

Zechariah 3, 5

Monday, June 04, 2012
8:13 PM

Passages to Read

1. Deuteronomy 28
2. Hebrews 10

Introduction

a. Sermon Introduction

- The saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words."
- Zechariah 3, as we will see in the passage, is such a picture, it is a 'sign'
 - Zechariah 3 is a detailed picture of the courtroom of heaven
 - We're also going to look at Zechariah 5, which deals with some of the same themes as Zechariah 3
 - Or, perhaps we would say Zechariah 5 fills in some holes in Zechariah 3, so considering them together, we see the whole of the courtroom of heaven
- The picture in Zechariah 3 is definitely worth a thousand words
 - As we look through Zechariah 3 and 5, we going to actually see three powerful pictures
 - ◆ We're going to see how Zechariah 3 and 5 describe the current situation that the people of Zechariah's day faced
 - ◆ We're going to see how Zechariah 3 and 5 point us to a greater reality in Christ
 - ◆ We're going to see how Zechariah 3 and 5 teaches us about our situation and the promises of the last days
 - ◆ In other words, Zechariah 3 and 5 follow the immediate, redemptive and consummative fulfillment motif that we've seen throughout Zechariah so far
 - Zechariah 3 and Zechariah 5 are part of Zechariah's eight night visions (#4, 6 and 7 respectively)
 - Generally, the purpose of the night visions is to spur the people on to continue the rebuilding of the temple
 - These three visions are part of that theme, but in a slightly different way
 - ◆ These three visions point out the theological realities associated with the rebuilding of the temple
 - ◆ They are strongly focused on what the rebuilding of the temple points to

b. Read Zechariah 3 and Zechariah 5

c. Proposition and Outline

- Proposition - The picture of Joshua points us to a greater high priest and calls us to see redemption and be slaves of righteousness and not of sin
- Outline
 - 1) The Priesthood's Problem
 - 2) Sin's Sentence
 - 3) Sin's Solution
 - 4) The Purified Priesthood
 - 5) A Greater Priest and a Greater Temple
 - 6) A Promised Blessing

1. The Priesthood's Problem(3:1, 3)

- a. **Zechariah's vision in chapter 3 starts with an interesting scene before the courtroom of heaven**
 - i. Joshua, the high priest who represents his people, appears before God
 - ii. Satan, the great accuser of the people of God, makes an accusation against Joshua
 - iii. A description of Joshua is given that substantiates Satan's accusations

- b. **This is a big problem!**
 - i. The high priest had to be perfectly ritually clean to appear before God
 - ii. If the high priest appeared in the Holy of Holies and was not perfectly ritually clean, he would be struck down by God
 - iii. Yet here we have a picture of an even greater throne room, the heavenly throne room of God, and Joshua appears there in soiled garments
 - iv. Joshua should rightly be struck down by God, Satan's accusations should be taken seriously
 - v. And if Joshua is struck down, then the people of God are without hope, their sins will stand before God

- c. **This is even a bigger problem than we might understand**
 - i. The description of Joshua's garments are not that they are a little dirty
 - ii. Literally, it means that they are covered in dung or feces
 - iii. It's like Joshua rolled around in a pig pen and then came into the courtroom of God
 - iv. Or it's even more like Joshua fell into the outhouse and forgot to change his clothes before he came before the presence of God
 - v. Joshua isn't a little dirty, he is completely unclean, there is nothing he can do to defend himself from the accusations of Satan

2. Sin's Sentence (5:1-11)

a. In Chapter 5, we see the full import of the soiled priesthood's problem

- i. Most of the eight night visions are full of encouragement, edification and admonishment
- ii. But two visions detail judgment against sin, both of these are in chapter five and are closely related
- iii. These visions tell the people what continued sin will lead to, but, combined with the description in chapter 3, it tells what doom they are already under

b. Wickedness Judged (5:1-4)

- i. Zechariah sees a scroll that enters the house of the wicked
- ii. The scroll is the word of God exacting its promised vengeance on sin
 - 1) The scroll was written on both sides, just like God's law given on Sinai
 - a) Exodus 32:15 - Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written. The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.
 - 2) The scroll bears judgment against both halves of the tablets
 - a) It brings judgment on those who sin against their neighbor
 - i) Verse 5 - everyone who steals shall be cleaned out according to what is on one side
 - ii) Stealing was a violation of the eighth commandment - you shall not steal
 - b) It brings judgment against those who sin against God
 - i) Verse 5 - everyone who swears falsely shall be cleaned out according to what is on the other side
 - ii) Swearing falsely was a violation of primarily the fourth commandment - you shall not take the Lord's name in vain
 - iii) To swear falsely was to take an oath in God's name in vain
 - 3) The scroll brings the curse of the covenant to its final fulfillment
 - a) Deuteronomy 28:15-20 - "But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. "The LORD will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me.
 - 4) So, the scroll represents the word of God executing judgment on sin
- iii. The scroll utterly destroys the wicked
 - 1) Verse 4 - I will send it out, declares the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of him who swears falsely by my name. And it shall remain in his house and consume it, both timber and stones.
 - 2) The picture is of a final judgment
 - 3) The curse is brought in such a way that it totally consumes the evildoers down to the wood and stones of their houses

c. Wickedness Removed (5:5-11)

- i. Zechariah then sees a basket being carried out of the city
- ii. The basket represents the evil of the people
 - 1) Verse 6 - And he said, "This is their iniquity in all the land."
 - 2) Verse 8 - And he said, "This is Wickedness."
 - a) Side note - we shouldn't take too much from wickedness being symbolized as a woman, since the messengers of God in this vision are also symbolized as women
 - b) The reason wickedness is symbolized as a woman is probably because intermarriage with the people around them was a significant sin of the people during the rebuilding of the second temple
- iii. Two things happen to the basket that are symbolic
 - 1) First, the woman that represents wickedness is unable to get out
 - a) Verse 8 - And he thrust her back into the basket, and thrust down the leaden weight on its opening.
 - b) This represents the finality of the judgment against sin - there is no escape for wickedness, it is utterly trapped
 - 2) Second, the basket is carried away to Babylon
 - a) Verse 9-11 - Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, two women coming forward! The wind was in their wings. They had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven. Then I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they taking the basket?" He said to me, "To the land of Shinar, to build a house for it. And when this is prepared, they will set the basket down there on its base."
 - b) This represents the removal of sin in several ways
 - i) It represents cleansing of the land and people - the wickedness that dwelt in the people of God in the promised land would be removed and the land and people would be clean
 - ii) It represents potential exile - the wickedness of the people had resulted in their exile to Babylon before, if they continued in wickedness, they would be exiled again
 - iii) These two representations are in tension with each other
 - One. The first seems hopeful - the people would be cleansed of sin
 - Two. The second seems hopeless - to cleanse from sin, the people would be judged
 - iv) It represents the final removal of sin
 - One. Eventually, sin will be removed so fully and finally that it will never return to the city of God
 - Two. It will be removed to the city of destruction - as we discussed before, Babylon represents the place of God's wrath, so sin is carried away from the City of Blessing to the City of Wrath

d. Chapter five is a terrible judgment against sin

- i. But, it is not a chapter without hope, in fact, the righteous should rejoice in the judgment and removal of sin
 - 1) Proverbs 11:10 - When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish there are shouts of gladness.
 - 2) There is hope that the evil that opposes the righteous will one day be finally removed
 - 3) I had some problems understanding this chapter because it is clearly a judgment of sin, but it has a hopeful tone
 - 4) The hopeful tone is for the righteous, those that will be freed from sin once it is judged and removed
- ii. The only problem is that none of us fall into that category - the righteous that can rejoice at the judgment and removal of sin
 - 1) We saw this in Chapter 3 - even the high priest is totally covered in his iniquity
 - 2) What hope do the rest of us have? Romans 3:23 - For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

3. Sin's Solution (3:2, 4-5)

a. The gracious choice (verse 2)

- i. In verse 2 Satan's is rebuked for bringing an accusation
 - 1) Satan was not wrong - as we saw before, Satan's accusation was well founded
 - 2) Satan was rebuked, not because he was wrong, but because God had chosen Joshua
- ii. Sin's solution begins with God's gracious choice to choose a people that are immune to the accusations (even the true accusations) of Satan
 - 1) This is the core of the Doctrine's of Grace - salvation begins with God's gracious choice
 - 2) We see that Joshua is unable to defend himself, he is guilty, but God chooses him, he is a brand plucked from the fire, he is a member of Jerusalem chosen by God

b. The great exchange (verses 4-5)

- i. The gracious choice of God to be merciful is not a miscarriage of justice though
 - 1) God could never do such a thing
 - 2) So God's gracious choice requires God to deal with sin somehow
 - 3) Thus we see the great exchange introduced
- ii. First, the polluted garments are removed
 - 1) Verse 4 - 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."
 - 2) This is how Satan's accusations are destroyed, the accusation is made false
 - 3) The iniquity that Satan accused is removed
- iii. Second, clean garments are granted
 - 1) Verse 5 - So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments.
 - 2) Zechariah actually participates at this point in the vision - he notices that Joshua doesn't just need his soiled garments removed, he needs clean garments
 - 3) So, clean garments of the priesthood are put on Joshua
 - 4) Thus Joshua is again ritualistically clean before God - representing that he has a righteous standing before the Holy Judge
- iv. But, again, this cannot be done in a legally facetious way
 - 1) So, we see a vague glimpse in Zechariah of the solution of God
 - 2) Verse 5 - And the angel of the LORD was standing by.
 - 3) Not a lot is said about this right here in Zechariah 3, but this cryptic statement points us to the truths of the rest of Scripture
 - 4) For the great exchange to occur, someone needed to take the filthy garments and someone needed to produce clean garments
 - 5) So, the angel of the Lord, who we saw represents Christ back in Chapter 2, is standing by
 - 6) Christ came to live a perfect life, providing the clean garments that were needed, and died a sinner's death, taking on Himself the soiled garments
 - 7) II Corinthians 5:21 - For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

c. The gracious choice and the great exchange purify the priesthood of God

- i. God unilaterally provided a solution for sin's soiling

4. The Purified Priesthood (3:6-7)

a. The purified priesthood is charged to its task

- i. Verse 7 - If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge
- ii. We see that the great exchange is not a reason to abandon the laws of God - it does not release us from the claims of righteousness
- iii. Instead, the great exchange frees one to follow the laws of God, to fulfill the charge
- iv. The soiled priests could never fulfill the charge, they could never keep God's statutes - it would be impossible
- v. But, having been purified, the charge is reinstated - the role of the priesthood is restored
- vi. This is a blessing and not a drudgery - God says to the priesthood, "Yes, you can be my priests."

b. The purified priesthood is promised its position

- i. Verse 7 - 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.
- ii. Not only is the priesthood's task reinstated, the position of the priesthood is also reinstated
- iii. The two promises are the rights of the high priest in the temple

5. A Greater Priest and a Greater Temple (3:8-9)

a. Two Promises

- i. The Branch - The Messianic King
 - 1) Verse 8 - 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.
 - 2) This is the continued promise of a Messianic descendant of David
 - a) Isaiah 11:1 - There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
 - b) Jeremiah 33:14-16 - "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'
 - c) We see that the Messianic descendant of David would restore the people of God and provide their righteousness - He is the character that will bring the vision above to pass
- ii. The Stone - The Messianic Presence
 - 1) Verse 9 - 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.
 - a) Two things here - an cornerstone, and the engraving
 - 2) The cornerstone is another Messianic promise
 - a) The stone set before Joshua is likely the cornerstone of the temple that was laid in His presence
 - b) But the cornerstone that was set before Joshua represented something greater, a Messianic hope for the truly restored temple
 - c) Psalm 118:22 - The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.
 - d) Isaiah 28:16 - Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'
 - 3) The engraving is a salvific promise
 - a) Exodus 28:21 - There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel. They shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes.
 - b) Isaiah 49:16 - Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.
 - c) The engraving on the stone promised that the 'Cornerstone Messiah' would remember His people before God

b. The Christological (or redemptive) interpretation of the passage

- i. So far, we've looked at the immediate interpretation of the passage - what it had to do with the people of that day
 - 1) But, since it is clearly labeled as a sign, now we are going to consider the redemptive interpretation - what does this have to do with Christ?
- ii. The condition of the priesthood
 - 1) In Zechariah 3, we see that the human priesthood, the Aaronic priesthood had failed, it was soiled and unable to represent the people before God
 - 2) But, Christ is the greater priest that is perfectly clean and represents His people before God perfectly
 - 3) Hebrews 7:26-28 - For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.
- iii. Sin's Sentence
 - 1) In Zechariah 5, we see that the people of God are liable to the judgment of God
 - 2) But Christ is the greater high priest who stands before the people of God and absorbs the judgment on their behalf
 - 3) II Corinthians 5:21 - For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- iv. Removing sin
 - 1) In Zechariah 3, we see that the human priesthood is unable to atone for sin, that God must do it
 - 2) But Christ is the greater priest that by His blood cleanses from sin
 - 3) Hebrews 1:3 - He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
- v. Clothing with righteousness
 - 1) In Zechariah 3, we see that human priesthood has no righteousness to offer and must accept a foreign righteousness to stand before God
 - 2) But Christ is the greater priest who not only brings His own righteousness but is the one who grants righteousness to His people
 - 3) Revelation 7:13-14 - Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
- vi. The charge and the promise
 - 1) In Zechariah 3, we see that the human priesthood has to have its role and position reinstated, and must be reminded to keep the covenant once again
 - 2) But Christ is the greater priest to whom these statements are only promises - He has walked in God's way and kept God's charge, therefore He has been given the right to rule the courts of God and the right of access before God's throne
 - 3) Hebrews 10:12-13 - But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.
- vii. So, Christ is the greater fulfillment of this passage
 - 1) Not by being exactly like Joshua (a true antitype)
 - 2) But by being the opposite of Joshua
 - 3) The failure of Joshua emphasizes the perfection of Christ

6. A promised blessing (3:10)

- a. The chapter ends with an apocalyptic ("In that day") blessing
- b. The blessing is the fruitfulness of Israel (the people of God) and the spread of the blessing to the nations (the neighbors)
- c. Thus, we are the recipients of this passage
 - i. We are those who are living in the last 'apocalyptic' days
 - ii. We are those who have been invited under Israel's vine and fig tree
- d. Therefore, there is also a consummative interpretation of this passage that applies to us
 - i. The Priesthood's Problem
 - 1) We are in the position of Joshua - Joshua the high priest represents all of the people of God
 - 2) But we have, like Joshua, been completely soiled by sin and face Satan's accusation
 - a) Romans 3:23 - All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
 - ii. Sin's Sentence
 - 1) Being identified with the soiled priesthood, we too are liable to the judgments of God
 - a) Romans 1:18 - For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men
 - 2) We are the ones who ought to be destroyed by the scroll and carried away to the place of wrath
 - iii. Sin's Solution
 - 1) But, we are the ones who are chosen by God to be the New Jerusalem, the branch plucked from the fire
 - a) Ephesians 2:4-5 - But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--- by grace you have been saved
 - 2) And, through faith in Christ, our sins can be washed away and new garments are given to us that we might appear before the presence of God
 - a) Acts 22:16 - And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'
 - b) Revelation 3:18 - I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.
 - iv. The Charge and the Promise
 - 1) We too are the final recipients of the priestly charge
 - a) Having been found righteous in Christ, we can be priests before our God
 - i) I Peter 2:5 - you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ
 - b) But, we must keep the charge of God, our cleansing is not means to sin, but means to righteousness
 - i) Romans 5:15-23 - What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- 2) We too are the final recipients of the promised position
 - a) We are the ones who are given the right of position before God
 - b) Hebrews 10:19-22 - Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
 - c) Note again that this is a conditional promise in Zechariah
 - i) This means, without fulfilling the charge of God, we do not receive the promise of God
 - ii) This doesn't degenerate into a theology of works, though
 - One. Christ has fulfilled this condition just as much as He has fulfilled every other condition - He fulfills it by working it in us
 - Two. But, because He has fulfilled the condition does not mean we do not need to fulfill the condition, it means we will fulfill the condition - the condition's outworking in our lives is promised

Conclusion

- a. We saw four pictures in or around Joshua this morning
 - i. The Priesthood's Problem - Soiled Garments
 - ii. Sin's Sentence - Total Destruction
 - iii. Sin's Solution - A Gracious Choice and a Great Exchange
 - iv. The Purified Priesthood - Charged to the Task and Promised a Position
- b. We saw that these four pictures applied not only to Joshua and the people of his day, but also to Christ
 - i. The Priesthood's Problem - Christ solves by being the perfect high priest
 - ii. Sin's Sentence - Christ solves by absorbing God's wrath
 - iii. Sin's Solution - Christ provides through His life and death the great exchange
 - iv. The Purified Priesthood - Christ has fulfilled the task and has the right of position before God
- c. We saw that these four pictures also applied to us
 - i. The Priesthood's Problem - We too are soiled by sin
 - ii. Sin's Sentence - We too are liable to God's righteous judgment
 - iii. Sin's Solution - We can participate in the great exchange through faith in Christ
 - iv. The Purified Priesthood - If we participate in the great exchange, we are given a task and promised a position
- d. So, what do we leave with?
 - i. See the glorious picture of the great exchange and rest in the righteousness of Christ
 - ii. Hear the charge and remember that Christ has accomplished all of the requirements on our behalf, but He is accomplishing some of them in us
 - iii. Therefore, because we have experienced the great exchange, we ought to present ourselves as slaves of righteousness and not of lawlessness