

Zechariah 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

Analysis

And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. Zechariah's fourth vision presents a dramatic courtroom scene. Yehoshua hakohen hagadol (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל, Joshua the high priest—also called Jeshua in Ezra/Nehemiah) stands before mal'akh Yahweh (מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה, the Angel of the LORD), likely the pre-incarnate Christ. Satan (שָׂטָן, the Adversary/Accuser) stands al-yemino (עַל-יְמִינוֹ, at his right hand) le-sitno (לְשַׁטְנוֹ, to accuse/oppose him).

The right-hand position typically indicates favor or power, but here Satan occupies it as prosecutor bringing charges. In ancient Near Eastern courts, the accuser stood at the defendant's right hand to present evidence of guilt. Satan's accusation has merit—Joshua wears filthy garments (v. 3), symbolizing sin and defilement. As high priest representing the nation, Joshua's contamination represents Israel's corporate guilt from exile and ongoing sin.

This scene depicts spiritual warfare over God's people and their restoration. Satan argues they remain unworthy of God's favor—guilty, defiled, disqualified from priestly service. Yet the Angel of the LORD (Christ) advocates for Joshua, rebuking Satan and defending the accused not based on Joshua's righteousness but on divine election and grace. This prefigures Christ's ongoing advocacy for believers (Romans 8:33-34, Hebrews 7:25, 1 John 2:1).

Historical Context

Joshua (Jeshua) served as high priest during the post-exilic period, leading worship restoration alongside Governor Zerubbabel. He represented the community before God, offering sacrifices and intercession. His standing before the Angel with Satan as accuser reflects the spiritual battle over Israel's restoration. Satan contested their right to rebuild the temple and restore worship—they were guilty, defiled by exile, unworthy of God's presence.

The vision addresses post-exilic doubts about whether God would accept their worship. Having experienced judgment through exile, could they truly be restored to covenant relationship? Satan's accusations exploit these doubts, but God's response (v. 2-5) provides assurance: election, not merit, secures their standing. God chose Jerusalem (v. 2), plucked them from judgment's fire (v. 2), and graciously cleanses them (v. 4-5).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. When Satan accuses you of unworthiness to serve God, how does Christ's advocacy as your High Priest and Defender provide assurance?
2. What does Joshua's standing before the Angel despite filthy garments teach about approaching God through grace rather than personal righteousness?
3. How does this vision prefigure Christ's role as both our accuser-rebuking Advocate and our sin-removing High Priest?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּרָא נִי	אֶת	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	הַכֹּהֵן	הַגָּדוֹל	עִמָּד	לִפְנֵי י
And he shewed	H853	me Joshua	priest	the high	standing	before
H7200		H3091	H3548	H1419	H5975	H6440
מַלְאֲכִי	יְהוָה	וְהַשָּׂטָן	עִמָּד	עַל	יְמִינוֹ	לְשֹׂטְנוֹ:
the angel	of the LORD	and Satan	standing	H5921	at his right hand	to resist
H4397	H3068	H7854	H5975		H3225	H7853

Additional Cross-References

Luke 22:31 (References Lord): And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

1 Peter 5:8 (Parallel theme): Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Psalms 109:6 (Parallel theme): Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

1 Chronicles 21:1 (Parallel theme): And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

Zechariah 6:11 (Parallel theme): Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;

Luke 21:36 (Parallel theme): Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Malachi 3:1 (References Lord): Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Haggai 1:1 (References Lord): In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,

Zechariah 3:8 (Parallel theme): 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.

Genesis 48:16 (Parallel theme): The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

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