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STANDING BEFORE YHWH: THE RESTORED PRIESTHOOD IN ZECHARIAH 3

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STANDING BEFORE YHWH: THE RESTORED PRIESTHOOD IN ZECHARIAH 3

Zechariah 3:1-7

(1) Then^a he showed me: Joshua, the high priest, was standing before^b The Angel of YHWH^c, and The Accuser^d was standing^e at his right hand to accuse^f him.

(2) And YHWH said to The Accuser, “Let YHWH rebuke^g you^h, Oⁱ Accuser, and let YHWH, who has chosen Jerusalem^j, rebuke you. Is not this a brand snatched away^k from fire?”

(3) Now Joshua^l was there^m: he was clothed in soiledⁿ garments and was standing^o before The Angel.

(4) But^p he^q responded and said^r to the ones standing^s before him, saying, “Remove the soiled garments from upon him.” And he said to him, “See^t, I have taken off^u from upon you^v your iniquity^w, and have clothed^x you in fine apparel^y.”

(5) And I said^z, “Let them put a clean turban^{aa} upon his head!” So^{bb} they put the clean turban^{cc} upon his head, and they clothed him in garments^{dd}. And The Angel of YHWH was standing^{ee}.

(6) And^{ff} The Angel of YHWH adjured^{gg} Joshua, saying,

(7) “Thus says YHWH of Hosts:

‘If^{hh} in my ways you will walk, and if^{hh} my serviceⁱⁱ you will guard,
then surely^{jj} you^{kk}, you will execute justice^{ll} in my house,
and surely^{jj} you will guard my courts^{mmm};
and I will give to you passageⁿⁿ among^{oo} these standing ones^{pp}.’

Justification of Zechariah 3:1-7

a. *Then* – the ׀ at the beginning of the chapter is a narrativial wayyiqtol, beginning the fourth of Zechariah’s eight night visions, translated *then*.¹

b. *was standing before* – עֲמַד functions here as a predicative participle, not agreeing in definiteness with *Joshua the high priest*, and so “was” should be inserted to convey the predicate

¹ Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Second. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 99.

sense.² CEV and Boda³ convey the predicative sense. עֹמֵד לְפָנָי, *standing before*, is the language of the court, and reflects one standing with respect before a king.⁴

c. *The Angel of YHWH* – Angel is definite because it is in a construct chain with a proper name.⁵ The Angel of YHWH is capitalized⁶ because this distinguished angelic figure appears throughout the Hebrew Bible and often speaks, as he does in this passage, directly for God (cf. Gen 16:11, 13; Exod 3:2; Judg 6:11, 14; 13:21-22; 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chron 21:18; Zech 1:11-12). Capitalization also conveys this author’s belief that the figure in question is a pre-incarnate Christophany.⁷

d. *The Accuser* – Though more accurately a title than the name Satan, as most modern scholars agree,⁸ לְשֹׂטֵן functions not as a neutral, angelic prosecuting attorney⁹, but as an antagonist, as YHWH’s rebuke in v2 makes clear. Capitalizing the entire title, as with *The Angel of YHWH*, conveys that this is a distinct figure. While “The Adversary”¹⁰ might better convey the antagonistic aspects of this figure more clearly, *The Accuser* maintains consistency with לְשֹׂטֵן to *accuse him* later in v1. *The Accuser* also points to John’s “accuser of our brothers” in Rev 12:10 (ESV) and the chief evil figure described here by this title.¹¹

² Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 91.

³ Mark J. Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 226.

⁴ William L. Holladay, “עֹמֵד,” in *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 275. See also Min Suc Kee, “The Heavenly Council and Its Type-Scene,” *JSOT* 31.3 (2007): 259–73, especially 267-68.

⁵ Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar*, Third. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 94.

⁶ Carol L Meyers and Eric M Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, AB 25B (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 178, 183, also capitalizes Angel, though only to convey that this is a common title in scripture.

⁷ See Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary, Volume 3: Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker Bk House, 1998), 3:1038, who though an evangelical scholar, does not believe that The Angel of YHWH is a Christophany. His argument is based on the fact that sometimes God speaks to The Angel and sometimes, as in Zech 1:12, The Angel speaks to God. However, the Father speaking to the Son, and the Son crying to the Father a prayer of intercession on behalf of his people, as Zech 1:12 would be, are within the purview of an Old Testament manifestation of the Son. The author agrees with Iain M. Duguid, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, EP Study Commentary (Carlisle, PA: EP Books, 2010), 96–97, who notes that the very close association between The Angel and YHWH combined with the clear distinctness of each points to this being a Christophany.

⁸ See Boda, *Zechariah*, 226; Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets Part 2*, FOTL 22 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 370; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 183–86; Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, ed. John D. W. Watts, WBC 32, ed. Glenn W. Barker and David A. Hubbard (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1984), 198–200; Marvin Alan Sweeney et al., *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, vol. 2 of *BO* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 595.

⁹ Or executioner! See Ryan E Stokes, “Satan, YHWH’s Executioner,” *JBL* 133.2 (2014): 251–70.

¹⁰ See McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1068; Joyce G Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1972), 113.

¹¹ Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 113: “The fuller development of the doctrine of a personal and devilish opponent of God is a feature of the New Testament. All the same there is a certain maliciousness about the satan’s role even here, and an opposition to God’s will, reflected in the Lord’s words addressed to him.” See also Anthony R. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, ApOTC 25 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 139: “Many commentators seem keen to point out that this figure should not be understood as the devil but simply a

e. *was standing* – The construction with עֹמֵד here is parallel to that above. See note b. In connection with Ps 109:6, where David asks God to “appoint... an accuser to stand at [the] right hand” of his enemy (ESV), many see this to further reflect the language of the court.¹²

f. *to accuse him* – As indicated in note d., לְשַׁטֵּן and הַשָּׂטָן share a common root, שָׁטַן.

g. *Let YHWH rebuke* – In context, יְגַעַר conveys “a jussive sense, expressing a wish,”¹³ even though “there is no separate jussive form” for גַּעַר.¹⁴

h. *you* – In Hebrew, בָּךְ. With גַּעַר Gesenius has בְּ indicating the object of rebuke.¹⁵

i. *O* – הַשָּׂטָן – here the definite article functions in a vocative sense.¹⁶

j. *who has chosen Jerusalem* – So ESV, NASB, Boda and Al Wolters.¹⁷ הַבְּחֵר is a definite, attributive qal active participle agreeing with YHWH, requiring a relative clause in translation.¹⁸ Though יהוה and הַבְּחֵר are separated by בָּךְ, in the context of statements in Zech 1:17; 2:16 (Eng 2:12), YHWH clearly is the one who “will choose” and indeed “has chosen” Jerusalem.¹⁹

k. *snatched away* – A hofal participle from נָצַל, literally “caused to be rescued.”²⁰

l. *Now* – So ESV, NASB, KJV, NIV. A *waw* with a nonverb providing “commentary on the condition and position of Joshua prior to the next key phase of the vision report.”²¹

functionary of the divine assembly. However, from a canonical perspective, the identification of this figure as the devil is certain (Rev. 12:9; 20:2).”

¹² Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 182; Meredith G Kline, *Glory In Our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah's Night Visions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 116; Helmer Ringgren, “עֹמֵד,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 179–80.

¹³ McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1070. Although Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 74–75, claims that a wish involves “An inferior [using] the jussive with a superior as subject,” the special relationship here represented with The Angel of YHWH suddenly speaking as YHWH himself, requesting that YHWH would rebuke The Accuser shows the “same but distinct” nature of The Angel and YHWH. In this case, The Angel wishes for YHWH to take action on behalf of His people. In such a case, “the jussive denotes *prayer*.” (75). This fits the character of Christ as our intercessor.

¹⁴ Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 226; Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 136.

¹⁵ William Gesenius, “גַּעַר,” in *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), 177.

¹⁶ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 10, 38.

¹⁷ Boda, *Zechariah*, 226; Albert M. Wolters, *Zechariah*, HCOT (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014), 89.

¹⁸ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 91.

¹⁹ Boda, *Zechariah*, 227.

²⁰ William L. Holladay, “נָצַל” in *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 244.

²¹ Boda, *Zechariah*, 227.

m. *was there* – Joshua is placed before יהוה, emphasizing his position *there*, before The Angel. *there* has been supplied in order to better express the verb’s presence.

n. *soiled* – In Hebrew: צואים. Only found here and in v4, צואים is an adjective most likely derived from צאָה meaning “excrement or “disgusting spew,”²² or specifically, according to John E. Hartley, “human excrement.”²³ “Feculent” is preferable to convey both the rare and abrasive, fecal-related nature of the Hebrew term, but is too obscure to be helpful. Iain M. Duguid’s “excrement-soiled” is also commendable.²⁴ NASB, ESV, NIV have “filthy,” which does not convey the “gross factor” strongly enough.

o. *was clothed... was standing* – Disagreeing with *Joshua* in definiteness, both לבש and עמד are joined by a conjunctive waw²⁵ and function as parallel predicative participles,²⁶ requiring the supplied *was*. This further emphasizes the “shock value” of the scene.

p. *But* – An adversative waw, as the angel “resolves [the] tension in the discourse” of Joshua’s uncleanness.²⁷

q. *he* – the speaker is unclear, either YHWH or The Angel of YHWH. Peshitta supplies “angel.”²⁸ The “same but distinct” relation between the two beings continues to develop.

r. *he responded and said* – NASB: “He spoke and said,” ESV/NIV: “the angel said.” Hebrew: וַיֹּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר. *responded* conveys the non-verbal sense of ענה.²⁹ His response is then shown in his speech.

s. *the ones standing* – העֹמְדִים is a substantive masculine plural participle, likely indicating other angelic attendants.³⁰

t. *See* – So NASB. ESV: “Behold,” which commonly translates הִנֵּה, but here we have the qal imperative of ראה, to see, look. “Look” translates the word accurately, but in modern use carries a connotation of impatience.

²² Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Boston: Koninklijke Brill, 2001), 2:992.

²³ John E. Hartley, “1884 צוא,” in Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, *TWOT*, 2:756.

²⁴ Duguid, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 99.

²⁵ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 157.

²⁶ Boda, *Zechariah*, 227.

²⁷ McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1070; Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 156–57.

²⁸ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 188.

²⁹ McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1071.

³⁰ Andrew E. Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, TOTC 28 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 149, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1205215&site=ehost-live>; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 188.

u. *I have taken off* – A hifil perfect: הֶעֱבַרְתִּי. In hifil, עֲבַר combined with מִן can have the sense of “take off” when referring to a garment.³¹

v. *from upon him ... from upon you* – while slightly awkward in English, this reflects the near-identical constructions in Hebrew, which differ only in their pronominal suffixes. This construction “reinforces the symbolic link between sin and defilement.”³²

w. *iniquity* – So ESV, NASB, along with Ralph L. Smith.³³ NIV: “sin.” Brown-Driver-Briggs cites this verse as an example “of forgiveness or removal” of iniquity,³⁴ while Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner understand it as “guilt caused by sin.”³⁵ In view is not only the deeds but also the punishment for those deeds.³⁶

x. *and have clothed* – So Boda and Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers.³⁷ A hifil infinitive absolute, וְהִלְבֵּשׁ functions as a verbal substitute, taking the perfect aspect from הֶעֱבַרְתִּי.³⁸ The Angel’s word accomplishes what it declares, as does YHWH’s word.³⁹

y. *fine apparel* – מַחְלָצוֹת, only found here and in Isa 3:22, where it refers to the fineries of the rich women of Jerusalem. William L. Holladay has “extra fine, white clothing, festival clothing.”⁴⁰ The purity and quality of the garments is most likely in view.⁴¹ NASB: “festal robes,” emphasizes their stateliness. Aaron’s robes in Exodus 28:2 are called “holy garments” (ESV), בְּגָדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ.⁴² This is likely not a specific type of garment, since later, Joshua is clothed in the more general בְּגָדִים.⁴³

z. *And I said* – Many of the ancient translations, including Peshitta, Vulgate, and the Targums, have the more expected “And he said,” keeping the angel as the speaker.⁴⁴ But Neville L. A.

³¹ Holladay, “עֲבַר,” in *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 263.

³² Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 140.

³³ Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 197. See also Hinckley Gilbert Thomas Mitchell, J M Powis Smith, and Julius A. Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 151–52.

³⁴ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, “עָוָן” *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 730–31.

³⁵ HALOT, 1:800. See also McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1071; Boda, *Zechariah*, 226.

³⁶ Carl Schultz, “עָוָה 1577,” *TWOT*, 2:650.

³⁷ Boda, *Zechariah*, 226–27; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 190.

³⁸ E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley, Second. (London: Oxford University Press, 1910), <https://archive.org/details/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft/page/n3/mode/2up/>, 345: “In the later books especially it often happens that in a succession of several acts only the first ... of the verbs is inflected, while the second (or third, &c.) is added simply in the infinitive absolute.”

³⁹ Wolters, *Zechariah*, 93, calls this a “performative utterance”.

⁴⁰ Holladay, “מַחְלָצוֹת,” *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 190, emphasis original.

⁴¹ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 190.

⁴² See George L Klein, *Zechariah*, NAC 21B (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 140.

⁴³ James C VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest and the Interpretation of Zechariah 3,” *CBQ* 53.4 (1991): 553–70, especially 556–57.

⁴⁴ Boda, *Zechariah*, 228.

Tidwell has shown that Zechariah's first-person interjection is characteristic of the "heavenly council" scene found in Zech 3; 1 Kgs 22; Job 1; 2; and Isa 6.⁴⁵ Even critical scholars in light of Tidwell's work find *And I said* to be the more accurate reading.⁴⁶

aa. *turban* – זָנִיף is used here instead of כִּנְיֹפֶת, the common term for the high priest's turban (See Exod 28:4). Though both are worn by royal figures,⁴⁷ the latter is used almost exclusively (except in Ezek 21:31⁴⁸) for the high priest's headdress, and is likely a more technical term.⁴⁹ Here זָנִיף "more likely indicates the dignity of the clothing than the office of the wearer."⁵⁰ As with the robe, so with the turban, Joshua's replacement clothing is better than his old clothes.

bb. *So* – a consequential *wayyiqtol*.⁵¹

cc. *the clean turban* – Here with a referential definite article.⁵²

dd. *garments* – see note y.

ee. *And the Angel of YHWH was standing*. The phrase begins with a circumstantial *waw*, detailing "the circumstances under which a certain action takes place."⁵³ This is understood differently, as the angel standing by "observing the procedures" as he waits to give the upcoming charge to Joshua,⁵⁴ or even as simply awkward phrasing.⁵⁵ Neither conveys the significance of עֹמֵד here, as The Angel stands, overseeing with approval the work being done,⁵⁶ and even indicates His presence with YHWH's people and his victory over The Accuser.⁵⁷

ff. *And* – A sequential *wayyiqtol*.⁵⁸

⁴⁵ Neville L A Tidwell, "Wā'ōmar (Zech 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah's Fourth Vision," *JBL* 94.3 (1975): 343–55.

⁴⁶ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 190–91. See also Wolters, *Zechariah*, 94.

⁴⁷ Holladay, "כִּנְיֹפֶת," *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 211; Charles L. Feinberg, "1940 זָנִיף," in *TWOT*, 2:771.

⁴⁸ See Marko Jauhiainen, "Turban and Crown Lost and Regained: Ezekiel 21:29-32 and Zechariah's Zemar," *JBL* 127.3 (2008): 501–11, especially 505-06.

⁴⁹ Sweeney et al., *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 598.

⁵⁰ Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 141. For view that this word hints at royal connotations, see VanderKam, "Joshua the High Priest," 557.

⁵¹ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 99.

⁵² Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 37.

⁵³ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 158; see also Sweeney et al., *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 598.

⁵⁴ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 194; Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 374. Also Boda, *Zechariah*, 228.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 198.

⁵⁶ Klein, *Zechariah*, 141: this phrase "adds solemnity to the vision, emphasizing the importance to the Lord of the actions by sending his personal emissary to oversee their completion."

⁵⁷ Kline, *Glory In Our Midst*, 116–17. The Angel's standing "at the close of Joshua's re-investiture ... accents the dominance of his presence and the decisiveness of his advocacy for Joshua's justification and reinstatement. With respect to Satan, the messianic Angel's 'standing' ... proclaims that the Servant tramples the serpent and is the victor in final judgment."

⁵⁸ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 98.

gg. *adjured* – “adjure” provides both the solemnity and the judicial connotations conveyed by the verb עוֹד.⁵⁹ ESV: “solemnly assured”⁶⁰ conveys the more positive aspect of The Angel’s charge in v7. Against this translation is Gen 43:3, where the ESV translates “solemnly warned” because of the emphatic infinitive absolute,⁶¹ which is not present here. “Warned” implies that curses for disobedience will be part of The Angel’s message,⁶² but instead he only promises blessings for obedience. Charge also fits well,⁶³ but in our context may convey connotations of a prison sentence.

hh. *If ... and if...* – וְאִם ... אִם “introduces the protasis” of The Angel’s conditional statement.⁶⁴ The two conditions are joined by a conjunctive *waw*.⁶⁵

ii. *my service* – So NASB, and several commentators.⁶⁶ This word (מִשְׁמֶרֶתִי) has a broad semantic range, but in the context of the high priest’s rehabilitation, it likely refers to Joshua’s priestly, ceremonial service.⁶⁷ It may also refer to God’s law in general, highlighting the priestly prerogative to keep the law.⁶⁸ ESV has “my charge.”⁶⁹

jj. *Then surely ... and surely...* – Hebrew: וְגַם ... וְגַם. There is debate as to where the protasis ends and the apodasis begins. Boda takes *wegam... wegam* to indicate further conditions.⁷⁰ More likely, The first *waw* functions in a conditional sense here, introducing the apodasis.⁷¹ Though וְגַם ... וְגַם is commonly translated “both... and,” in context this pair functions in parallel with וְאִם ... אִם. The first *waw* introduces the apodasis, while the second *waw* functions in a conjunctive way, as the *waw* in וְאִם.⁷² גַּם in both instances is asseverative⁷³ or emphatic.⁷⁴

kk. *Then surely you* – According to William Gesenius, sometimes the emphatic use of *gam* shows “that the next word takes a considerable emphasis.”⁷⁵ So here, וְגַם־אֵתָהּ shows that The

⁵⁹ Wolters, *Zechariah*, 95.

⁶⁰ Also McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1073.

⁶¹ “עוֹד,” in Gesenius’, 611. See Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 87.

⁶² So Boda, *Zechariah*, 242.

⁶³ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 194; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 197–98.

⁶⁴ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 154.

⁶⁵ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 157.

⁶⁶ “מִשְׁמֶרֶתִי,” in Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 220. See Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 197; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 195.

⁶⁷ Boda, *Zechariah*, 242, translates this, “priestly-obligation.” Michael R Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, LHBOTS 506 (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 162, has “my requirements,” seeing “both a technical application to the priesthood ... and an application to the people of God generally.”

⁶⁸ “מִשְׁמֶרֶתִי,” in Gesenius’, 518; “מִשְׁמֶרֶתִי,” in See McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1073.

⁶⁹ McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:107; Duguid, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 100;

⁷⁰ Boda, *Zechariah*, 242.

⁷¹ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 158-59.

⁷² Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 157.

⁷³ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 145.

⁷⁴ “גַּם,” Gesenius’, 174.

⁷⁵ “גַּם,” Gesenius’, 174.

Angel emphasizes to Joshua that these promises are *surely* to him.⁷⁶ He will continue to serve as high priest to YHWH, which is its own blessing.

ll. *execute justice* – יָדִין often means to “bring justice”, “go to law with” or “execute justice.”⁷⁷ Only here does it have a building (*my house*, i.e. the temple) as its object. It likely refers to the priestly responsibility to execute justice.⁷⁸

mm. *my courts* – Once again, this almost certainly refers to the temple.

nn. *passage* – Traditionally “access” here, מַהְלָךְ is used variously as “passageway,” “distance” or “journey.”⁷⁹ In its plural form here, it seems to convey the sense of multiple “goings into and out of” God’s presence.⁸⁰ Access is thus a good translation, though NASB, “free access” seems overly interpretive. *passage* conveys the sense of “going” more than “access.”⁸¹ Again, the priestly privilege to draw near to YHWH is in view here.⁸²

oo. *among* – בֵּין, when used once before a plural noun referring to a group, denotes “among.”⁸³

pp. *these standing ones* – So Boda.⁸⁴ The NASB, Thomas McComiskey: “these who are standing here.” In Hebrew, הַעֲמֻדִים הָאֵלֶּה. Note again the use of עָמַד in this context. Here the plural participle likely refers to angelic attendants carrying out YHWH/The Angel’s commands concerning Joshua.⁸⁵ ESV, “those” does not convey the immediacy of the angelic attendants.

Context of Zechariah 3:1–7

Historical Context and Zech 1:1-6

Zechariah began his prophetic ministry in Judah “in the eighth month of the second year of Darius” king of Persia (Zech 1:1, ESV), around 520 B.C., and the book comes from around

⁷⁶ See also Boda, *Zechariah*, 242.

⁷⁷ “יָדִין,” Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 70.

⁷⁸ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest and the Interpretation of Zechariah 3,” 559; in agreement is Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 163.

⁷⁹ “מַהְלָךְ,” Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 184.

⁸⁰ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 196.

⁸¹ Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, 142, says a more literal rendering would be “walkings.”

⁸² Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 164. Sweeney et al., *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 599, sees here a reference to “the exclusive right of the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies” on the Day of Atonement. See also McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1074–75.

⁸³ Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 121.

⁸⁴ Boda, *Zechariah*, 242.

⁸⁵ McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1074–75, connects the standing ones to the access granted to Joshua in his performance of his Levitical duties: “These figures symbolize the agencies by which God expunges guilt. In Zechariah’s day, these agencies were the Levitical sacrifices and rituals. The promised freedom of access to these priestly functions is an affirmation of the restoration to priestly privilege that this vision sets forth, assuring the free enjoyment of the means of grace by which God expunges human guilt.”

the same time period,⁸⁶ approximately eighteen years after the first exiles' return to Jerusalem. Haggai had encouraged the leaders of Judah two months prior to renew their effort to rebuild to temple (See Hag 1:1). The temple was finished four years later, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius (See Ezra 6:15).⁸⁷ Prophesying to people who had newly begun work on the temple, Zechariah calls the people to repent: "Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts" (Zech 1:3). Reminding them of the failures of their sinful fathers, Zechariah calls the people to "learn from the past."⁸⁸ Their sinful fathers are gone, but the one thing that remains –and that people can trust to endure forever– is YHWH's word (See Zech 1:6). Despite the stern nature of this call to repentance, the implicit hope held out is that YHWH is calling his people to repentance: "The Covenant still stands!"⁸⁹

The Night Visions

Three months later, the word of the LORD comes to Zechariah in the night. Thus begins "The Night Visions" of Zechariah, which comprise Zechariah 1:7–6:8. There are most likely eight vision.⁹⁰ These visions zoom in chiastically and geographically from the whole world (1:10; 6:5), to the land of Judah outside Jerusalem (1:19; 5:3) to Jerusalem itself (2:2; 4:9), focusing in Zechariah 3 on the temple itself, the center of religious life in Jerusalem.⁹¹ In the first

⁸⁶ This period for the authorship of Zechariah is held by evangelical and critical scholars alike. See Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 167; Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 44–54; Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 311.

⁸⁷ It is important to note this context, especially in light of Zechariah 3. The priesthood must be re-established and re-validated. The message of Zechariah 3 comes to people who are rebuilding the temple and wondering if it will all be worth it. Will God still meet with them there?

⁸⁸ Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 184.

⁸⁹ Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 85.

⁹⁰ Kline, *Glory In Our Midst*, 177, finds only seven, structured chiastically. Most make a division between Zech 5:1-4 and 5:5-11, but Kline finds that based on the introductory formula throughout the night visions, and based on "interdependencies of grammar and terminology" all of Zech 5:1-11 should be taken as one. This reading is worth considering, but whether one holds to seven or eight night visions, Zech 3 falls at the center of the section of the book.

⁹¹ Meredith G Kline, "The Structure of the Book of Zechariah," *JETS* 34.2 (1991): 187. With an eight-vision view, the focus comes to center upon visions 4 (3:1-10) and 5 (4:1-14) and the historical figures present in them, the priest, Joshua, and the prince, Zerubbabel. For this arrangement, see Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 85.

of the vision, YHWH speaks gracious and comforting words to the angel accompanying Zechariah concerning Jerusalem, and ends with the promise that “the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem” (Zech 1:13, 17). YHWH promises the daughter of Zion in the third vision, “I will dwell in your midst” and “the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem” (Zech 2:15, 16 [Eng: 11, 12]). With this note of comfort, the third vision closes with the command: “Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling” (Zech 2:17 [Eng: 2:13]). The ensuing hush leads us to anticipate what comes next.

Exposition

v1 – Setting the Scene

Instead of YHWH leaving his holy dwelling, in Zech 3 the prophet has been shown into His holy dwelling. This vision manifests its unique position in the structure of the night visions through three differences: 1. The accompanying angel plays no part in this vision as he has in the three prior visions; 2. “The main subject of the vision is a historically identifiable person, Joshua the high priest;” and 3. “there is no “question-and-answer process” through which Zechariah comes to understand the vision.⁹² This has led some to treat Zech 3 as a later addition, or as separate from the series of night visions,⁹³ but the distinctions should rather cause us to pay attention to what is clearly a significant section of the book. As the scene is set, we meet the *dramatis personae* of the vision: Joshua the high priest is standing before The Angel of YHWH and The Accuser stands at Joshua’s right hand to accuse him.

⁹² Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 373–74.

⁹³ Paul L Redditt, “Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the Night Visions of Zechariah,” *CBQ* 54.2 (1992): 253; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 179. Paul Haupt, “The Visions of Zechariah,” *JBL* 32.2 (1913): 114, 118, goes so far as to believe that the original texts read “Zerubbabel” in place of Joshua, and sees this scene as originally presenting Zerubbabel before the satrap of Syria, “the King’s envoy.” This is ridiculous.

Already we have noted the significance of “standing” in this passage. Joshua is described as עֹמֵד לְפָנַי twice, both times in reference to The Angel of YHWH (3:1, 3). This formula of an impure man standing before YHWH⁹⁴ who is “subsequently cleansed” by Him brings many to draw parallels between Zech 3 and Isa 6, another divine court scene.⁹⁵ What is often forgotten is the setting of Isaiah’s vision, in which God is simultaneously “sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up” and filling the temple with the train of his robe (Isa 6:1). Here it seems that we are likewise brought into “the true form of these realities” that the temple is “but a shadow of” (Heb 10:1). What has been described as YHWH’s court can at the same time be described as the Holy of Holies, where seraphim cry “Holy, holy, holy” (Isa 6:3). N. L. A. Tidwell has argued that this vision “stands in a particularly close conceptual relationship to the prologue of Job” due to the presence of הַשֹּׁטֵן in both courtrooms.⁹⁶ These passages do seem to inform each other. A significant different between Job 1, 2, and Zech 3 is that here הַשֹּׁטֵן never is allowed to speak. Drawing both Isa 6 and Job 1 and 2 together, we see that God’s holiness, human sin, the testing of God’s people, and suffering should inform our reading of this vision. And, lest we miss the main point for the other nuances involved in this passage, Joshua stands before YHWH not only on trial, but also as the high priest,⁹⁷ in service of YHWH.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ We have already argued that The Angel is distinct from yet identified with YHWH. Even a critical scholar Mitchell, Smith, and Bewer, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah*, 148. calls The Angel “a (or the) manifestation of the Deity in human form, which might be, and, according to various passages in the Old Testament, often was, called a man.” No connection to Christ is made, but even here a clear “manifestation” of God is shown to us.

⁹⁵ Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 156. Mitchell, Smith, and Bewer, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah*, 148, is in the minority, and sees this taking place in “mundane surroundings.”

⁹⁶ Tidwell, “Wā’ōmar (Zech 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah’s Fourth Vision,” 347.

⁹⁷ While we reject his redaction criticism, W. Dommershausen, “יֹהָדִים,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 7:71–72, helpfully notes that the title “the high priest” came into popular use to describe the “chief priest” or head of the Aaronic priestly order after the exile as the priest “increasingly [became] the political head of the Jewish community.” The priestly rehabilitation in Zech 3 had lasting impact on the Jewish community.

⁹⁸ Commentators have so focused on the legal aspects of this text that they underappreciate the priestly connotations of “standing before” YHWH. David Baron, *The Visions & Prophecies of Zechariah*, Second. (Scripture Truth Book

v2 – YHWH Rebukes Satan and Confirms his Choice of Jerusalem

As noted above, although The Accuser stands to accuse Joshua, The Accuser never speaks. Instead, YHWH, who has only been present in this scene so far as The Angel of YHWH is present, speaks. YHWH speaks of himself in the third person: “And YHWH said... ‘Let YHWH rebuke you!’” This has baffled Wolters, who is “at a loss to explain this strange but apparently deliberate ambiguity,” though he trusts that Zechariah has written thus intentionally.⁹⁹ Though less acceptable academically, Zechariah may have himself been confused to express the concept of One who is distinct from YHWH yet “the same in substance, equal in power and glory” speaking here.¹⁰⁰

YHWH rebukes The Accuser based on His predetermination to choose Jerusalem.¹⁰¹ This decision, already expressed twice in Zechariah through two *weqatal* forms of בָּחַר conveying a choosing of Jerusalem “again” in the future. Now those statements are made clear: YHWH not only *will choose* Jerusalem, but he has chosen Jerusalem. YHWH’s election of his people temporally precedes and logically overrides any accusation that The Accuser may make against their high priest. This statement of comfort likewise narratively precedes the knowledge of

Co.: Fincastle, VA, 1962), 87, calls עֲמֹד לְפָנַי “almost a technical term” when used “of the priests, and especially of the high priest” to denote “their priestly ministry and service,” citing Deut 10:8.

⁹⁹ Wolters, *Zechariah*, 92.

¹⁰⁰ WSC Q. 6, *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (Lawrenceville, GA: Christian Education & Publications, 2007), 360–61. While this reading must only be made “with the eyes of faith” it ought not be too quickly abandoned in the academic setting. The Angel is the same yet distinct from YHWH. Here preachers are on equal footing with PhDs: Richard D. Phillips, *Zechariah*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, REC, ed. Richard D. Phillips and Philip Graham Ryken (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2007), 25; Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 4:1112.

¹⁰¹ More than this, if הַבְּחֵר is taken as a substantive participle, YHWH may be arguing from his character, as one who may be named בִּירֵשֶׁלַם הַבְּחֵר, “The Chooser of Jerusalem.” See Arnold and Choi, *Guide to Biblical Hebrew*, 94–95.

Joshua's impure status. Before the whole of the problem in this passage is presented to the reader, the problem is resolved by God's electing love.¹⁰²

The proof of YHWH's election is that Joshua is "a brand snatched away from fire." Not only does this refer "to the fact that he was saved from exile,"¹⁰³ but it is likely an echo of Amos 4:11, where the same Hebrew construct exists, excepting a different word for "fire." In context of Amos 4:11, a brand plucked from burning (מִשְׁרֵרֶפֶת) is a sign of God's judgment, but here YHWH reverses the image, using it as a sign that God has delivered His people from captivity.¹⁰⁴

v3-5 – *The Angel of YHWH cleanses the priest*

We are finally presented with Joshua's problem in v3. He is clothed in "soiled" or "feculent" (צִוֵּאִים) garments. Joshua here stands not just for himself and for the priesthood, but for all of the people in Israel. This is clear for two reasons. First, YHWH cited his election of *Jerusalem* when He rebuked Satan for accusing *Joshua*, clearly drawing a connection between the two. Second, Joshua's iniquity being removed in v4 is in some way tied to the removal of the iniquity from "this land" (אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל) in v9.¹⁰⁵ Even if Joshua stands before YHWH only as the high priest, he still stands as the mediator between YHWH and His people, implicating the people in his uncleanness.

In order to understand Joshua's dilemma, we must return to Exod 28, where the High Priest's clothing is described to Moses. Twice in Exod 28, YHWH commands Moses that the garments should be worn by Aaron and the other priests "so that he does not die" when he comes

¹⁰² Phillips, *Zechariah*, 66.

¹⁰³ Julia O'Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, ed. Theodore Hiebert et al., AOTC, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 128, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/rts/detail.action?docID=5014602>.

¹⁰⁴ Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 157; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, 113.

¹⁰⁵ With Boda, *Zechariah*, 237, it at least foreshadows the work of the Messianic figure, The Branch/Sprout.

before YHWH (Exod 28:35, 43). Death was the punishment for improperly wearing the garments made for the priests, not to mention extreme ceremonial uncleanness, which excrement (רִצָּצִים) upon the garments of the high priest would have caused (see Deut 23:11-15 [10-14], esp. v14).¹⁰⁶ Joshua is ministering before YHWH in ceremonial uncleanness. We now suspect what The Accuser's accusation may have been. Joshua, the one figure who must present himself in "glory" and "beauty" before YHWH, is before Him in excrement-spattered garments. Were it not for YHWH's previous declaration, we would anticipate Joshua's doom.

The בְּגָדֵי רִצָּצִים do not only signify human excrement. When The Angel removes Joshua's clothing from him, He says He has removed Joshua's "iniquity." Some try to minimize any reference to personal sin found in this passage.¹⁰⁷ While it may be true that Joshua's own sin may not be immediately in view, the problem of Judah's sinfulness along with their uncleanness from their time in Babylon must be held together here.¹⁰⁸ The "sum of past misdeeds against God" is denoted here, as well as the consequences for those misdeeds.¹⁰⁹ This removal is a wholesale removal. The guilt for the sin is removed. The punishment for those sins (i.e. exile in Babylon) has been removed. And now, the fear of "high priest-lessness" of Judah is being removed, as The Angel of YHWH recommissions Joshua to stand before Him. The breach between Judah and YHWH is no more, and God will dwell with His people and provide them with a way to worship Him.

¹⁰⁶ Boda, *Zechariah*, 235.

¹⁰⁷ See O'Brien, *Zechariah*, 128; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 187.

¹⁰⁸ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 189, though they minimize the sense of personal sin, do link "moral impurity" and "ritual uncleanness" and see them as "not separate in biblical religion."

¹⁰⁹ Carl Schultz, "1577 עֲוֹנָה," *TWOT*, 650–51.

The garments that the priest receive have been noted by many. Instead of his regular garments, he is given **בְּחֵלְצוֹת**, “fine apparel.” These fine garments do not give us a new pattern for the priest’s clothing, but instead show the excellent, white quality of the robes. These are new robes for Joshua’s old robes. YHWH has given Joshua and the people a gracious new start. Zechariah is so taken by the reinvestiture of Joshua that he speaks up. He calls on the attendants to place the turban on Joshua’ head. Some have argued that the word for turban here (**כִּנִּיָּוִת**) implies “glory and even royalty.”¹¹⁰ This word seems more likely to refer to a general term for turban, though in Ezekiel it is used of the turban of the princes of Israel (See Ezek 21:26). Joined with the upcoming prophecy of the Davidic **מֶלֶךְ** this turban may indicate that Joshua as High Priest “is both to stand in for... and... to be a sign of the coming restoration” of YHWH’s Davidic king.¹¹¹ What is more certain is the connections back to Leviticus 8 and 16, which detail Aaron’s consecration and the description of the priest dressing on the Day of Atonement. In both passages, the turban is the final adornment, completing the ceremonial dressing of a new priest, as well as the priest on the day of his most sacred performance. Joshua is clothed in pure clothes in order that he may be commissioned for sacred duty.¹¹²

v6-7 – The Angel of YHWH Adjures Joshua

The charge given to Joshua is both stern and warm. It ought not be considered a “warning” because there are no negative consequences mentioned for failing to walk in YHWH’s ways and guard his service, though such consequences are implied. Nor should we read this as a simple “works-rewards” statement, where God will only bless Joshua if he is good

¹¹⁰ Duguid, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 99.

¹¹¹ Jauhiainen, “Turban and Crown,” 511.

¹¹² Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 159; Boda, *Zechariah*, 240.

enough.¹¹³ Instead, these conditions have blessings attached to them, which themselves are further priestly duties.¹¹⁴ They are conditional insofar as Joshua must be faithful to God in order to continue to have the privilege of “passage” among “these standing ones.”¹¹⁵ The word מַהֲלָכִים seems to have connotations of a “pathway,” implying that Joshua will come so regularly that he wears down a path into God’s presence among the angelic attendants. We must again remember that we are currently in God’s heavenly courtroom, the true Holy of Holies, which only the high priest could enter, and then only on the Day of Atonement. The “passage” YHWH grants Joshua implies that the high priest will be able to come more frequently to YHWH than once a year. Or else, this is a promise that generations after Joshua the high priest will be able to continually come on the Day of Atonement on the condition of faithfulness. Whatever the case, this promise comes to full fruition in Christ and those who come to the Father through him.¹¹⁶ This passage highlights and enhances the incredible privilege that the high priest has, being able to come, not only into the earthly sanctuary, but in some sense into the very throne room of YHWH.

v8-10 – The Priest as Messianic Sign

The vision concludes with a messianic prophecy. The Angel, still speaking to Joshua, says that he and his associates sitting before him are “men of a sign” (הַנְּשִׂי מוֹפֵת). These men (Joshua and his fellow priests) are symbols of “future divine activity.”¹¹⁷ They are a sign that YHWH is bringing “My Servant, Scion” (עַבְדִּי צִמָּח). The priests are signs that YHWH is

¹¹³ See O’Brien, *Zechariah*, 127.

¹¹⁴ We do not see royal duties described here, as do Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, 196. See instead Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 162–63.

¹¹⁵ Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 150; Klein, *Zechariah*, 142.

¹¹⁶ Klein, *Zechariah*, 142.

¹¹⁷ McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1077, points to Ezek 12:6, where YHWH describes Ezekiel as a מוֹפֵת to the people of the coming exile brought about by God.

working towards the coming of His Servant, “Scion.”¹¹⁸ In light of Zechariah 6:9-15, where this same figure is said to rebuild the temple (6:12-13), Michael R. Stead argues that “the recommissioning of the priesthood is a sign that Yahweh’s house is about to become operative again, which in turn implies that the temple builder (צִנְוֹר) must be about to come and complete the construction.”¹¹⁹ If this is a true description of a time when Zerubbabel (the צִנְוֹר in Stead’s opinion) “was temporarily absent,” from Jerusalem, it cannot cover the entire scope of this prophecy.¹²⁰ This figure combines the עֶבֶד of YHWH from Isaiah who we know in Isaiah 53 as “the suffering servant,” and the Davidic צִנְוֹר from Jeremiah 23 and 33, who is named “YHWH Our Righteousness” (33:16). YHWH has declared Joshua righteous, and now promises that the priest is a sign of YHWH Our Righteousness, who is now conflated with the servant of YHWH who bears the sins of many. In light of the reference to YHWH removing, or departing with,¹²¹ the iniquity of this land in a single day, we should understand that עֶבֶד י צִנְוֹר will build a greater temple than the physical temple, and he will remove iniquity from the land in a more definitive way than the priest did in the yearly Day of Atonement. The priesthood and the Day of

¹¹⁸ Commonly translated, “The Branch” (ESV, NASB), this term refers more accurately to new growth coming up from the ground, and “Sprout” or “Shoot” makes the most sense, but I cannot bring myself to use either word, and so the lesser known, but nobler sounding “Scion” has been employed. Gregory R Lanier, “The Curious Case of צִנְוֹר and Ἀνατολή: An Inquiry into Septuagint Translation Patterns,” *JBL* 134.3 (2015): 505–27, has shown that the LXX’s translation of this word that in English has been traditionally rendered “dayspring” (See Luke 1:78) stems from the common meaning of each word to denote new plant growth.

¹¹⁹ Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 168.

¹²⁰ Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 166.

¹²¹ So Max Frederick Rogland, “Verb Transitivity and Ancient Hebrew MVSH in Zechariah 3:9,” *VT* 63.3 (2013): 497–98, who sees וַיִּנְשֹׂא in 3:9 as a regular qal use of the verb נִשָּׂא, with the meaning, “I will carry away,” instead of the causative sense typical in hifil, “to remove” that most people translate this verb as. From this, he draws connections to the Day of Atonement, where the scapegoat carries away iniquity into the wilderness. Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 170, also sees reference to the Day of Atonement in 3:9b, though not in the verb.

Atonement, according to this prophecy, function as a sign of a greater figure who is still to come who will combine in Himself both prince and priest.

Brief mention should be made of **הָאֶבֶן**. YHWH sets a stone before Joshua and “upon a certain stone are seven eyes” (**עַל-אֶבֶן אַחַת שִׁבְעָה עֵינַיִם**). YHWH also “engraves an engraving” in it. Commentators usually¹²² claim this signifies one of two things: 1. a precious stone worn by the high priest, either with seven “facets” in it, functioning akin to the metal band placed in the high priest’s turban, which had the words “Holy to YHWH” inscribed in it (See Exod 28:36),¹²³ or with fourteen “facets” corresponding to the fourteen stones the high priest wore, inscribed with the names of the tribes of Israel.¹²⁴ or 2. The capstone or cornerstone of the temple.¹²⁵ Christopher J. Thomson has shown linguistically that the claim that seven eyes means “seven pairs of eyes” is untenable, as is reading “eyes” as “facets” or “springs.”¹²⁶ Stead, on the other hand, notes that while there are precedents for engraving the stones found in Aaron’s breastplate in Exod 28, there is no Biblical precedence for engraving “a stone for use in temple construction,”¹²⁷ and Boda suggests that better than facets, “gleams” or “sparkles” is a better translation of **עֵינַיִם**, which does have biblical attestations.¹²⁸ The decision regarding the identity of the stone is difficult, and it may be that this vision conveys some connotations of both.¹²⁹

¹²²Though see Jonathan Yogev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” *VT* 69.2 (2019): 307–19. Yogev sees the seven eyes on the stone as tied to a Babylonian ritual that Zechariah snuck into his text. Also ridiculous.

¹²³ Mitchell, Smith, and Bewer, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah*, 159–61; Boda, *Zechariah*, 259–60; Kline, *Glory In Our Midst*, 122–24.

¹²⁴ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest and the Interpretation of Zechariah 3,” 567–70; Wolters, *Zechariah*, 102–3.

¹²⁵ McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1079. McComiskey provides little suggestion for what the engraving would be, determining simply that YHWH “is already carving” the stone

¹²⁶ Christopher J Thomson, “The ‘Seven Eyes’ of Zech 3:9 and the Meaning of the Dual Form,” *VT* 62.1 (2012): 115–28.

¹²⁷ Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 169.

¹²⁸ Boda, *Zechariah*, 260.

¹²⁹ John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. W. H. Goold (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 3:96, notes the connection between the plate with the inscription “Holy to YHWH,” and the stone here, but nevertheless interprets the stone as a promise that YHWH would “bring forth the Son as the corner-stone of the

Whatever the stone may be, or the inscription upon it, the seven eyes most likely refer to the seven eyes of God referenced in Zech 4:10 looking “upon” the stone, watching over God’s people.¹³⁰ The outcome of this stone’s presence, either in the completion of the greater temple or in the perfect high priestly work, is the removal of iniquity from the land. As a result of this cleansing through the Servant-Scion-Stone, people will enjoy peace akin to the time of Solomon (1 Kgs 5:5 [Eng: 4:25]), yet even greater, with men inviting their friends to share their joy with each other under their vines and fig trees.¹³¹ Thus in Zechariah 3 the high priest is rehabilitated and transformed into a sign of God’s renewed love, and a sign of hope in YHWH’s Servant who will bring about a peaceful, prosperous future without sin.

Conclusion: Theological and Pastoral Implications

Zechariah 3 is rich in its theology. We have throughout noted the implications it has for Christology. Christ is present in this passage as The Angel of YHWH. As the preincarnate Word, He declares with YHWH’s voice that YHWH has chosen Jerusalem. He removes Joshua’s iniquity and clothes Joshua with (His own) rich apparel. He then grants Joshua access to the throne of grace, and tells Joshua of His own coming to fulfill the sign of the priesthood as our great high priest. We today 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” (Heb 10:19-20).

The pastor preaching on this can likewise tell his congregation that no matter how “dirty” someone feels, Christ has born the stain of our sin and is able to cleanse any and all who come to

church” and “to engrave upon him the seven eyes of the Lord... or the perfection of his wisdom and power, to be expressed unto the church in him.”

¹³⁰ Thomson, “The ‘Seven Eyes’ of Zech 3:9 and the Meaning of the Dual Form,” 124; McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, 3:1079.

¹³¹ Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8*, 171.

him in faith. No man or woman is righteous in his or her own right. In the presence of God, we all stand in filthy rags. But Christ is our righteousness, and he traded our rags for his robes. He took our rags upon himself and “bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2:24). We stand in the imputed, perfect righteousness of Christ.¹³² Not only do we see God’s grace, but we see God’s call to faithful obedience to him in response to grace. From Zechariah 3:1-7, one can preach the character and persons of the Godhead, human depravity, justification, imputed righteousness, mediation, atonement, sanctification, and glorification, and in all this, Christ!

¹³² Phillips, *Zechariah*, 70–71.

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