means “God remembers.” He has remembered His people he will redeem and rescue them in the midst of their troubles. And he can rescue you and me just like he says in Zechariah 3.

The Big Idea

God remembers his people. Are you one of his people? (slide #2)

I have recently run into this chapter and I just marveled at it. In the book of Zechariah, God shows how he is again seeking out his children. His lost children who have been through the toughest ordeals of life. He wants to redeem them, to rescue them, and then to protect them. He has given them no mercy because of their past sins against him. The angel says so in vs. 1:12-13. They have paid a tremendous price but now he will reach out to bless them. The comment of the Lord in v. 13 (read) begins the unfolding of a fantastic story of redemption. It is meant to encourage the Jews in their time. The process which God sets in motion, as predicted by Zechariah's words, can even reach us today.

Zechariah by his prophecies is telling the secrets of God. It is a picture of what will happen to Israel. Later in the passage we will see God broaden its application showing it relates to his plan to redeem all mankind. The fulfillment of many of Zechariah's prophecies happened just as God said they would. It shows the sovereignty of God in ways that should prove to us clearly how faithful, and trustworthy God and His words are.

However the Jews responsibility and our responsibility to God is clearly stated. See 1:3-4 (read)

In v. 3 we see the theme verse of the book of Zechariah. (Re read it.)

I don't know where you stand this morning in your obedience to God. Wherever you stand know that you can come back to God. No matter what, he is waiting for you. The Lord remembers the plans he has for you. Just like he remembered his plan for Israel in spite of their sin. In spite of what you may have done. You too can become his son or daughter and walk with him.

Transition

In order to understand this chapter better I want to give you some historical background on what is going on in the book of Zechariah.

In 538BC King Cyrus of Persia gave the decree that the Jews could begin returning home. Now it is around 536BC as Zechariah himself returns to Jerusalem. Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest are the leaders of the people returning at this time. 2

Zerubbabel is the grandson of the last King Jehoiachin. Therefore Zerubbabel is a member of the kingly line of David. He is the Governor of Judah at this time and was appointed by King Cyrus. As a point of reference it will be another 90 years or so until Nehemiah arrives to repair the walls of Jerusalem.

At this time the people have rebuilt an altar and priests have begun to offer sacrifices again. Their sacrifices to God for the forgiveness of their sin had been discontinued in Jerusalem for 70 years because of the exile. Now about 50,000 Jews had returned to Israel. They intended as a first priority to begin rebuilding the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. They do begin building the Temple in 536 BC. But then construction stops until 520BC. Until a new king, King Darius encourages them to begin building again. Darius graciously, and it could be said supernaturally, gives the Jews a great deal of assistance in building it. The temple is completed and dedicated in 515BC.

One of the biggest problems the returning Jews struggle with is the motivation to continue on in the great venture they have undertaken to rebuild the Temple and their cities in Judah. That is where the words of Zechariah serve a very important function. He wants to encourage the people. He shows them what is coming and how it demonstrates the perpetual faithfulness of God to his people.

This chapter is a fantastic representation of God's coming redemption that is meant to encourage the Jews in their time. The process which God sets in motion, as predicted by Zechariah's words, can even reach us today. God remembers all of us too! We will see how he intends to save all who would call on him because of Jesus. Amazingly Zechariah's words predict this over 500 years before Jesus was born.

Transition

Zach is a great encourager to the Jews. I want to tell you more about him. So as to better understand this passage.

The words of the prophecy were delivered in about 520BC, which is 18 years after the exiles first returned from Babylon. Chapter 3 is one vision of a total of eight different visions that Zechariah received at this time.

This book is full of metaphors, symbols and visions that make it hard to understand. This probably explains much about Zach's character. His soaring visions are breathtaking and revealing but are sometimes difficult to explain. However he very clearly outlines the character of the Christ, and his descriptions of what would happen to Jesus in Christ's passion at the cross are truly amazing. He is a poet and a writer. He is more like and artist than a forceful leader. His fellow prophet who lived at this time, Haggai was such a leader. Together they made a good team, as complements to each other. While Haggai emphasized building the Temple, Zach emphasized a spiritual 3

renewal to turn the people back to God.

Zach was born in Babylonia during the exile. He is a priest, as were Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He relatively young man, at the start of the book. (See chpt 2:4) Zechariah lived into the reign of Artaxerxes, (465 to 424BC) Making him an old man when he died.

Transition

Now having some idea of the history of the people Zach is speaking to, and his own background lets move on to the text. It is also very interesting and **no coincidence** that the name Zechariah's means "God remembers"

We today need to know that God remembers us too! The prophecy will show how God's rich grace extends to us just as we shall see it shown to the Jewish exiles. If you think God has forgotten us wait until you see how this prophecy wraps up.

Read v. 3:1-3

God Remembers Our Condition (slide #3)

Joshua is the high priest of this time. He is one of the two leaders of the reconstruction effort in Jerusalem and Judah. The vision is a picture of the Jewish people on the inside, it reveals their spiritual condition. Here the condition of Israel is represented by Joshua the high priest.

In v. 1 we find Joshua standing in the midst of the angel of Lord and Satan. Satan's name literally means "the accuser." Satan levels accusations against Joshua because he is unclean and therefore unfit to be a priest before God. The scene has a court room feel to it. It happens in much in the way Satan accused Job before God in **Job 1**.

Can you identify with Joshua? Satan will accuse us and point out our guilt anytime he can. Usually when we draw near to God or seek his help Satan will be right there to point out how unworthy we are. He is very good at it and very persistent in order to keep us away from dealing with our sin.

Now to **v. 2** we see the Lord's answer. "The Lord rebuke you Satan." and he repeats in for effect in the same verse, He (God) "has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" Because it is by grace that God has chosen Israel, whom Joshua represents, Satan's accusation is unreasonable. Satan doesn't understand the grace of God. He doesn't get how God can love these filthy people.

In God's sovereignty it was totally God's choice to love Israel. It was nothing they earned. In fact it could be said that God chose them because they were the least likely to ever succeed. He chose to bless them, therefore he will defend Israel.

The phrase describing Israel as a brand or a burning stick snatched from the fire refers to God rescuing them from the fire that was the Babylonian captivity. God had himself snatched them from the fire and rescued them.

We see Joshua in v. 3 dressed in “filthy clothes” as a sign of his guilt. The word for “filth” in Hebrew is “the strongest expression in the Hebrew language for a most vile and loathsome character” Filth is used to describe our even our righteous acts in Isaiah 64:6 “ ALL OUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS AS A FILTHY RAGS.” If this is what our righteous acts are compared to God, I can't imagine what our sin is like. It could be said it is as if Joshua is covered with excrement. We might say Joshua looks like was sprayed by a manure spreader. Satan is accusingly asking how can a man like this stand before God. Or even more ridiculous is the thought that he could be a priest in the Temple of a holy God. Joshua is guilty, and all of Israel is still guilty.

We all are just like this. The manure spreader of our sin has splattered or lives with its impurity. None of us can stand before a holy God. We feel dirty, filthy in fact is what we are. “None are righteous no not one” (Rom 3:10). We feel shame. We don't run to him. We run away from God because of our sinfulness.

In our guilt and shame it is ironic that we respond in a completely wrong fashion

In his Book “A Faith Worth Sharing” C. John Miller (pg.144) describes people this way. “To be spiritually dead and deceived is to be centered on yourself and not on your creator, and to believe ... **A BIG LIE** Since man's first sin , he has tried to be INDEPENDENT of God. Actually every human being is entirely DEPENDENT on God for breath, food, health, shelter and mental abilities. The BIG LIE is SELFISH INDEPENDENCE. Self-trust, self-boasting, self-reliance, self-hating, self-seeking.

All men are lost and undone before a Holy God. Even so, **God rescues us like a stick from the burning fire.** Watch what happens now.

Read vs. 4-5

God Remembers to Cleanse Us (slide #4)

In v. 4 we have Joshua representing the sinful people of Israel standing in his filthy garments. Satan is being told to be quiet, essentially. What else does God do to answer Satan the accuser? The angel commands those who are with him to “Remove the filthy garments from Joshua.” In his sin stained condition Joshua isn't able to serve as priest.

But now his garments of filth are removed and the angel says “I have taken away your sin” so he is clearly the one who deals with sin. It is God who removes the sin ultimately by the work of the Messiah who is a servant of all.

Now in case you have been wondering. It is pretty clear that the “Angel of the Lord” is the actually the Lord himself. Look at **v. 3:2** the angel is called “The Lord.” Read the vs. Further supporting this point is the fact that only God alone who can forgive sin so this claim indicates the Angel is actually the Lord himself.

Now interestingly in **v.5** Zechariah speaks and asks that the job be finished. He asks that the angel to replace Joshua's turban and the angel allows it. Now from head to toe the clothing of Joshua with pure vestments is completed. The angel is standing by approving of the Lord's righteousness being put on Joshua. Joshua has been restored as a priest before the Lord. All because of what the Lord has done, for it is God who has done it all by his grace and his mercy.

Just as Joshua the high priest has been dressed in the rich clothing representing righteousness. We likewise as believers in Christ have put on Christ's righteousness.

Ephesians 4:24 (English Standard Version)

24and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Galatians 3:27 (English Standard Version)

27For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

We are re-clothed like Joshua in garments that are washed in the blood of the lamb. And we stand in the righteousness, and holiness of God in Christ. God remembers that we need cleansing, just like Joshua here in chapter 3. God says we are justified by the blood of Christ. I am justified, just as if I never sinned!

Read vs. 3:6-7

God Remembers to Restore Us **(Slide #5)**

In **vs. 6-7** The angel of the Lord gave Joshua his charge. It is an “if”/ “then” conditional statements. There are 2 “ifs” in this challenge. The “ifs” are followed by three “thens.”

- 1.) If you “walk in my ways”- referring to Joshua's personal life and attitude towards the Lord.
- 2.) If you “keep my charge”- referring to Joshua's faithful carrying out his duties as a priest of God.

If you do this, then these 3 results will occur.

- 1.) Israel will govern the temple you “ shall rule my house” says the text in **vs. 7.**
- 2.) Israel will have oversight in the courts of the temple. You shall “have charge over my courts”

Israel should be jealous for the temple being a house of prayer as God intended. 6

3.) Israel will have free access to God. Joshua receives the right to access like those angels who stand around him in Zach's vision. The text says "I will give you a place among those standing here."

This refers to the fact that Israel would have access to God like the other angels appearing in Zach's vision. The priesthood of Israel would be restored. God's calling them as a nation of priests before the whole earth would be realized as God has predicted Israel would be.

If they obey God and walk in his ways, and keep his requirements God will restore Israel to the position he intended for them in the first place. A zeal for the Lord's Temple will appear in Israel. They would have a renewed desire to live exemplary lives for him in his courts before all men. Also they would have free access to God like the angels have. All this is the way God intended from the beginning.

Israel's restoration will be for God's glory and he will see to this prophecy's fulfillment. In the same way our restoration as sons of God when we believe in Christ will be for his glory. Let's look at that now.

Read 3:8-10

God Remembers to Save Us (slide #6)

The greatest news of Zechariah is that "God saves."

This chapter finishes in an amazing fashion by describing the Messiah who is to come. The angel of the Lord announces that they, Joshua and his colleagues will be given a sign. They will be shown something of prophetic significance identifying something that will happen in the future. He speaks of one who is called "my servant, the branch." This is a reference to the Messiah whom the Jews awaited as their ultimate Savior.

A reference to the branch being the Messiah also appears in [Jeremiah 23:5](#), also seen in [Zechariah 6:12](#)

[Jeremiah 23:5](#) (ESV)

5 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

[Zechariah 6:12](#) (English Standard Version)

12 And say to him, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.

[vs. 9](#) Goes on to say that a stone would be set before Joshua. It represents the Messiah again. It is speaking of what the Messiah will accomplish. He will be a stumbling block as he was at his first appearing to the Jews. See [Matt 21:42](#)

[Matthew 21:42](#) (English Standard Version)

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord's doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Jesus was the stone that was smitten, the one Moses struck. He was a stumbling block to the Jews. He was the foundation and chief cornerstone of the church. All of these images are used to describe the stone which is the Messiah.

It says the stone has seven eyes. The seven eyes of the stone represent the fullness of the Spirit or the Godhead, with his all knowing attributes representing his Deity.

The Lord will put an inscription on the stone. It is said that these refer to the wounds of the Messiah etched on his body. Or it is like action of God making a seal on this stone to beautify or commemorate what it represents. The actual meaning is not clear. We do see that the stone represents the Messiah likely in his first coming, which is his incarnation in the gospels.

(slide # 7)

An important phrase in **v. 9** is where it says that "the Lord himself says I will remove the iniquity of this land in **one single day.**" It is not the sin or iniquity of Joshua that the Lord is speaking of here. It is the sin of the whole land. The day of atonement is the most important day of the Jewish calendar. It dealt with the sin of Israel once a year. It was the day God would meet them to deal with the sins of that year. That day's observance would be made obsolete by this one single day. God would deal with sin once and for all. He would remove it in one day!

Who is it that removed the sin of the nation in fact all nations in a single day? It is Jesus the Messiah.

Now for Israel as a nation, it appears that this redemption of the Messiah would be fully realized when Jesus returns for the second time. Then the righteous branch he will deliver Israel. They will see him for who he is the true Jeshua. That is the Hebrew pronunciation of Joshua. The Messiah will rid Israel of all her enemies punishing their sin. In that day the iniquity of the country will be wiped away for those who are God's people.

What about us? What does this mean for us? How has God remembered to save us? How has all of our sin been dealt with on that one day?

Now for we who know of Christ, again hind sight is more clear. Maybe its 20/20 for

9□ many, but for others it is still not crystal clear, with all this talk of salvation in Christ. Maybe you know you don't get all of this.

If you doubt think about this from **2 Cor 5:21**

2 Corinthians 5:21 (English Standard Version)

21For our sake he made him to be sin **who knew no sin**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

At the cross Jesus took on our garments. You know the filthy ones. The ones spattered with the impurities of our sin. He stood before God as it were in our manure spotted garments. He took the guilt of our sins upon himself. Consider Peter's words...

1 Peter 2:24 (English Standard Version)

24He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Now in this condition Jesus could even be accused by Satan as guilty for the sin soiled garments he wore. He seems just like Joshua or rather Jeshua in **Zech 3**. You see Jeshua of Zechariah is a foreshadowing of Jesus. It is nearly a parallel situation.

As a priest of God, Joshua represented the people of Israel. However Jesus was the High Priest and he would represent all mankind not just Israel. Joshua stood guilty because of his sin which he bore in the form of the unclean filthy garments.

But Jesus himself stood blameless before God because he was sinless. He chose to bear the sins of all mankind. Then Jesus took the punishment for sin which is death. He died for all sinners. God accepted Jesus' sacrifice as just payment for the penalty of our sin. God in Christ took away our sins. Then because of Jesus' own righteousness God raised him from the dead. Death and Satan could not keep this righteous man down.

In **Zech 3:9** God said I will take away the iniquity or sin from the land in one day. The day Jesus died for us and in our place, that was the "one day" God was talking about. Jesus obviously is the fulfillment of the prophecy we see played out in **Zech 3**.

Has God remembered you? Yes he has! Listen to this testimony of a WWII halocaust survivor Corrie Ten Boom.

Often I have heard people say, "How good God is! We prayed that it would not rain for our church picnic, and look at the lovely weather!" Yes, God is good when He sends good weather. But God was also good when He allowed my sister, Betsie, to starve to death before my eyes in a German concentration camp. I remember one occasion when I

was very discouraged there. Everything around us was dark, and there was darkness in 10□ my heart. I remember telling Betsie that I thought God had forgotten us. "No, Corrie," said Betsie, "He has not forgotten us. Remember His Word: 'For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.'" Corrie concludes, "There is an ocean of God's love available--there is plenty for everyone. May God grant you never to doubt that victorious love--whatever the circumstances."

The parallels of Jeshua the high priest and Jesus the Messiah are no coincidence. Jeshua clearly represents Jesus. In fact you see, Jesus is the Greek translation of the name Jeshua. Jesus is the final high priest who sacrificed his own life to buy our redemption. For the meaning of the name Jesus and Jeshua is "the Lord saves"

If God remained faithful to Israel, in spite of their rebellion and punishment, what does that say about how God feels about you?

God has remembered us, in Jesus He knows our condition, He cleanses us, He restores us. He will save you! Just return to him and ask!!

bgk 1-10-10

10

2 Peter 1:20-21 (New International Version)

20Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 10:11 (English Standard Version)

11Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.