

November 30

Scriptures: Read Zechariah 3 & 4

Key Verse: “‘... Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts.”
(Zechariah 4:6)

Overview

Joshua was the High Priest who was serving at the time of Zechariah. He had responded to Haggai’s call to repentance (Hag. 1:12-14), and so in Zechariah’s vision of Joshua standing before the Lord at the altar, he was likely asking God for cleansing from sin, so that his sacred duties might be acceptable to God. Whenever someone tries to put himself into a right relationship with God, Satan, the accuser, will be right by his side, trying to dissuade him. The Lord intervened by coming to Joshua and rebuking Satan, saying that He had chosen Joshua and the city of Jerusalem to be the place from where atonement for sins might be made. Though the Jews were unworthy, the Lord, by His grace, had chosen them and was determined to use them to fulfill His plan of redemption for the world. Although they had gone through the fire (judgment), He had spared a remnant for His purposes.

Joshua, as a representative of this remnant, was vindicated by God. On his own, Joshua could do nothing to cleanse himself. It was the Lord who removed his filthy garments, symbolizing forgiveness, and dressed him in rich robes, symbolizing his being clothed with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus (cf. Isa. 61:10). What a beautiful illustration of God’s grace in justification! Zechariah saw with his own eyes how one who was stained and defiled with sin had become a worthy and clean servant of God. Therefore, Zechariah called for him to be crowned with the high priestly turban, the one upon which was written, “Holiness to the Lord” (3:5; Ex. 28:36-38).’ As a consecrated priest of God, Joshua is promised that if he would walk worthy of his calling, by obeying the Lord and fulfilling his divinely appointed responsibilities of keeping the Lord’s Temple pure from defilement, then he would continue to have the honour of being in charge of the Temple; he would have access to God, communion with Him, and one day be with the Lord in heaven (3:7).

Zechariah clearly states that Joshua and his fellow co-workers (priests) were “a wondrous sign”, since their task of mediation and intercession pointed to another, the coming Messiah, whom God calls: “My Servant the Branch”. These names signify His humanity and royal descent from the root of Jesse (King David’s father), as well as His humility (cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 52:13; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Ezk. 34:23-24). The Lord also calls Him “the Stone”, likely signifying His strength and eternal nature (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:6). The seven eyes upon the Stone would seem to signify His divine attribute of omniscience. The engraving upon the Stone may indicate either His beauty or the preordained plan of God for the Stone.

The purpose of the symbolism is made known in the climax of the vision when God declares, “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day”. To the people of Zechariah’s day, this meant that the Day of Atonement would be effectual in cleansing them from sin. However, since these words come with reference to the Messiah, we know that it points forward to the ultimate and

complete work of the Messiah. Christ's self-sacrifice upon the cross made possible the justification, regeneration, peace, and spiritual prosperity (3:10) of not only Israel but believers of all nations, even to this very day.

Zechariah's vision in chapter three brought encouragement to Joshua, the religious leader. The vision in chapter four is a message of encouragement for the strengthening of Zerubbabel, the civil leader, who had met with much opposition in his attempts to rebuild the Temple. Zechariah saw an unusual seven-armed lampstand which never needed tending by human hands, for it had an abundant and continuous supply of oil from the two olive trees (one on either side) which dripped oil into the bowl above the lampstand. From the bowl went pipes into each of the seven lamps, and thus they continually burned. The purpose of this vision was to encourage Zerubbabel. He was assured that God would indeed enable Him to complete the task of rebuilding the Temple, and no mountainous problems would stand in his way. Neither might nor power would accomplish this, but only God through His Holy Spirit (symbolized by the oil). It was important for him to understand that he must trust in God and rely totally on Him to see the work completed. This same continuous source of power is available to all believers who are building up the Kingdom of God.

Some of the people who witnessed the erecting of the new Temple thought that it was a small, insignificant thing (cf. Hag. 2:3), but through Zechariah's word from the Lord, they were to know that God did not consider it small. The all-knowing, all-seeing (seven-eyed) Stone, the Messiah, who knows the future, was pleased to see His servant Zerubbabel actively involved in the erection of the Temple; he had made sure the walls were perfectly vertical with his plumb line. It would have been a further encouragement for both Zerubbabel and Joshua to know that they were the anointed ones, represented by the two olive trees, whom the Lord was standing beside and through whom His Spirit flowed (4:14).

Prayer

Father, we rely upon Your word which says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit" says, the Lord of Hosts". We want to be led by Your Spirit today, that we might be effective in pointing others to You.