

Zechariah 3; Isaiah 11:1-10; Remember the Branch I. The Coming of the Branch II. The Coming of His Blessings

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how do you get clean? Most of our stains can be taken care of with soap and water- but sometimes an article of clothing is so dirty that it simply needs to be thrown away. The stench and the filth are beyond our ability to remove. Well, today we find a HP who needs to be cleansed. As we come to the prophet Zechariah, we find many different images- and some of them are very complex. Zechariah lived during the same time as Haggai- speaking shortly after this older prophet. One of the great themes of this book is finding a solution to iniquity- a cure for pollution. Zechariah was a priest himself- and he returned to the land of Judah with Zerubbabel some years before. His name means- the LORD remembers! God keeps His promises! As a book, Zechariah is the longest of the minor prophets- and it is heavily quoted in the NT. Over 50 times in in the NT- but most of these images of Zechariah are found again in the book of Revelation. In fact, I would say that Zechariah is the minor prophet's version of Revelation with all of these visions, dreams and imagery. This book is very clear in identifying the person and work of Jesus Christ- while remain complex in its symbolic meaning. With vision of the 4 horsemen, a golden lampstand, angels and horns of destruction- even earthquakes and a river of life. So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ the Branch calls the church to remember and return to the LORD. Zechariah is repeatedly asked- do you see- do you understand? So I ask you- do you know your sin and misery- do you know your need? Do you see and remember that Jesus is your only hope?

### **I. The Coming of the Branch**

In our first point, we are going to consider the identity and work of this person who is called the Branch in our reading. 3:8- I will bring my servant the branch. And again in 6:12- the man's whose name is Branch will branch out. Now chapter 3, the Lord is speaking to Joshua and his friends- who are a sign before the Lord. And in speaking to the one who will build the temple in 6:12- we know that this one is in fact Zerubbabel who we considered last week. In fact, the name Zerubbabel means "shoot or branch of Babel". So it seems clear that the branch here spoken of by Zechariah is in fact a reference to Zerubbabel. But as

we saw last week, this man has become a sign- a picture or someone greater to come. Isaiah 4:2 speaks of the branch of the LORD. Or Jeremiah 23- the LORD will raise up unto David a Righteous Branch. Now was Zerubbabel or Joshua the High Priest particularly righteous men- without sin? As we also read in Isaiah 11:1- there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will be upon him- and he will judge with righteousness- righteousness will be his belt! Back in 3:9 we continue to find that a stone was set before Joshua- and on that stone was inscribed this promise- I will remove the iniquity of the land in a single day! As great a man that Zerubbabel may be- and holy and upright the priest Joshua may be- they still have their sin to deal with as we will see in our next point. They were not righteous! Continuing this line of thought in ch. 6:12- 13, we find that this one called branch will build the temple- as Zerubbabel did- and this one will bear royal honor- as Zerubbabel did in part- but what about sitting and ruling on his throne. We know that Zerubbabel never sat on a royal throne! Zerubbabel was signet ring as we saw last week- a ring that was a sign of the covenant made to David- and God will keep His covenant promises! And this priest of v. 13 who will sit on the throne with him- it is likely a reference to Joshua the high priest- but he also never sat on a throne. So it must be someone else- someone who will sit on a throne not only as a king, but also as a priest! Could it be that there was another temple to be built at a later date? That someone was coming who would bring the promised forgiveness and cleansing- who would also rule in righteousness and truth- who would sit on a throne? Someone greater who will spring forth from Jesse's stump- the righteous branch! So both Joshua and Zerubbabel continue the work of the LORD- while they typify in part the priestly king who was to come! But Zechariah has more to say about this coming king- Not only will He rule- but He will come with humility. Specifically, when this promised King named the Servant of the LORD and Branch comes- He will come gentle and lowly- as we find in 9:9. Humble- riding on a donkey. He shall speak peace- his coming in meekness will bring blessings and life to all nations. But although his coming will bring great blessing, He will also be rejected. He will come to His own- but His own will not embrace Him. Even his own disciples will flee; when the Shepherd was struck the sheep scattered- 13:7. He will be the rejected shepherd king as

we find in ch. 11. A good shepherd who loves and saves the flock from destruction- but who is also rejected and despised by men. Adding to this theme of rejection- He will even be pieced! Lets read 12:10-13:1. His side will be split open. Note that v. 10 records the LORD saying- they will look on me whom they have pierced. It is the LORD who will be pierced- who will be looked upon! How can God be pierced if not for God taking on flesh- being crucified by the hands of sinful men! And it will be by this blessed work- by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ- that a healing fountain and cleansing flood will be opened- 13:1. You see- the one day upon which iniquity would be removed- 3:9 said- or the day in which a fountain will be opened to cleans from sin and uncleanness as 13:1 says- refers to what happened on the day when Christ body was broken and blood was shed! Healing and life-giving water now does flow forth- by His stripes we are healed as Isaiah said! Or as Eph. 1:7 says- in Him we have redemption through His blood- the forgiveness of our trespasses. So once again- the book of Zechariah is telling us the good news! Do you know Him? Do you remember that He was sent according to the promises! As the name Zechariah means- the LORD will not forget! Jesus is the yes and the amen to all of God's promises! It is easy to forget- to ignore and neglect this blessed truth. But let not our hearts be cold when we are told of Jesus, his loving sacrifice, His coming in humility to die for us- and now He reigns on high! Let us praise Him for what He has done- and rejoice in the forgiveness of sins that He has purchased!

## **II. The Coming of His Blessings**

As we continue in our 2<sup>nd</sup> point now, we look at the blessings that this servant of the LORD, Branch, and shepherd brings to His people. As a book, Zechariah is unique in that it begins with the application. In 1:3 we read, return to me and I will return to you. This is the imperative of this opening chapter- turn- or return- we would say repent from your sins and flee unto the LORD. And the people obeyed- as 1:6 says- they repented- they returned to the LORD! They acknowledged their sin and misery- they turned to the LORD and look to Him- trusting in Him alone for salvation and life. And this really set off the direction of this whole book. When the shepherd calls- His sheep hear His voice- they head the summons and come! This call comes in the context of a covenant community that has responded to the word of the LORD- not

only by building the temple again as we saw last week- but in repenting from their sin and turning to the LORD in faith! And one of the visions found in ch. 3 give us a beautiful picture of what this means- of how we benefit when we are joined to Christ by faith. In ch. 3 we find Joshua the high priest- but he is not looking very priestly. (read ch. 3:1-5) He is covered in filth- his robes are covered in animal dung- filthy in v. 3. The kind of stain that cannot be washed off- that pollutes to the core. And Satan is standing by- ready to accuse- to bring a charge against God's elect because they are sinners! Now this pollution is a sign of our sin- a reminder that we are all dirty- clothed in polluted garments and filthy rags. Joshua is wearing the sins of his people on his shirt if you will- but instead of accusing him, the angel commands that he be changed. Instead of removing Joshua from his position- the LORD commands that his cloths be changed so that they are in keeping with his position. Instead of rebuking Joshua, the LORD rebukes Satan! And in v. 5, Joshua is given a new robe- clean vestments and a new turban. He is made clean- and his garments reflect his calling as a priest of the LORD. Now this is a beautiful picture of what takes place in our justification. It is a vision of the removal of sin- in God's grace a surprising provision is made- the dirty rags taken off- replaced with glowing white or pure and clean clothes! Our sins placed on Christ- His righteousness placed on us! The same thing happens in ch. 5:6- the iniquity of the land is placed in basket and taken away- the sins of the people are removed! As Psalm 103 puts it, our sins are cast away as far as the east is from the west! So the first blessing we find in this book is the forgiveness of sins- the pardon of iniquity- the removal of the stain that pollutes- we are justified in Christ! As Rom. 8 states, who can bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies! Do you know your sin- do you acknowledge that you are polluted as well? We all need to see this truth- my sin is a pollution in God's sight- but the free gift of grace and Jesus blood cleanses within! The second, big picture blessing that we find our prophet is the sending of the Holy Spirit! In 12:10 we find a promised pouring out of the Spirit of grace. That those who had once pierced Christ would have their hearts turned- softened- so that now they mourn over their sins in sorrow. As 4:6 confirms, salvation comes not by might, nor by the power of man but by the Spirit of God! So we have this promised moment in history when those who only a few days before crucified Jesus- were now pierced to the heart and filled

with sorrow! As we found back in the book of Joel 2- the Spirit is going to be poured out on the people. Now this promise of 12:10 was fulfilled in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. The people of Israel who had cried out- Crucify Him- were now struck to the heart by the Holy Spirit- a Spirit of grace and mercy had changed their hearts so that now they cried out- what shall we do? It was by the Spirit's moving that the people of Israel were filled with a heart of sorrow an mourning- to which Peter would say- repent and be baptized and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And on that day- 3 thousand souls were added to the number of the church- and the church continued to grow and increase and they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship. We can say that any person who has godly sorrow for sin- and is filled with a repentant heart- has enjoyed the presence and work of the very Spirit about which we read in ch. 12. So the Spirit opens the hearts of these people- so that they hear- turning to the LORD and He returns to them with forgiveness and grace! So if you know your sin and misery- if you have turned from your sins and return to the LORD- then the Spirit has been at work in you- and we thank the Lord for His work within!

To conclude, as I said in the introduction- this book reads like an OT version of the book of Revelation. Ch. 14 ends with living water flowing from the temple- when a time of healing would be experienced in all nations. The fountain opened in ch. 13 becomes a stream or water that cleanses and gives life! The one to bring these blessings is the LORD'S servant, the Branch and the Shepherd King. We know Him as Jesus Christ our Lord- the Son of Man who walks among golden lampstands or the churches. Our book opens with a command to turn- to repent and believe- to return to the LORD! Do not harden your hearts or stop your ears when the call to faith and repentance is heard- rather humble yourself before the LORD as you remember His promises- and repent from your sins that are like dirty cloths whose stain cannot be washed out by the hands of man. As our theme stated, Jesus Christ the Branch calls the church to remember and return to the LORD. It is this good Shepherd who has removed the sins- the iniquity of the land in a single day- by the shedding of His blood a healing fountain has been opened by which we might be saved!