

Zechariah 3

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[0 : 00] We'll look again at the passage we read in Zechariah, the prophecy of Zechariah in chapter 3, and we'll read just verse 1 there.

Zechariah chapter 3 and verse 1, Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

I don't know if you've ever had the experience of waking up after having had a dream. I'm sure everybody has. Sometimes you are glad that you've woken up, that it was a dream. Other times I think you might, like me, you might think, Oh, I wish I could carry on in this dream. The dream was so lovely.

Well, here we have a man called Zechariah, a prophet. Zechariah, who hadn't just had one dream or vision, but he had eight visions in the space of one night.

From chapter 1, verse 15, right down to the end of chapter 6. There's vision after vision after vision. Very bizarre things he sees.

[1 : 13] The Lord is speaking to him in a very strange way, revealing to him a message that he in turn has to pass on to the Jews. God speaks to Zechariah in a vision.

And whilst we might wake up in the morning sometimes and feel very troubled or relieved, and that's the end of it. For Zechariah, this was something he had to communicate.

This was something that he couldn't just say with himself. He had to go and tell the people what the Lord was saying to him and through him. Who was he speaking to? He was going to speak to the Jews.

Do you remember the Jews had been taken away into captivity in Babylon? And many years had passed. God said, I'm going to bring you back. And God is always faithful to his word.

And about 50 years later, Zerubbabel and Joshua, this Joshua we're speaking of here, by the direction of King Cyrus, sent 50,000 Jews back to Jerusalem.

[2 : 15] And what was the first thing they did? They started rebuilding the temple. The temple of the Lord. The temple of the Lord. It was so important. It was so crucial that they had a place to worship. They began to build and they laid the foundation.

And then they stopped. They stopped because of opposers. And for something like 16 years, that foundation was as safe as it was.

The work stopped. Until Zechariah and Haggai, they're both contemporaries, were sent by God to encourage the people. To speak to the people.

Get building again. Get going again. My temple must be built. And he speaks to them in these visions about these things. But in this vision that Zechariah is given, the Lord is speaking to him about many things.

He's speaking to him about sin. He's speaking to him about Satan. He's speaking to him about salvation. He's speaking to him about his sovereignty. The Lord's sovereignty. And what I want to do today is look at what the Lord is saying to you and me today.

[3 : 26] He wasn't just speaking to Jews hundreds of years ago. Thousands of years ago. What he was saying then is appropriate for you and me today.

And the message that I want to bring to you today is in the form of the three main characters that we find here in verse 1. Of Zechariah 3.

The first character we come across is the accused. Who's the accused? It's Joshua. The Lord, he showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel.

He's an accused. This is like a courtroom setting. How do you know he's an accused? Because Satan is standing beside him, accusing him. Why is he accusing him? Look at verse 3.

Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes. We'll come on to that in a minute. But he is an accused man. Joshua, the accused.

[4 : 28] What do we see about him? First of all, we see that Joshua is standing before the angel of the Lord. Who is the Lord? He is standing before the Lord.

He is standing before the Lord. And that reminds me today that every one of us, in our very real senses, standing before the Lord. Do you know that? Every one of us today is sitting or standing in the presence of the Lord.

He looks down from heaven and sees every one of us. We're all in the presence of this Lord that Zechariah is talking of. To give this vision. So everything that we say and everything that we do is known to him.

Man looks on the outward things, but the Lord looks upon the heart. So he doesn't just see what we are outwardly. He sees what we are inwardly. He knows what we think. He knows what we feel. We are all standing before the Lord.

In the sang of Psalm 14, the Lord looks down on heaven to see if any understand or any who sees God. And so on. It's not as if God decided, well I'll have a look to see what's happening.

[5 : 35] I'll cast a glance or a gaze down to the sons of men or to people to see what they're doing. He's always looking. We are always standing before this Lord.

Consider who this Lord is. He is the Lord God Almighty. He is the Holy One of Israel. He is pure. He is perfect.

He cannot abide soon. He cannot deal or cope or will not tolerate anything that's nice for himself. That is perfect. And you and I, we today in his house, we are sitting before him or standing before this Lord.

Just like Joshua was standing before the Lord. Think of what you think. Oh man. Think of what you think. Think of what you say. Think of what you do.

Maybe nobody else knows. And nobody else sees. And maybe nobody else will ever find out. But then remind yourselves. Yes, but I'm in the presence of this one. I'm standing before the Lord.

[6 : 43] That's the first thing. He's standing before the Lord. He secondly is serving before the Lord. He's a priest. Not just a priest, but a high priest.

He has a special status in God's house, in God's temple, with God's people. In fact, that's probably the proper and most strictly proper application of this standing before the Lord.

He's ministering in the Lord's sight. And again, I'm reminded that all of God's people, we are priests. We do not need a priest. We don't need to go to a priest to get access to God.

Because God says, you, Christian, you are a kingdom and priest unto God. We are priests. Our whole lives are meant to be lived out in dedication to this Lord.

Every moment and second and hour and day and week and year of our life is meant to be lived out in service to Him. We don't have any free time.

[7 : 47] The Bible had no concept of leisure time. Although we have leisure time, of course. But even in our leisure time, it's to be done to the glory of God. We are servants of God.

We are priests to God. We are representing God before the world. As we stand in His presence. How do we measure up?

Those of us who know in the name of Jesus. How do I measure up with how I use my time and my efforts and my energy and my gifts and my skills and my money and everything else?

How do I measure up? When I think everything that I am about should be done and given in service to this Lord.

Because He is my Lord and I am His priest. Joshua is standing before the Lord. He is serving before the Lord. And thirdly, he is sinful before the Lord.

[8 : 47] What do we read in verse 3? He was dressed in filthy clothes. Do you know what that means? Do you know what that means? For a start, no priest in his right mind would ever dream of entering into the presence of God with a stain on his clothing.

Let alone wearing filthy clothes or filthy garments. And this tan, filthy clothes.

Do you know what that means? The picture that conjures up this clothes that have excrement on them. That's what it means. Now if there were any Jew within that, they would be utterly aghast.

They would be aghast. They would not believe it probably. For not just a priest, but a high priest. To be standing in the presence of the Holy One.

His name some Jews would not even utter if he felt it was so holy. With excrement on his garments. But that's what we have.

[10:05] Do you know, Christians through sin. The way I hear some people talk and say, Oh, it's amazing that they're Christian sins. They find it hard to believe that a Christian still sins.

In one sense, yes, it is amazing that it ought not to be. But the fact is, Christians still sin. This Joshua is a Christian. He is one of the Lord's people.

He is a man, a burning streak, snatched from the fire. Clutch from Jerusalem, which was burning so many years ago. He must have been just a young man at that time. He is one of God's people.

And he's standing sinful before the Lord. And so if you're Christians today, let's try and think about, We are cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

We have faith in Jesus. And we are right with God. But at the same time, which is really weird. At the same time, we can stand in the presence of God as if we are clothed with sin, with filth.

[11:09] Think of your sins, Christian. Think of your sins. And imagine them as an excremental covering in the sight of our God before whom one tiny sin is repugnant.

That's what the sins are in the presence of the Holy One. Even though we are being cleansed. Even though we are being made new. Even though we are made right with God. You know, John, the Apostle John, would look at this and think, That does not make sense.

Read 1 John. John says, Anyone who is born of God does not sin. Now he does not you. He knows that Christians still sin. But he's saying, But the Christian has the seed of God in him.

The Christian has a new nature and a new name. He has a new person. He has a new right with God. So, what he's saying is, This is just an anomaly. It doesn't make sense.

And that's the fact. Our sin, Christian friends, is an anomaly. It just ought not to be. It's not our own nature, our own man. That's gone, that's dead.

[12:22] We, we sin in the presence of the Holy One. But I think here, we also have a stark message, a stark reminder to those who are not Christians today.

Those of you today, who are here in church, and here in the Word of God, and thank God that you are here. But without Christ in your life, without Christ as your hope, without Christ as your altar, without just hanging power at work in your life, you stand before this Holy One like this.

With this excremental robe. The Bible tells me, and the Bible tells you, the problem is not just outward, it's inward.

The Bible is very careful, and clever, in how it depicts sin. Jeremiah says, the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Who cannot? The Christian's heart has been made new. The Christian has had his heart of stone taken away, and replaced with the heart of flesh. But you, who are not a Christian, your heart is wicked, it is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked, and outwardly.

[13:49] Isaiah the prophet tells us, that we are like, covered from head to toe, in wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, just symbolic language to see how, to depict how corrupt we are without Jesus.

And all this means that there is an accusation. We stand in the dock, as it were, as accused. For the Christian, it will mean discipline.

The Lord disciplines his people, his children. For the one who's not a Christian today, it means damnation. If you continue without Jesus, us, that's what it will mean.

Because as well as standing before the Lord now, we will one day stand before the Lord. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That doesn't mean just make a quick appearance.

We will all stand there and give an account. So we have this problem of sin, whoever we are.

Depicted for us, represented for us in this one, Joshua, the accused.

[15:03] Then we have secondly, the accuser. Here we have Joshua, I, please stand before the angel and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

Probably in your own footnotes of your Bible, you have there explained quite helpfully for us, Satan means accuser. That's what his name means. We have the accused, then we have the accuser, Satan.

So as we are standing before the Lord, Satan's right there with us. Satan, Satan is our, the accuser is our real living angel, spiritual being.

And he could be here today with us as we sit before the Lord or stand before the Lord. He could be here. He may be elsewhere, but he could be here.

He could be here. He sends his demons, his minions, he sends them throughout the world to do his bidding. And I have no doubt that they are here.

[16:11] So if we are standing before the Lord, so is he or somebody to represent him. And as we are serving before the Lord, then he is there as well.

There's nothing better that he likes to do than to disrupt the service of God. Whatever form that might take, whatever work we are doing for the Lord, Satan loves to disrupt it.

He wants to get in there and distract you and to spoil what you are doing, to spoil the work of God's kingdom, to put an end to the work of God's kingdom if he could. Don't be surprised. Don't be surprised if a good work that is going on in the Lord's name hits trouble.

Don't be surprised. Maybe we should be looking for that more often. It's a sign perhaps that the evil one, Satan, the accuser is getting a bit worried and he has to get in there and start causing some trouble.

And as we're sinful before the Lord, as we stand here today, as we sit here today knowing our sin, which I trust we do, then you know he is right there.

[17:16] Because there's nothing more that he likes than reminding us of just how sinful we are. This accuser, the Bible tells us he is the demonic ruler, the ruler of all the demons.

When the Pharisees heard Jesus speaking, they said in Matthew 12, this fellow doesn't cast their demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. He is the demonic ruler.

The Bible tells us that Satan is a accuser, is a deceiver. Paul tells the church of Corinth, no wonder, Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of right.

He can deceive in that respect as well. He can appear to be an angel of right. He deceives people. This accuser, he is dangerous.

Listen to how Peter describes him. Be sober, be vigilant, be on your lookout. Because your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

[18:20] Believe this, friends, today. This is no playful pussycat. You try and play with a lion, and you see what happens.

You try and stroke a lion's mane. He'll rip you to pieces. And that is the whole point that Peter is making. This is a dangerous demon, a dangerous accuser, as dangerous as a lion.

And then here, the Bible tells us that the denouncer, he accuses the Lord's people. I heard a loud voice from heaven in Revelation 12.

Now salvation and strength, John hears, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ have come for the accuser of our brethren to accuse them before our God.

The knight has been cast down. The point there that's been made is that the devil will be defeated ultimately and completely one day. We know that. But for our purposes he is called an accuser.

[19:27] He is a demonic ruler and a deceiver. He is dangerous. He is a denouncer. And who does he come to accuse? I believe he accuses Christians and those who are not Christians.

Some people believe the devil, the accuser wants nothing to do with you when you are not a Christian. But wants to become a Christian then he has to do with you. I am not so sure.

I am not so sure. But he certainly accuses a Christian. He comes to the Christian and he says just like to Joshua, you're filthy. I see what he was supposed to do in his ears.

Look, Joshua, look at what you are wearing, man. Look at the filth. Smell yourself, man. The presence of the Holy Word.

And I think he comes to us and says exactly the same thing. Look at these sins that you've committed. Look at these sins, man. Yeah, nobody else might not know.

[20:34] You know though. You know how wrong they are, how filthy they are. He says you're filthy and then you come and you'll say you're a fraud. You call yourself a Christian?

Look at what you think. Look at the thoughts you allow to go through your mind. You're just a fraud. You're foolish. He says you're foolish. You're just kidding yourself.

People will know, people will find out sooner or later. And you might argue with them. And you might bring scripture against them, I trust you will.

The promises of scripture are, but you've fallen from grace. The Bible talks about you've fallen, about people falling. Read the epistle to the Hebrews. People falling from grace.

That's what's happened to you. You started out well, but you've not continued well. And you're a failure, he says. You're a failure. And I believe that that's the devil who says that.

[21 : 32] You know, the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin as well. But you know, I think that that's not the spirit, and it is the devil. They accuse her. Because the spirit would never say half of these things to us.

But the devil says it to try and drive us away from the Lord, to drive us away from Jesus, to drive us away from the only answer to your sin, Christian, to your continuing sin.

The spirit would never do that. He does not do that. But the accuser does. He'll do everything in his power, and with his persuasion to loose you from your moorings, if he could, by focusing your mind on your sin.

Does that make sense to Christians today? Can you say, I know that in my life. I know that kind of thought in my experience. I believe you do.

But it's not just for you, it's not just to me. That he comes. The accuser comes to the one who's not a Christian. I think he says two things, two extreme statements.

[22 : 52] He maximizes sin, he minimizes sin. He maximizes your sin, he minimizes your sin. He'll say you are filthy.

Christ does not need somebody like you on his side. Christ doesn't need a female like you in his army. Christ doesn't need somebody like you to let him down. Look at your sin, look at your life, you're a disgrace.

You can't come to Christ, he doesn't need you. I mean, if you did, you'd make a mess of it all. You are, in fact, filthy. Or else, he'll say this, you're fine, you're okay, you're fine.

I know Christians, he'll say, I know Christians, it's so worse than you do. You don't need Christ. You see what he does? Christ doesn't need you, no, no, no, you don't need Christ.

You're that big sinner, you're that bad a person. My unconverted friend today, does that mean any bells? Do these cells ever go through your head?

[23 : 56] It must be one or the other. Christ won't have you or I'll let him go, or I don't need Christ. But the accuser comes alongside us, just as he did with Joshua, and then he speaks in these ways.

So we have an accused person, Joshua, who is hearing the accuser speak and tell him about his sin. What are we to do with our sins? Well, here's the cross.

Whether we're a Christian or not today, the answer is the same. And it's all found in the third character in this first verse. Who is the angel of the Lord?

We have the accused Joshua, the accuser of Satan, and then they quote us, the angel of the Lord. He can deal with our sins.

Who is this angel of the Lord? Read the Bible, check up cross references to the angel of the Lord. And you'll find that he is sovereign, he speaks as of his God, and then at other times he speaks as of his separate from God, to save from God.

[25 : 09] Here it's the one and the same person speaking, the Lord and the angel of the Lord. And yet sometimes they seem to be distinct, other times they seem to be the same person. The burning bush, the angel spoke to Hagar and to Abraham when he was going to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Look at these verses for and see how the angel is standing speaking as the Lord and distinct from the Lord. Who do we know in the Bible who can speak as God and yet say he's distinct from God? There's only one. That is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe the angel of the Lord is the Lord Jesus before he came into this world.

He reappears and he is the only one that can deal with this very problem of sin. He is a sovereign one. He is separate.

He is speaking. He is speaking here. And he first of all deals with Satan. The Lord rebuke you. The Lord said to Satan in verse 2, this is the angel speaking.

[26 : 18] The Lord rebuke you, Satan. You see, only he has the power to rebuke Satan ultimately. We are weak in the sight of Satan.

We are weak before him because he is strong. But the Lord, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, he can rebuke him. The Lord rebuke you. He has power to rebuke Satan, to tell him to go, to turn him back, to haunt him, to hold him, to put him on a chain.

Only he has that power. The Lord speaks and then he rebukes Satan. Why? Why does he rebuke him? Because the Christian, Joshua, here, is a selected one.

He is a chosen one. The Lord, he says, who has chosen Jerusalem and rebuke you, is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?

Do you see what he is saying? He is one of mine who are plucked from destruction in Jerusalem. And for every Christian, the Lord plucks us from the brink of destruction.

[27 : 25] He has plucked us from the fire of hell. That's what he's done. He's plucked us as branches or sticks in the burning. That's why he rebuked Satan.

He cannot allow Satan to have his way with us. God He will He will be He will be saved by him. And because of that, the Lord, this angel of the Lord, is sensitive to every one of our needs.

Look at chapter 2 and verse 8. This is what the Lord Almighty says, We are as the apple of the Lord's eye.

We are precious to him. He will never let anything happen to us beyond what he wants, beyond what is good for us. He will never let the accuser go beyond what the Lord wishes him to do with us. The Lord is speaking and he rebukes Satan. He deals with Satan, but then he deals with sin. Then he deals with sin.

[28 : 42] He doesn't dismiss it. He doesn't say there's no sin here. He doesn't minimize it. It doesn't matter. He just deals with sin.

He deals with the sin of Joshua. And he deals with your sin. And he alone will deal with all our sins. With your sin, with my sin, whoever we are today.

And what we have here in verse 3 and verse 4 is Old Testament language to describe what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, does with our problem of sin.

Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said, the Lord Jesus said to those who are standing before him, take off his filthy clothes. Then he said to Joshua, see, I have taken away your sin and I will put rich garments on you.

In Old Testament terms, in Old Testament language, what we have is what Jesus in the New Testament did for us. For the sinner and for the saint.

[29 : 54] I use these terms carefully, for the sinner and for the saint. Every saint is still a sinner, but not every sinner today is a saint.

But he deals with us in these categories, if you like. What does he do? How does he deal with your sins, sinner? You who have yet to come to Jesus to know his saving grace.

On Calvary's cross, cross, when Jesus hung there on that cross, and he cried out, it is finished, a great transaction was taking place for all who put their trust in this Jesus.

A great transaction was taking place. This filthy robe that we were discussing, that we're talking about here, for you sinner, is taken if you will trust in Jesus and put on him and his robe of righteousness, says, his robe of planting, his robe of being right in God's sight, is taken from him and then put on you.

That is what we have here. Take off that filthy robe. Put clean garments on him. If you trust in the Lord Jesus, that is how your sin is gained for.

[31 : 15] By the angel of the Lord. His rightness before God becomes yours. Your sin excrement of garments and all before God becomes his.

That is why he cried on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Paul disguised it in this way. He made him renew no sin to be sin for us, so that we might be made the righteousness of God, right before God, in him.

This transaction has taken place. And you know what? Joshua is silent. Not a word.

It's the angel, the son of God who does it all. What do I say to you then today, sinner, or person who is without Jesus? We trust in this angel of the Lord.

You'll never deal with your sin in any other way. you can never blot out your iniquity. You can never get rid of the stench from your sins. The stench that continually comes before God.

[32 : 30] Only the Son of God can. Trust him. Trust him. And he will take away that sin. He will make you right in the sight of God.

And if you are right in the sight of God, then you are blessed. and all is well. But what about those of us who are Christians and we go on sinning?

Do we need a new robe of righteousness? Do we need Jesus to die a second time? No, not at all. I believe the closest analogy we have in the New Testament to this for the Christian, and this quickly speaking a Christian we're talking about, is the parable of the prodigal son.

The prodigal went away. He was a son of the father before he went. He was a bass slider I believe. And he went far away.

He went really far away. And he was filthy, wasn't he? And then he came to his senses and he came back. Did he try and hang himself up? Did he try and work out his own sin?

[33 : 39] Did he try and work out his own disobedience? No, he said, I know where I need to go. I need to come back to my father. And he comes back. A son comes back to his father.

And what does the father do? When he sees him afar off, he doesn't think about what a Jewish father is, he runs to his son. And he puts upon him the tokens of sonship, which show that this is not a slave, this is not an outcast, this is not somebody with the family.

Here's a family member. He puts a bass robe on him, he puts a ring on him, he puts sandals on his feet. He clothes him in that garment, that robe, to say, son, welcome back.

I've accepted you back, of course I have. You're one of mine. You are my son. I think that's what we have depicted in Old Testament figurative language here.

We must every day, Christian, trust the Lord for continued and continual forgiveness. Leave this section in the shorter capitalism on justification about continual forgiveness.

[34 : 47] It's excellent. We're talking about a continual need to come back to God that he will cleanse us anew, forgive us afresh. And what does he do with his sins?

For sinners and for sins alike. What does he do with him? He pardons iniquity, passes over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage.

He will have compassion on his people. He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. I love that picture.

He will cast all our sins, Micah 7 and 18, into the depths of the ocean. And who can plumb the depths of the ocean? None of us. We have no right to go and dredge up our sins again.

Once he has dealt with them, once we take them to him, once he reclothes us or clothes us for the first time, they're done with. They're gone.

[35 : 53] And as one of the puritans of old has said, he could just sign that that place where your sin and my sin is cast into the depths of the ocean, which says no fishing.

We have no right to go there. this angel of the Lord, and this I finish, he is sovereign, he is separate, he is speaking, and then finally, he is sending.

In verse 7, this is what the Lord Almighty says, if you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my court and so on.

When the Lord cleanses our people, saves them for himself, he then sends them. We are not saved by our works or by what we do, we are saved so that we can go and live a different life.

We are hated of sin, when we know sin is in the sight of God. We are sent out with a new motivation, a new drive, to be with us in once and for all.

[36 : 59] And that's what he does with us today. When he deals with our sin, he sends us out there to be a holy people, to work witness for him, to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly before our God.

May he in his grace grant that be a truth for everyone. Let's pray together.