



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Zechariah 3:1-10

“Zechariah - The Cleansing of the High Priest”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] 3rd chapter of the Book of Zechariah. And while you are finding the 3rd chapter of the Book of Zechariah I wish to read three verses, two from the Book of Exodus and one from the Book of Isaiah, because they give us important introductory words concerning the message from Zechariah 3. When Israel was at Mount Sinai and the law was to be given. We read in the 5th and 6th verses, “Now therefore,” this is Exodus chapter 19,

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, (now that is the expression that I wish you to notice particularly.) And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”

And then in the 61st chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah in which the prophet gives some of the glorious details of Israel's future, in the 6th verse we read, “But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.”

Now you notice that the import of these words is, “Israel is to be a priestly nation,” a kingdom of priests. And they shall be a kingdom of priests. They were spoken of in this way as they began their history and then at the conclusion of their history they are characterized by the fact that they are a kingdom of priests. That is that they are to stand for God among men. And the time shall come again when they shall do that, Isaiah says.

Now with that as a background, and it is an important insight into Zechariah 3, let's read the Scripture reading of Zechariah chapter 3. I'll read and you follow along as we read the ten verses of the chapter.

“And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD who hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spoke unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a clean turban, (or a fair mitre, you have,) a clean turban upon his head. So they set a clean turban upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by. And the angel of the LORD protested, (or solemnly testified,) unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, (now these, of course, are the courts of the temple and he is referring to priestly activity,) and I will give thee places to walk among these who stand by. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will

engrave the engraving of it, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.”

And that word “call” means to invite so that there shall be a festive gathering under the vine and under the fig tree. May God bless this reading of his inspired word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] How gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the privilege which is before us. We thank Thee for the privilege of having the word of God in our hands. We thank Thee for the privilege of assembly and we thank Thee for the peace and security that we enjoy. And Lord, we pray for this country. We thank Thee for the leadership which Thou hast given for we know, Lord, from Thy word that public officials are the ministers of God. That Thou hast allowed the men to be in office today who are in office.

And we pray, oh God, that in this land that Thou wilt give wisdom to the men Thou hast given to govern and to direct us. And we especially pray for this land today, that the forces of lawlessness and violence shall be turned back by the hand of our God. We thank Thee for the security and the peace and the sense of wellbeing that has been found and enjoyed in the United States of America. And we pray, oh God, that if it should please Thee, Thou wilt give us further opportunity to enjoy peace in order that the word of God may go forth and wind them to Christ.

We realize, Lord, that there shall not be peace upon this earth until Jesus Christ comes and so we do not pray that Thou wilt act contrary to Thy word. We do pray, oh God, that the gospel message may go forth and may touch many hearts, not only in the United States but to the utter most parts of the earth. And we pray that many shall turn to

the Lord Jesus and that the true church may be built up and used of Thee as Thou which have them to be used.

May, oh God, Thy purposes be accomplished in this earth. And, oh Father, if it should please Thee we pray that Thou wilt give each one in this auditorium a burden and a passion to proclaim our Lord Jesus Christ, to cooperate with Thee in the great plans which Thou hast for men, the mission of our Lord Jesus. And enable us to pluck some of the brands from the burning today. And so Lord, we pray that every Christian here may realize that one of the reasons for which he has left is that he may be a tool in Thy hand for the salvation of others. And we pray for this church, that it may never lose that evangelistic outlook and since its mission as a church to reflect the truth of the word of God.

We thank Thee for the light Thou hast given. And oh Father, give us more light on Thy word and enable us, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to perform the tasks which Thou hast for us. We commit to Thee all who are absent, many who are traveling, enjoying their vacations. And may, oh Lord, Thy presence be with them and Thy blessing be with them, and refresh them, and bring them back safely for their work and home here. Now we commit this service to Thee, for Thy blessing upon us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Today we are continuing the series of studies, Zechariah in the light of current events. And the subject for today is “The Cleansing of the High Priest,” and our text is Zechariah chapter 3. We have been trying as we have been going along to relate the things that are found in Zechariah to current events today. And the interesting thing about this chapter in the light of current events, to me at least, is the relationship that this chapter bears to Judaism itself today.

One of the most revealing features of Judaism today is its concept of sin. The American rabbinate, by and large, does not understand, nor believe, that man is sinful in

nature. And this, of course, accounts at least in measure for the fact that Israel has not turned as yet to our Lord Jesus Christ. Most of the rabbis, not all of them, but most of the rabbis conceive of sin in social terms. That is, sin is the wrong that we do to our neighbor. Sin is the wrong that we do to our fellow man in our businesses. Sin is the wrong that we may do in our community, as it affects our community. It is sinful to support organizations which are anti-social. Sin, according to the American rabbi then, is not a personal thing at all. It is not a man's attitude toward God. It does not arise from man's base nature. As a matter of fact, today some Jews are discovering that this doctrine of sin is something that is lacking in Judaism.

This past week I read again the statement of a Jew who said that Israel seems to be unable to recognize sin even when she sees it. Max Geltman, an outstanding Jewish intellectual, has written some words that I would like to quote to you because I think that they are kind of revealing of the attitude that exists in Judaism. He says, "Yet if I were asked to furnish the names of people whom I would like to see as representative spokesmen for American jury I would have to decline, modestly, because there are just no spokesmen for a community made up of the most proudly patriotic, and the most totally submersive of the devout and irreligious of the holy and the profane. A people by and large still as proud and stiff-necked as the Lord God Jehovah found them in the desert, a people hard to define because they get their individualism from the prophets, such as Jeremiah, and their collectivism from their apostates, such as marks." That's a very interesting statement coming from a Jew.

Now in spite of the fact that in Judaism today there is no concept of sin, as a matter of fact I really doubt that the rabbis or even the ancient Jews understood the New Testament and Old Testament doctrine of sin. That is, almost all of Jewish students outside of the Bible have failed to believe and accept the New Testament teaching, and the Old Testament teaching, of original sin.

In spite of this failure to understand the doctrine of sin there is today, on the other hand, another surprising thing. And that is the fact that the problem of Jesus seems to be agitating the Jewish mind. Now you and I have been reading in the newspapers attempts on the part of Roman Catholicism and some Protestantism to extricate themselves from the dilemma of accusing the Jews of deicide. That is, the slaying of God. As a matter of fact, some official action has been taken, or at least is planned by some large religious organizations, in order to temper the criticism and condemnation of Judaism that has existed in Christianity as a whole.

And of course the Jews are very much interested in this because they want to feel that they are no longer under this condemnation for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But even in spite of the activities of Protestants and Roman Catholics to temper this criticism and condemnation of Judaism, still the Jews are agitated by the problem of Jesus. You know it illustrates this, that down in the hearts of men it is God who speaks. In other words, no matter what we may do as men still God speaks to the hearts of men. And if we were to say to all Jews everywhere, “You are not guilty of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ,” then God would say, “You are.” And he would make his voice known in the hearts of men.

Now let me hasten to say I am not saying that the Jews only are guilty of the death of Christ. The Gentiles are guilty too. The whole human race is guilty. As a matter of fact, we are all guilty of deicide; every single one of us, Jew and gentile. It does us no good to forget that fact.

I say that the Jews are agitated by the problem of Jesus. Shalom Ash, an outstanding Jewish author, has said these words, and I want to read this citation again if I may, “Ah, I couldn’t help writing on Jesus,” as you know, Mr. Ash wrote The Nazarene as well as Paul. “I couldn’t help writing on Jesus. Since I first met him he has held my mind and heart. I grew up, you know, on the border of Poland and Russia which wasn’t exactly the finest place in the world for a Jew to sit down and write a life of Jesus Christ.”

He means by that, that in that section there were the largest concentration of orthodox Jews who had the most antipathy for Christianity. “Yet even through those years, the hope of doing just that fascinated me. I floundered a bit at first, I was seeking that something for which so many of us search, that surety, that faith, that spiritual content in my living which would bring me piece and through which I might bring some peace to others. I found it in The Nazarene. For Jesus Christ to me is the outstanding personality of all time, of all history. Both as the Son of God, and as Son of man.” And later on he says, “He became the light of the world, why shouldn’t I as a Jew be proud of that?”

Many Jews today think that Jewish people become Christians only in order to better their position. That is manifestly false. Not long ago I was speaking with a Jew and that was his view. He did not feel that anyone really became a Christian if he did not have some monetary or status motive. Now this, of course, is totally contrary to the New Testament, for the Jews who became Christians in the beginning that was the one thing they lost. They lost everything in order to become Christians. And it is totally oblivious to the fact that some of the greatest minds in Judaism, in fact some of the greatest minds in the world, have been Jews who have turned to Jesus Christ.

Now this is remarkable. In Judaism there is no concept of personal sin, as sin against God. And yet at the same time, deep down in the hearts of the Jews, the problem of Jesus is still agitating them. Still concerns the best minds in Judaism.

Now the Bible tells us that a radical and wonderful change is going to come someday. That is, the nation of Jews is going to stand up and to confess their sin against God. They are going to confess their self-righteousness, they are going to confess their Godlessness, and furthermore they are going to ask for a new revelation from heaven. As Isaiah, picturing the last days and the men of that day, says, “Oh that Thou hast rim the heavens and that Thou hast come down again.” And so Israel is going to respond and then Israel is to find her God. And I think that that even if you reflect upon it is undoubtedly going to be one of the most touching scenes in all of human history.

This past week a young couple was sitting in front of my desk. They were thinking about getting married and were discussing some of the things that had to do with their possible marriage. By the way, it's not my daughter [Laughter]. And we were discussing spiritual things and I was explaining the gospel of the Lord Jesus to this young man who was open to the word. And finally at a point in our conversation after the gospel had been given he said to me in all seriousness, he said, “Well I think I could believe that.” And you know, a kind of lump came in my throat. “I think I could believe that.” You know, when you see a person who has been so opposed, this is not about this man, when you see a person who has been opposed to God and then you see them come to the Lord and confess their need of him, and confess that they are sinners, and confess their faith in Christ and stand up, every Christian gets that feeling down in the heart. And you know, when a whole nation comes to the Lord in the days of the future, I was thinking about this last week, and you know, lumps came up in my throat as I thought about the future when all of this rebellious apostate nation which exists today in the four corners of the earth as a nation, shall come to the Lord and shall weep and mourn over the fact that they have rejected Jesus of Nazareth. What a tremendous day that's going to be.

Now Zechariah writes of the spiritual transformation that is going to take place in the Jewish nation in Zechariah chapter 3. For you see, God called this great nation, the nation that came from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to be a priestly nation. A kingdom of priests. He called upon them to be the ministers of the God in heaven to mediate the truth of God to men.

Now, of course, we know the history of the Old Testament. Israel as a kingdom of priests failed. They disobeyed God, they eventually went into captivity, they returned a weak remnant. We are looking at some of them here in Zechariah. But then ultimately they disobeyed God, refused the Messiah, and God scattered them to the four corners of the earth. But they still are to be his priestly nation. They are still to be a kingdom of

priests. And the time is coming when they shall assume that place again. And God is going to do something wonderful for this group as a nation. That's what he writes about here.

Now the vision, which is the fourth of the Book of Zechariah, is given to the Prophet Zechariah of Joshua the high priest. Now you remember when the children of Israel came back from Babylon, this remnant, at the time of the Book of Zechariah they were guided and governed by Zerubbabel who was the civil ruler of the people. He stands, of course, as a great illustration of the Lord Jesus as the son of David who shall rule. But the spiritual governorship or the spiritual direction was given by Joshua the high priest.

Now, of course, our Lord Jesus is not only to be king but he is to be priest. Priest after the order of Melchizedek, a king-priest, but at this time the office is a separate and so Joshua is the high priest who has returned with the people of Israel to establish again in the city of Jerusalem the priesthood. And so Zechariah in his night visions is given a vision of Joshua the high priest. Now this is a vision, Joshua is not standing there. But he sees him standing there in vision. And he sees the angel of the Lord, or as we have pointed out, the Lord Jesus standing by. And furthermore there is another character there and he is Satan. And he stands by, Zechariah says, as he's looked in the vision, he stands by to resist Joshua the high priest.

Now the big problem with Israel is simply this, Israel is an unholy people. Israel has disobeyed God. Israel stands under divine condemnation. God is a holy God. How can a holy God reinstate and restore to blessing an unholy people? How is it possible for Israel to be a kingdom of priests when they have disobeyed God? How can a people so disobedient be brought back to him? That's the problem. And so Zechariah sees the vision and Joshua stands in the vision, and also in the vision the angel of the Lord and Satan.

Joshua hears the Lord, the angel of the Lord, speak and he speaks very emphatically. He says, “The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments, and stood before the angel.”

Now we must first of all notice this. That Joshua stands here as the representative of the children of Israel. That is evident as you read through this account because first of all so often he is called, “The high priest,” that’s the representative office.

Furthermore, you’ll notice the 2nd verse says, “The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen (not Joshua) Jerusalem.” Jerusalem. In other words, Joshua stands as a representative of the people and the city, the nation. The Lord who hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee, Satan, for accusing Joshua. And then in the 4th verse he hears, “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee,” but in the 9th verse we read the predictions, the explanatory predictions, that follow, “And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” And so the removal of the iniquity of Joshua the high priest is representative.

So Joshua then stands as the representative of the people. He stands as the representative of the priestly nation, the land, the city. He stands as Israel. In other words, as Joshua so the nation Israel. Now Joshua is clothed in filthy garments. I wish I could, in this audience, tell you exactly what that meant. I’m not sure that I can. I heard a preacher this past week say this meant vomit covered garments. And as he looked out on the audience he noticed the audience had reacted and he said, “That I thought you would react at that.” But I want to tell you that that’s a mistranslation. This is worse than that.

Joshua stood clothed in garments which you might have dredged up from the bottom of the outhouse, that’s the meaning of the Hebrew word. This word is so vile in its connotation that it is impossible for us to think of anything worse. And Joshua is in filthy garments. Not only dirty but smelly and vile and offensive. What does God mean

by this? Well this is Israel before God. This is what Israel is. Israel stands before him as not only dirty but smelly and offensive. That’s exactly the way they stand before him. In other words, Joshua stank. Israel stinks before God. I never liked that word; I’ve never liked to use it. But it’s the only appropriate word for Israel.

Now let me tell you something, this is not just God’s attitude toward Israel. This is God’s attitude toward every man outside of Christ. Every man outside of Christ stands before God in the same position. If you have not come to Jesus Christ in your heart and have been born again by faith in him, you stink before God, in yourself. You can see, of course, how offensive it is to God for a man to say, “I think I’ll save myself. I think I can get along without God. I think I’ll do the best I can and surely God will accept me.” You can see how offensive it is to God for a man to parade as a self-righteous individual, to come to church on Sunday morning, to put money in the collection plate, to bow his head when prayer is offered, to go out with, “Well I’ve done my good turn for the week and people think I’m really nice and sweet,” you can see how offensive that is to God, how hypocritical.

I read of a man who was filling out an application, I guess it was an application for a job, and one of the questions was, have you ever been arrested? Of course he put down no. The next question was designed for a yes answer and it had simply, why? And he wrote, I never got caught [Laughter]. You know, it’s very illustrative of human nature. He actually, of course, had broken the law many times he felt. He felt he should have been arrested but he never was caught. And so that’s the way many of us are, you know? We think we can get away with it forever, that we can attend church, that we can go through the motions of being a Christian, a believer in God. But it’s all because we’ve never been caught, he hasn’t arrested us yet. But the time is coming, of course, when we’re going to have to stand before God, every single one of us. And then we’re not going to flee behind, “I never got caught.”

Now Joshua stands, now Joshua also hears and Zechariah hears the words, “The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD who hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” Now the adversary, Satan, is anxious to resist Joshua. By the way, in the Hebrew text the word for resist is the same word from which you get the word Satan. And so he is standing by to satanize Joshua. That is, to rebuke him. And Satan is emphatically rebuked himself. You see, Satan wants to stand by the side of Israel and say, “Ah, look at that filthy nation, oh God, what are you going to do about that? You’re a holy God, you must punish that nation. You must punish Joshua. You must condemn them.” And so Satan stands by as the accuser, he wants to satanize Joshua. He wants to lay the charge at the foot of the throne of God and say, “You have acted unjustly in choosing Jerusalem, in choosing Israel, in choosing Joshua, in choosing Zerubbabel. You’ve acted unjustly in giving those promises to Abraham, look at him. Look at him, that’s the way he really is.”

Now I love this rebuke, do you know why? Because the rebuke does not rest upon any good works that I have performed. “Oh the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem.” In other words, God’s attitude towards Jerusalem is determined by his choice of Jerusalem. It’s not determined by Jerusalem’s good works. It’s not determined by Jerusalem’s righteousness. It’s not determined by Jerusalem’s religiousness. It is based altogether and entirely upon the choice of God. In other words, the election of Jerusalem is the basis of God’s condemnation of Satan.

I don’t know how to explain thoroughly to the minds of everyone the choice of God, I know he has chosen me. You know why he’s chosen me? Because he loves me. Do you know why he loves me? Because he loves me, that’s why. If somebody were to say to you, “Why do you love your wife?” what would you say? “Well, she can cook scrambled eggs, bacon, she keeps a clean house, she mows the yard for me [Laughter], and so on.” But that isn’t really why, is it? All these things may be wonderful attributes to

have in a wife, I wish I had them all [Laughter], but that isn't why. You love her because you love her, that's why. You can't explain it.

And so God has chosen Israel and God has chosen me, and he has chosen me because he loves me and he loves me because he loves me, that's why. So Satan, you don't understand. You think that the relationship to God is based upon works, that's why you condemn Joshua. The relationship to God is not based upon works, it's not based upon what we have done, it's based upon what we are in the mind of God, in the promises of God.

You remember the famous tradition about Martin Luther and the Wartburg prison or in the castle. One day there came to him, as he was thinking about his sins, a vision of Satan. And Satan came with a great scroll and on this scroll were all the sins of Martin Luther and he began to detail them, one by one. One after the other. And finally Luther became more and more impatient; he was deeply disturbed by his sins. And finally as Satan was getting near the end of it he couldn't stand it any more and he stood up and he said, “Yes, Satan, and far more besides. But right at the bottom of them all the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth me from all sin,” and with that he took up his ink and threw it at Satan in the vision, and today if you go in the Wartburg castle you can see the black mark on the wall which is supposed to be the place where the ink landed.

You see, the blood of Jesus Christ covers our sin. Satan doesn't understand that. He thinks that relationship to God is based upon works. He says, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? What I have done for Israel out of Babylon I shall do in a greater way in the future. And out of my electing sovereign grace I shall reach down and take Israel and I shall make them what I intend to make them.” What a tremendous thing that is. This filthy, vile, offensive Joshua and Satan rebuked for charging them with guilt before God.

Now the vision continues. And we see the vision of the cleansing and clothing of Joshua. How can a God of holiness justify his choice of Joshua? Well, you see, he

doesn't choose Joshua because of what Joshua is now, he chooses Joshua because of what he is going to make of Joshua. It's by transformation, divine transformation, that Joshua who stands as representative of the nation becomes something entirely different. And so we read, “And he answered and spoke unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” How can a God justify his choice? It's because of what he is going to do, that's how he can justify his choice of me. God doesn't expect to live with me as I am now forever. That would be horrible. As my old teacher used to say, if we all went to heaven as we are we'd wreck the place. And so he's going to make us something different, something different. And so now in symbol, this transformation takes place. Take the filthy garments off of him. Give him a change of raiment.

Many years ago a teacher was teaching some children in a Glasgow Sunday school. They lived in the roughest, toughest neighborhood of the city, the Watts and the Newark of Glasgow. And the teacher was teaching the prodigal son and she began to speak about how he had taken his substance from the father, he had taken it into a far country and wasted his substance in writers living, he had come down to the fact that he was just at the dregs of life, and then he made his way back toward God, and the teacher then turned to the boys in the class and said, “What do you think that his father will do?” Well the little kid spoke up, he knew life at its worst, he said, “Bash him.” Bash him. That's exactly what we expect. What do you think God will do to Joshua in these filthy garments? Bash him. Well that isn't what God does. You see, and if you do not understand why God does not do that, you do not understand the God of the Bible. You have misunderstood the grace of God. That is fundamental to biblical truth. You'll never understand spiritual truth if you do not understand why he says, “Take the filthy garments away and give him a change of raiment.” And furthermore, it is just to do it. Just to do it.

I like this word, change of raiment. It really means the dress uniform of the high priest. It's a word that is used of in one other place, of women in fancy clothes. In other words, put not just a pair of clean clothes upon him or a suit, but give him the Sunday best. A change of raiment. As a matter of fact I think from the fact that Joshua interrupts in a moment and says, “Put a clean turban upon him,” it's obvious that God has clothed him in the priestly garments of the great high priest in Israel. He has given him the garments of glory and beauty.

Now I know you Bible students will think that he gave him the all white linen garments. No, I don't think so. Because those garments were worn when the atonement was made, but this is a sign of that which occurs after the atonement has been made. And then you remember the high priest, he put on those special garments on the day of atonement in order to carry out atonement, but as soon as it was finished he put on those beautiful garments. Neiman Marcus would have loved to have sold those garments, those beautiful garments of glory and beauty which the high priest had. And that I think is what he put on them. He took Joshua in that filthy, vile, offensive outfit, he took the clothes away, and Joshua was clothed in the finest of garments. That which signified the nation as the priestly nation of God. In other words, typically Joshua was reinstated into the office of high priest, and in Joshua so the nation was reinstated as the high priestly nation before God.

Now Zechariah is an impatient person and so he has to interrupt. And I guess this is a sanctified interruption because it's found in the word of God. “And I said,” he couldn't wait for the garments to be put on, “And I said, be sure to put the clean turban upon his head.” So they set the clean turban upon his head and clothed him with garments and the angel of the Lord stood by. In other words, impatiently he says, “Put the turban on, for goodness sakes put that on, that's the sign that he is the high priest.” And furthermore, do you remember what was on that turban? Well that was a clean,

white turban. And there was a golden plate right across the front of that turban. And on that plate were the words, *Kodesh L'YHVH*, or “Holiness to the Lord.”

Here is a person in those vile, offensive garments and now a person in the high priestly garments with the words, “Holiness to the Lord,” written across. What a tremendous transformation has taken place in Joshua. “The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem,” that hath chosen Israel, that hath chosen Joshua, that hath chosen Lewis Johnson. I’m going to put a change of garments upon them and, “Holiness to the Lord,” across them. And that’s where Joshua stands before the Lord now, holy because of God’s action.

I say you don’t understand this, you do not understand God because this principle of grace dealing is the dealing of God with men. Satan thinks legalistically. Men outside of Christ think legalistically. You seen the moral unbeliever, the moral unbeliever is the kind of person who says, “Well I won’t drink, I won’t smoke, I won’t dance. I won’t even go to the movies. I won’t this and I won’t that. And because I don’t do these things surely I have acceptance with God.”

Now it would seem to me that Christians would not fall for that but surprisingly Christians do the same thing. They become Christians and then they take up all of the little legalistic don’ts. And furthermore, to compound ignorance they add to it hypocrisy. And so with the façade of self made righteousness they try to bring other Christians under the same domination. And then there are the religious unbelievers, we go to church, we put money in the collection plate, we sign the pledge, we attend the meetings, we also attend even a prayer meeting. We pray. They have never received Christ in their hearts, they do not know anything about the grace of God, very religious. And surprisingly Christians are affected by them. And so we become Christians by the grace of God and what do we do? Try to be religious. And so we play at being religious. And all of that façade of moral hypocrisy and religious hypocrisy is upon the faces of so many

evangelical Christians around this country that I am sure that God is sick when he looks at it. We do not understand the grace of God. We do not.

Now I know some of my friends come up when I say things like that and say, “Well you must be for all of these things.” I’m not necessarily for them at all; I’m for following the Lord. I’m for following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And I believe when a man follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit his life will reflect it. I love this. You see, God does the work and this man who was filthy is now holiness to the Lord because of the work of God. And hypocrisy and all of the façade of self-righteousness which we as Christians have go outside the pale.

Now we also read a few words at the end of this chapter which are important. I’m going to skip the words which have to do with conditions for the enjoyment of this blessing for it is simply faith. In other words, if obedience follows they will continue in their place. We know from the future of the word of God they shall obey.

But in the 8th verse the Lord himself speaks, “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at.” The question might come now, “Well this is a tremendous transformation and I understand now how Joshua can stand before the Lord because it is the Lord who does this work. But who is going to do the work for the Lord? Who is going to make it possible for this unrighteous person to stand before a holy God? What’s the theological basis of it?” You see, God does it in righteousness, he does not look at that filthy, vile, offensive Joshua and say, “I can’t stand to look at him, give him some clean clothes.” Now that’s not all the story, you see. God cannot do that, he must punish sin. He must punish iniquity. He must condemn that which is contrary to his work. He must execute the judgment of the law upon sin.

He cannot just say, “I’ll make him clean.” He must do something to back up his words. So he says the men, Joshua, as well as those with him, they are men of prophetic portent. That’s the meaning of “wondered at”, men of prophetic portent. That is, this

whole thing is a picture of the future. It is a picture of what I'm going to do for Israel as a nation. I'm going to make them a priestly nation, holiness to the Lord, in spite of their present condition of disobedience and iniquity. “For, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.” Ah, here is the reason why God can do this. It's because of his servant. Now a servant does something. This servant, I have to sum up the whole of the Old Testament almost with this, this servant performs the work of the servant of Jehovah, and the work of the servant of Jehovah according to the prophecy of Isaiah is to go to the cross and die for the sins of the world. Oh we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every man to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. In other words, God righteously judges the servant, the Lord Jesus Christ. He takes Joshua's filthiness and offensiveness and puts it upon Jesus Christ, the servant. And the servant bears the judgment. And because the servant bears the judgment then Joshua can be clothed in the garments of glory and beauty with holiness to the Lord as his turban.

You see, it is our Lord Jesus Christ who is the reason for God's dealing with men. And he does it in righteousness because Christ bears all of the sins of men. For the holy stone, we've talked about the stone of Daniel chapter 2, and here it is. And Zechariah draws upon Isaiah, and drawing upon Daniel, the former prophets, and the great Prophet Daniel speaks of the stone which ever student of Scripture should know about, the stone that is going to come and smite that great image upon its feet which is going to become the kingdom of God throughout the whole of the earth. It's the stone, the servant. And so the servant who comes and dies at the first coming is followed by the stone who comes at the second coming. And the work of redemption is accomplished at the first coming and the kingdom of God comes at the second. And Israel then becomes the priestly nation of Jehovah. Then, by the way, you're going to hear some of the greatest messages on the sin of men coming from Jews. They will know as no other nation the baseness and character of human sin.

Very quickly, one last remark in verse 9, “And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day,” the day of the Second Advent. “In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.” And so redemption shall come, Israel shall be restored, it shall become the ministers of our Lord. The priestly nation, mediating the knowledge of God throughout the whole of the earth. Men shall go up to Jerusalem to learn the law of the Lord. And the kingdom of God shall spread shall spread from pole to pole. All because the servant came and gave his life for the redemption of men. And by the work of the servant the filthy nation, out of fellowship of God, is restored to its place of preeminence in the earth.

Did you notice in this chapter the tremendous stress upon the initiative of God? Verse 2, “The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD who hath chosen Jerusalem.” Verse 4, “Take away the filthy garments,” command of God. “I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee.” Verse 8, “For, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.” Verse 9, “For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; I will engrave the engraving of it,” that’s the work of Calvary. “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.”

Who is responsible for this redemptive work? It is God. It is God. From beginning to end it is the work of God. Henry Morehouse was a great Scottish preacher. He was just a little fellow, he died when he was forty years of age but he made quite an impact in his day. I’ve told you about the visit, one of the visits, that he made to the United States when he preached in Mr. Moody’s church. He kept writing Mr. Moody, Mr. Moody had met him over in Britain, and he kept writing Mr. Moody and said, “One day I hope to come to Chicago and I will preach.” Now Mr. Moody had a large church in Chicago and finally he didn’t think anything about it because after all, he was a long ways away.

But finally Mr. Morehouse wrote him and said, “I am coming next week and I will preach.” Mr. Moody didn’t know exactly what to do, he had said he hoped to come to Chicago someday and preach for him sometime before, never thinking he would have to

make good his promise. They had a meeting on Thursday night and Friday night in the church and so he said, “Well,” to the elders, “put him on on Thursday night and if he does alright put him on on Friday. And after you’ve checked him out then you announce, I’m coming back on Saturday night, you announce whether he’s going to preach on Sunday or not, depending on your evaluation.” Mr. Moody came back and he said to his wife, “Well how did that by Morehouse do?” His wife said, “Why he’s done wonderfully.

As a matter of fact, he’s a better preacher than you are.” [Laughter] Mr. Moody couldn’t believe that. And she went on to say, “Why, do you know that he is telling men that God loves them?” Mr. Moody said, “That’s not true, God does not love the sins of men. Until they come to Jesus Christ God does not love them.” “Well he’s telling them that God loves them.” Sunday morning Mr. Morehouse got up and he preached for the third time on John 3:16 and Moody listened. He said afterwards as he described it, he said, “As I listened to that young man my own heart was softened and I was touched myself.” And finally, to make a long story short, he preached six times on John 3:16. The seventh night was the last night of his stay in Chicago and he got up and he said, “I’ve been searching around for a text all of today,” Mr. Moody tells the story, he said, “and my heart has come back again to John 3:16.” He said, “I’ve been trying to get over to you the fact that God loves you.” And he said, “Do you know, if I could borrow Jacob’s ladder and I could ascend up to heaven and ask the archangel Michael, ‘What message does God have for men and for the world?’ I couldn’t, I’m sure, receive any message other than, ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’”

This work is the work of God and Israel shall be restored, by the work of God. And I am saved by the work of God. Are you saved? Have you put your trust in Christ? Stop trusting your good works. They are filthy. They are vile, they are offensive to God. Stop trusting your religion, trust in the servant who has come and has died for you. The stone has been engraved with the love of God. In the five wounds of Calvary, that’s your

redemption. Christ has taken it away, all of that offensiveness, all of that condemnation, and now you may stand free if you simply say in your heart, “Lord, thank you for giving Jesus Christ to die for me.” That’s all, that’s all. Why don’t you do that?

Shall we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the wonderful words concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh Father, forgive us for the self-righteousness of our hearts. And Lord, if there are any in this auditorium who have not yet believed in Christ, oh give them no rest nor peace until they trust in him. Speak to their hearts at this moment. Now may grace, mercy, and peace abide upon all who know him in sincerity. Until the stone come, oh so shadow human government and establish the kingdom of God in reality upon the earth. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.