



+ **YOU**

Sermon Series: Irrefutable: Prophecies that Point Us to Jesus

To be used with: Session 6: The Ruler Who Cares for His People

Sermon Title Possibilities: Compassion for a Corrupt Nation

Scripture: Zechariah 3:1-10

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *Irrefutable: Prophecies that Point Us to Jesus*, these sermon outlines will follow the same theme as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The Point: Jesus leads and cares for His people.

Introduction: Some time ago I came across an article on Baptist Press about a new movement called “Chrislam.” Proponents contend that since the Koran mentions Jesus and even affirms some of the Bible’s teachings about Him, then Christianity and Islam share some common ground. They say we should focus on the areas of agreement instead of the differences. The writer of the article correctly noted that this whole idea is fraught with problems. While Islam may agree with some of the Bible’s teachings about Jesus, it denies the most important things such as His deity, His atoning death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead. I saw the article on Facebook, and I was really intrigued by a comment left by one reader. He said, “One of the key tenets of monotheism is that God is unknowable.” Needless to say, I felt compelled to reply! I suggested that he study his theology a little more carefully, because Judaism and Christianity are both monotheistic, and they most certainly do teach that God is knowable.

When I say God is knowable, I’m not suggesting that human beings can discover God or learn about Him through their own intellectual faculties. I am saying that God has revealed Himself to us, and therefore He certainly is knowable. The Israelites understood this, but in Zechariah’s day, many of them wondered if God had forsaken them. They had just returned from a seventy-year exile in Babylon, and the city of Jerusalem lay in ruins. Solomon’s temple, once the pride and joy of the whole nation, had been reduced to a pile of rubble. Construction on a new temple had begun, but the people were still discouraged. Had God forgotten His covenant with the nation? Was there any hope for them at all? Zechariah assured the people that God had not forgotten them at all. He would not only forgive their sins, but He would also reveal Himself to them in a way that no one had ever seen before. Someday God’s own Servant – the Messiah – would come and offer full forgiveness not only to Israel, but to the whole world.

I. A difficult dilemma.

- A. Zechariah saw a vision of Joshua the high priest standing before God.
 - 1. Joshua is mentioned several times by Haggai and Zechariah.
 - a. Evidently, he had grown up in Babylon and returned to Israel with the first group of Jews that were released.
 - b. Since he was the high priest, the people held him in high regard.

2. Satan stood up to accuse him.
 - a. Joshua was wearing “filthy garments”. The word “filthy” is the same word that speaks of human vomit or even human excrement.
 - b. No self-respecting high priest would ever perform his priestly duties while clothed in such garments.
3. “The Lord rebuke thee” – If it were a modern American courtroom, we would say God ruled Satan out of order.
 - a. God didn’t deny Joshua’s guilt. He simply said he had already taken care of the matter.
 - b. God refused to take Satan’s side because He is merciful.
- B. What did Joshua’s filthy garments have to do with life in the real world?
 1. The Israelites had recently returned from captivity in Babylon.
 - a. They knew their captivity was God’s judgment.
 - b. God could have destroyed them altogether, but since He is merciful, He allowed a remnant to return to Israel.
 2. We are just as guilty as the people of Israel.
 - a. We have sinned against God, and we deserve His judgment.
 - b. Because God is merciful, He provided a way of forgiveness through His Son Jesus Christ.

II. A curious cleansing.

- A. God took away Joshua’s filthy garments.
 1. They set “a fair mitre” on his head.
 - a. This was a turban worn by priests and kings.
 - b. The high priest’s turban had a golden plate on the front that said, “Holy unto the Lord”.
 - c. They also clothed him with clean garments.
 2. This symbolized what God was going to do for Israel.
 - a. Just as He removed Joshua’s soiled garments, He would remove Israel’s sin and guilt.
 - b. Just as He clothed Joshua with clean garments, He would clothe the people of Israel in righteousness.
 - c. Just as He restored Joshua to his position as high priest, He would restore Israel into a right relationship with Him.
- B. This was a great picture of what God would do through Christ.
 1. Just as Joshua was physically unclean, we were spiritually unclean.
 - a. He has taken away our sins and clothed us in His righteousness.
 - b. We didn’t do it ourselves; God did it for us because He is merciful.
 - The New Testament says a great deal about “justification”. This means God has not only forgiven us for our sins, but He has also declared us righteous in His sight.
 2. The angel of the Lord “protested unto Joshua”. The word “protested” can also be translated “admonished” or “charged”.
 - a. Joshua had privileges as high priest, but he also had responsibilities.
 - b. As followers of Christ, we are God’s representatives in this world, and we are expected to obey Him.

III. A powerful prediction.

- A. “For they are men wondered at” – Other translations say, “they are men who are a symbol”.
 - 1. “My servant the BRANCH” – This word appears several times in the Old Testament prophets, and at least five times it refers to the Messiah.
 - a. God had warned that those who rebelled against Him would be destroyed like trees in a forest fire (Isaiah 10:11-18).
 - b. However, a “shoot” (or branch) would grow out of “the stump of Jesse”. In other words, God would someday raise up one of David’s descendants – the Messiah – to rule Israel (Isaiah 11:1-5).
 - 2. He also spoke of a stone with seven eyes.
 - a. Scholars disagree whether He was speaking of a stone in the new temple, or one of the sacred stones in the high priest’s breastplate.
 - b. Seven is the number of completion or perfection, which suggest that the Messiah would have all the knowledge of God Himself.
- B. God would “remove the iniquity” of the people.
 - 1. “In one day” – The Messiah would do one great work that would take away the sins of the people.
 - a. This happened when Jesus died on the cross.
 - b. The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, symbolizing that the barrier between God and man had been removed.
 - 2. He promised a future of peace and prosperity (v. 10).
 - a. We still live in a world that is under the curse of sin, so we still see wars, strife, poverty, and injustice.
 - b. Our Lord has prepared a home in heaven that is free from the curse of sin, and we can look forward to it with anticipation.

Conclusion: I have a commentary on the Minor Prophets that was written by Dr. Steve Miller, who was my Old Testament and Hebrew professor in seminary. He told a story about a Japanese fighter pilot named Mitsuo Fuchida. He was the leader of the assault on Pearl Harbor that took place on December 7, 1941. That incident, of course, destroyed the American fleet in the Pacific and prompted our country’s entry into World War II. Fuchida later boasted that this assault was “the most thrilling exploit of my career”. After the war, Fuchida returned home. He was bitter and disillusioned by his country’s defeat. He was a married man, but he had a mistress in Tokyo whom he visited regularly. One day in October of 1948, he was on his way to visit his mistress when he saw an American handing out leaflets at a train station. The leaflet was titled *I Was a Prisoner of Japan*. It told the story of an American pilot named Jacob DeShazer who had been captured by the Japanese. He spent forty months in a prison camp, where he was frequently tortured. The leaflet told of how he overcame his hatred for his captors through Jesus Christ. He later returned to Japan as a missionary.

Mitsuo Fuchida was intrigued by DeShazer’s story. A few days later at the same train station, he saw a Japanese man selling Bibles, and he bought one. He was particularly fascinated by Jesus’ prayer on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It soon dawned on him that he was one of those for whom Jesus prayed. Fuchida came to know Jesus as his Savior, and later became an evangelist in Japan and

Asia. Through his work, he made the acquaintance of Jacob DeShazer, whose testimony had so impressed him. These two former enemies became great friends.¹

For the last century, we have heard a great deal about world peace. Yet in spite of man's noblest efforts, wars still happen all over the world. Why? All the problems that cause war – greed, prejudice, racism, political rivalries, etc. – all of those things are problems of the heart. No government on earth can change a person's heart, but Christ can! Mitsuo Fuchida led one of the most brutal assaults in the history of the world, yet even his heart was not beyond the grace of God. Let us keep preaching and sharing the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ, because it is this world's only hope for a better future.

¹ Stephen R. Miller, *Holman Bible Commentary: Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004, pp. 159-60.

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