

In Spite Of

Zechariah 3:1-7

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A. Accused (vs. 1):

1. Then he showed me Joshua – Joshua was under complete scrutiny before the angel of the Lord. He was inspected against all that the Word of God stood for.

a) Zechariah was a post-exilic priest born in Babylon (Neh. 12: 1, 16; Ezra 5:1; 6:14).

b) He began his ministry two months after Haggai in Oct./Nov. 520 BC.

c) Haggai's ministry was to motivate the people to build, whereas Zechariah's ministry was to create inward spiritual change. Haggai's ministry responded to the physical; Zechariah responded as a priest should to the spiritual side of the exiles.

d) The central purpose of the prophecies of Zechariah is to show the glorification of Zion, the overthrow of Israel's enemies, and the universal reign of the Messiah. In fact, all the promises of Israel's glorious future would yet be realized in the distant future. It was also to rebuke the people of Judah and to encourage and motivate them to complete the building of the temple.

e) Joshua, the sitting high priest in this period, shared leadership in the community with Zerubbabel. Though Zerubbabel had a legitimate Davidic pedigree and, therefore, a claim to the throne, the fact that Yehud was under Persian rule necessarily restricted his role. Zerubbabel, therefore, served as governor, and as part of the imperial system, the governor's range of powers was constricted. As a high priest, Joshua may have enjoyed control over resources and parts of the community that a governor could not access, thus making it critical that both these individuals needed to cooperate on the rebuilding effort. There are no contemporary extra biblical references to Joshua, but in the biblical accounts, his grandfather, Seraiah, had been

executed by Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:18–21); Joshua is therefore also likely related to Ezra (see Ezra 7:1).^[1]

f) A polluted priesthood had brought woe upon Israel; it needed purging (cf. Ezk 22:26). Zechariah saw Joshua, the high priest, in his official and representative capacity, standing before the Angel of the Lord in the performance of his priestly ministry. Suddenly, he found himself the object of the accusations of satan. If he were cast off, the nation also would be rejected; if he were cleared, the nation would be accepted. satan was standing at his right hand. Satan appeared to lodge his condemnation (cf. Ps 109:31)^[2]

2. Standing – Joshua, the High Priest, stood in an upright manner as in an official capacity before the angel of the Lord.

a) Here, the word “standing” is practically technical for priestly ministry (cf. Deut. 10:8; 2 Chron. 29:11). This implication concerning the deity of the Angel of the Lord and His identity as the pre-incarnate Christ is more explicitly indicated in Zechariah 3:2 where He speaks under the title of “LORD” and yet distinguishes Himself *from* the LORD in addressing satan (cf. comments on 1:11). This identification is further supported in 3:4 where His action is virtually that of forgiving sins.^[3]

a) No one was allowed to sit before God.

b) Joshua standing before the Lord demonstrates a willingness to be accountable for the sins of Israel. His willingness to accept the mercy of God reflects the heart of the matter. God’s matchless grace causes us to disrespect Him (Romans 6:1-2).

3. Before – All of this took place in the presence of the Lord, which means ultimate respect for whom the angel of the Lord is required.

a) The scene of this vision was a heavenly courtroom where Joshua, the representative of the people of Judah, was standing before the “angel of the Lord” while being accused by satan. The “stick that has been snatched from a fire” (3:2) referred to Judah, delivered from the “fire” of the Babylonian captivity. The “filthy” clothing (3:3) symbolized the pollution of sin that needed to be removed (cf. Isa. 4:4).^[4]

4. Angel of the Lord – The Angel of the Lord, who functions in the nature of God and as God’s representative, operates with the authority of God while scrutinizing the activity of Joshua the High Priest.

a) There are several names used for the Lord in this passage:

- Angel of the Lord – incarnate Christ (vs. 1,6).
- The Lord (vs. 2-2xs).
- The Lord of Host (vs. 7).

5. Satan – satan, who is the prince of the air (Eph. 2:2), full of pride (1 Tim. 3:6), who does everything possible to seduce men (1 Chr. 21:2; 2 Sam. 24:1) and

adversary of all those who are saved; major focus is to be accuser of those who are saved (Luke 22:31-32; John 12:31; Rev. 12:10).

a) Satan—the *Hebrew* term meaning “adversary” in a law court: as *devil* is the *Greek* term, meaning *accuser*. Messiah, on the other hand, is “advocate” for His people in the court of heaven’s justice (1 Jn 2:1).^[5]

6. Right hand – satan took a position of honor and strength, which exposes his level of pride when accusing Joshua. He felt confident, especially since this is a position of strength, that he can win his accusation.

a) Satan took the place of honor near Joshua when accusing him as if he had all the rights to gain access to Joshua.

7. To accuse him – satan, who has animosity towards those who are saved, addresses God with bias against Joshua, the high priest.

8. The Lord –The Lord who has all authority and power, who sincerely desires to have a relationship with His people, spoke up.

9. Satan – satan, who is the prince of the air (Eph. 2:2), full of pride (1 Tim. 3:6), who does everything possible to seduce men (1 Chr. 21:2; 2 Sam. 24:1) and adversary of all those who are saved. His major focus is to be the accuser of those who are saved (Luke 22:31-32; John 12:31; Rev. 12:10).

a) Messiah called down the rebuke of the Father on satan, not because Israel was righteous, not because satan had exaggerated his claims, not because the

nation had already suffered in the fire of exile, but because God had made an eternal and immutable choice of Israel out of love for her (cf. Rom 9:16; 11:5).^[6]

10. Rebuke – The Lord rejected satan, in a detestable manner, for the claim he brought concerning Joshua, the high priest. The Lord, who is just, has no taste for evil and unjust claims brought before Him.

a) Then the Angel of the Lord rebuked satan and acquitted Joshua, not because satan's accusations were false, but because of God's gracious love for and choice of His people, Israel. Joshua was functioning here in his high priestly capacity as representative of the nation Israel.^[7]

11. Rebuke – We are protected by our commitment to live righteously because the Lord will not tolerate slander being brought before Him (Job 1; Psalm 34:7-9).

a) The conclusive answer. If the issue rested on Jerusalem's merit or demerit, condemnation must be the award, but Jehovah's "choice" (Jn 15:16) rebuts satan's charge against Jerusalem (Zec 1:17; 2:12; Ro 8:33, 34, 37), represented by Joshua (compare in the great atonement, Le 16:6–20, &c.), not that she may continue in sin, but be freed from it (Zec 3:7).^[8]

12. The Lord – The Lord is sovereign and decisive. Once He decides His relationship with Israel, there is nothing that is going to change it. It is because of

His covenant that everyone is included in His covenant benefits from His covenantal relationship.

a) Herein, God implies that His acquittal of Jerusalem is not that He does not recognize her sin (vv. 3, 4, 9), but that, having punished her people for it with a seventy years' captivity, He, on the ground of His *electing* love, has delivered her from the fiery ordeal; and when once He hath begun a deliverance, as in this case, He will perfect it; and though He chastise temporarily the elect for their transgressions, "nevertheless His loving-kindness He will not utterly take away," because of His everlasting covenant with their Head, the Divine Son of David (Ps. 89:30–35; Phil. 1:6).^[9]

13. Rebuke – By repeating His rejection of satan's accusations makes the Lord's rejection even more detestable and emphatic.

14. Delivers – The Lord continues, after rebuking satan, that he snatches Israel out of their anguish so that they are no longer doomed for hell. In other words, satan has no claim on them.

B. Back to New (vs. 3-4):

1. Standing before – Joshua was in filthy garments when he came before the altar of the Lord. To mention twice that Joshua was standing reminds us that he was in an officially established capacity before the Lord God.

2. He spoke and said – The Lord, after addressing satan now continuously, as if He does not intend to stop, verbally speaks directly to Joshua.

3. Standing before Him – By repeatedly standing before the Lord, the author wants to make sure that we know that Joshua, despite Satan's attacks, is still in the presence of the Lord in an official capacity even though he is wearing filthy garments. In other words, as powerful as Satan may be, his slanderous accusations have found no place before the Lord against Joshua. The Lord is just.

4. Saying remove – To remove is not just to take off the garments; the word also means that whatever caused Joshua to wear these filthy garments, he is now commanded to change. All those standing before the Lord were commanded to remove the garments from Joshua.

5. Filthy – Joshua's garment represented how defiled the priesthood was during this time. By using the word filthy, the author is being as descriptive as possible because it means that the garments were foul with human excrement smeared over them, making Joshua ceremonially unclean.

a) The acquittal took the form of removing Joshua's filthy clothes, representing his sin and guilt and that of the nation. Joshua was then clothed with festal or rich garments, speaking of the purity associated with his forgiveness, and a clean turban, possibly suggesting the joy of his reinstatement into the priesthood. This symbolized the forgiveness and restoration of the nation Israel as a priestly nation (cf. Ex. 19:6).^[10]

6. See – By removing Joshua's filthy garments, God vividly displays, right before Satan, that He has commanded a comprehensive intellectual understanding of all that is taking place in the priesthood and is completely committed to taking care of it.

7. Taken your iniquity away – The total of all the past depraved sins of Israel (not some of them, but all) that deserve punishment was removed while Joshua, the high priest, stood before the Lord.

8. Clothed with festive robes – What is so powerful is that once the Lord removed Joshua's filthy garments, nothing of the past is represented before the Lord anymore.

10. Then I said – The Lord persistently kept saying to those standing before Him to put a clean turban on Joshua's head.

a) *Put a clean turban on his head* – Thus reinstating him into his high-priestly function so that Israel once again has a divinely authorized priestly mediator. On the front of the turban were the words: "Holy of the Lord" (Ex. 28:36; 39:30; 14:20).

11. Angel of the Lord – The Angel of the Lord, who functions in the nature of God and as God's representative, operates with the authority of God while scrutinizing the activity of Joshua, the High Priest who witnessed all that was taking place.

12. Standing before Him – Along with Joshua, satan, and maybe a host of angels, the Angel of the Lord, in an official capacity, stood in the presence of the Lord as all this was taking place.

a) **angel of ... Lord stood by**—the Divine Angel had been sitting (the posture of a judge, Da 7:9); now He "stands" to see that Zechariah's prayer be executed, and then to give the charge (Zec 3:6, 7).^[11]

C. Come Close (vs. 6-7):

1. Angel of the Lord – The Angel of the Lord, who functions in the nature of God and as God's representative, operates with the authority of God while scrutinizing the activity of Joshua, the High Priest who witnessed all that was taking place.
2. Admonished – The angel of the Lord continuously warns Joshua that He now serves as a witness to determine how He would respond to Joshua from this point forward. This serves as a warning to Joshua.
3. Lord of Host - Traditionally "the Lord of host." This is the first time in the Bible that this title designates God. The Hebrew for "host(s)" can refer to (1) human armies (Ex. 7:4; Ps. 44:9); (2) the celestial bodies such as the sun, moon and stars (Ge. 2:1; Dt. 4:19; Isa. 40:26); or (3) the heavenly creatures such as angels (Jos. 5:14; 1Ki. 22:19; Ps. 148:2). The title, "the Lord host," is perhaps best understood as a general reference to the sovereignty of God over all powers in the universe (hence the NIV rendering, "the Lord Almighty"). In the account of the establishment of kingship in Israel, it became particularly appropriate as a reference to God as the God of armies-both of the heavenly army (st. 33:2; Jos 5:14; Ps. 68:17; Hab. 3:8) and of the army of Israel (1Sa. 17:45). This name also proclaims His universal sovereignty.
4. Said – Satan cannot stop or interfere with what the Lord is saying. The Lord does not have to keep this a secret because once Joshua does what the Lord says, Satan cannot affect the blessings that the Lord is promising.
5. You will walk in my ways – With Joshua now being given new garments and a new turban he did not earn, the Lord of Host now says to him that he must continuously, without ever thinking of deviating, develop a righteous lifestyle that is directed by the divine will of God. His life must now be constantly focused on pleasing God.
6. Perform - If Joshua would be careful to observe all the Lord's laws and diligently execute with great care all the laws direct him to do, he would be blessed to be in the presence of the Lord continuously.
7. My service – What the Lord of Host requires of Joshua is very personal. He repeatedly says, 'My.'
8. My service – Joshua must, with a sense of obligation, guard what has been entrusted to him with a commitment to faithfully execute the laws of the Lord carefully.

9. Will also govern my house - The Lord of Host placed Joshua, the high priest, in a position to legislate in a judicial manner the courts of the Lord's house. A house that does not belong to him; it is the Lord's.
10. Will also govern my house - The Lord of Host placed Joshua in the position not to allow the nation of Israel to sin so that his garments become filthy again, causing satan to think he can have valid accusations against the people of God.
11. I will grant you – The Lord of Host will generously, permanently put in place (this access is guaranteed) free access before the presence of the Lord.
12. Free access – Joshua can freely come into the Lord's presence whenever he chooses if he commits to practice a godly lifestyle and to hold to the Lord's laws in the temple (John 15:1-13).

a) The greatest blessing of all would be the granting of access (lit., *walks or paths*) among the angels of heaven. Immediate communion with the Lord is indicated. ^[12]

13. Among those who stand here – Joshua, who no longer wears filthy garments, can stand in the presence of the Lord like everyone else who stood before the Lord of Host if he honors 'My ways,' 'My service,' 'My house,' and 'My courts,' based on the laws of the Lord.

a) If Joshua and these priestly associates are faithful, they will be co-workers with the angels in carrying out God's purposes for Zion and Israel. (NASU, Study Note)

^[1] Walton, J. H. (2009). [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary \(Old Testament\): The Minor Prophets, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*](#) (Vol. 5, p. 212). Zondervan.

^[2] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). [*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament*](#) (Zec 3:1). Moody Press.

- [3] Lindsey, F. D. (1985). [Zechariah](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1554). Victor Books.
- [4] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [Tyndale concise Bible commentary](#) (p. 378). Tyndale House Publishers.
- [5] Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#) (Vol. 1, p. 719). Logos Research Systems, Inc.
- [6] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#) (Zec 3:2). Moody Press.
- [7] Lindsey, F. D. (1985). [Zechariah](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1554). Victor Books.
- [8] Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#) (Vol. 1, p. 719). Logos Research Systems, Inc.
- [9] Fausset, A. R. (n.d.). [A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Jeremiah–Malachi: Vol. IV](#) (p. 667). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.
- [10] Lindsey, F. D. (1985). [Zechariah](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1554). Victor Books.
- [11] Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible](#) (Vol. 1, p. 719). Logos Research Systems, Inc.
- [12] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#) (Zec 3:7). Moody Press.