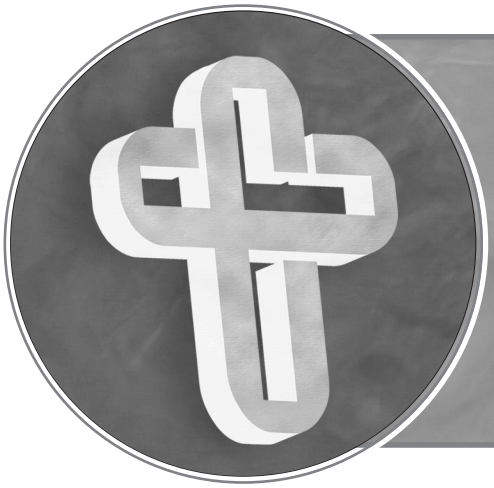


CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
OCTOBER12024

I want you back!

Scripture Story: Zechariah 1:1–3:5.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 47.
Key Text: Zechariah 1:3.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The book of Zechariah is a series of visions given to the prophet by God for the encouragement of the remnant of Judah, fast at work rebuilding the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah's message, like that of Haggai, is one of hope.

Satan worked feverishly to discourage the returning exiles in any way possible, reminding them of their recent exile and their poor condition. But God through Zechariah offered the maligned remnant a new lease on life. "'Return to me,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'and I will return to you'" (Zechariah 1:3, NIV).

God continued His entreaties to Judah by promising to once again bathe His people in their former prosperity (verse 17). Jerusalem would overflow its borders so much that they could not be measured. God would be its walls, and His presence its glory (Zechariah 2).

In spite of this grand imagery, the most poignant moment occurs in Zechariah 3 when God through the Holy Spirit removes the iniquity of Joshua the high priest and clothes him in new garments. This message is at the core of this week's lesson. Highlight the fact that God is the "author" and "finisher" of our faith. God accepted Joshua's supplications on behalf of the people, just as He accepts Christ's supplications on our behalf.

In this message of redemption and restoration God foreshadowed the day when Jesus would redeem fallen humanity from sin. Also, make the point that when we accept Jesus' sacrifice, Satan's accusations lose their power. We are complete in Jesus (Colossians 2:10).

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Discover that God offers us a bright future with Him in heaven. *(Know)*
- Experience the assurance that God is willing to forgive and restore all who repent of sin. *(Feel)*
- Accept God's offer of cleansing and renewal. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Great Controversy, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 8: "All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. . . . Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation." (Genesis 3; 6-8; Job 1:6-12; Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-18; Romans 1:19-32; 3:4;

5:12-21; 8:19-22; 1 Corinthians 4:9; Hebrews 1:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 3:6; Revelation 12:4-9.)

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Divide the class into groups of two or three and ask the teens to share their rankings with the group. After a few minutes, ask one student from each group to share their top three most difficult challenges to overcome. (Note: There is a good chance that one or more of the students in your class have experienced, or are experiencing, similar setbacks. If the opportunity presents itself, use this moment to pray for kids who may need it.)

The purpose of this activity is to get kids thinking about the challenges faced by Judah as they tried to rebuild their lives following 70 years of slavery and subjection in another country. As if this were not enough, they faced the added burden that their own behavior had caused them to lose all.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

An elegant woman shared her heartbreaking story at a banquet in Seattle. "She told how John H. had murdered her brother during a robbery, served 18 years at [a prison] in Walla Walla, [Washington, and] then settled into life on a dairy farm, where she had met him in 1983, 20 years after his crime. Compelled by Christ's command to forgive, Ruth Youngsman had gone to her enemy and pronounced forgiveness. Then she had taken him to her father's deathbed, prompting reconciliation.

"Some wouldn't call this a success story: John didn't dedicate his life to Christ. But at [the] banquet last fall, his voice cracked as he said, 'Christians are the only people I know that you can kill their son, and they'll make you a part of their family. I don't know the Man Upstairs, but He sure is hounding me.'

"John's story is unfinished; he hasn't yet accepted Christ. But just as Christ died for us regardless of our actions or acceptance, so Ruth forgave him without qualification. Even more so, she became his friend" (Albert H. Quie, www.higherpraise.com/illustrations/forgiveness.htm).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Forgiveness is a grace that few people extend to others in our cold and calculating world. Yet if forgiveness is rare, restoration of the perpetrator of the wrong to the status of friendship is no doubt an act of God.

In this week's lesson God doesn't just want the minute remnant of Judah to know that He forgives them; God goes even further. He restores them to fellowship with Himself through promises that echo down to our time and situation. While our world may seem out of control, God is at work in it, reconciling lost humanity.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- God often offers us "carrots" before "sticks"—carrots of course being blessings and sticks representing punishments. What "carrots" did God offer the returning exiles from Babylon?
- What could be the reason God mentioned the past crimes of Judah when the people of Israel were vulnerable and desperate for a new life, free of Babylonian oppression?
- What special challenges might Zechariah have faced in delivering this message?
- What does Judah's response in Zechariah 1:6 tell us about the role of confession in forgiveness? Was this confession a signal of their repentance?
- In what way is the high priest Joshua a "type" of Christ? How is he different from Jesus?
- In Zechariah's vision, Satan stands to the right of Joshua, hurling accusations to God about him. Were Satan's accusations against Joshua and Judah unfounded?
- The removal of Joshua's sin preceded his being provided clean garments. What act of Jesus removed our sins? What is the "robe"

that we now wear? (Isaiah 61:10).

Notice in this story that confession leads to repentance, which leads to forgiveness, and finally, restoration through Christ's righteousness alone.

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Exodus 28; Isaiah 53; Matthew 27; Hebrews 4:14–5:10.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. **The Parent Trap.** The parents of the returning exiles of Judah had died in captivity. Some fled to Egypt instead of heeding Jeremiah's message not to resist the Babylonian captivity, and they perished there.

   To a large extent, it was the parents of Judah's remnant that brought God's judgment down on the entire nation. God knew that unless they understood the wrong that their parents had done and saw the justice in God's punishment, they would be doomed to repeat the same mistakes.

   Through Zechariah, God was giving Judah a chance to seize the future, but before doing so they had to come to terms with the past.
2. **Without a Mediator.** In "Joshua and the Angel," chapter 47 of *Prophets and Kings*, Ellen White notes that "Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing scenes of the great day of atonement. The remnant church will then be brought into great trial and distress" (p. 587).

   In the vision Joshua stands before a holy, sinless God, pleading his case. As he pleads for mercy on behalf of himself

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Great Expectations

All learners come to a learning environment with certain expectations. During some downtime, consider asking your students what they expect when they come to Sabbath School. Ask them what they'd like to see happen. Would they like to help with a portion of the lesson, for instance? Often teens will connect more with other teens than they would with their teacher.

Once you know what your teens are expecting, you can then tailor the class to expand the range of experiences that they get. Today's media-saturated, technology-savvy teens can overwhelm a teacher with their desire for an entertainment-driven Sabbath School. Resist the urge to be entertainment-driven. Make the learning interesting through the use of media, for instance, but try to not to overdo this.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight *convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

and the nation of Judah, Satan is accusing him. Satan's taunts are deeply distressing to Joshua. This will also be the case for God's remnant church as it approaches the second coming of Jesus.

Today is the day to let Jesus reproduce His perfect character in us to fit us for that day.

3. **Other Voices.** Zechariah's message of hope was part of a theme. Isaiah prophesied that God would one day comfort His exiled people: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1, 2, NIV).

After the captivity, God had a plan to prosper Judah and not to harm them (Jeremiah 29:11). Jesus looked down through the eons of time to our day with the knowledge that like Judah, we too would face uncertain days. To His disciples then and now, He said: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?" (John 14:1, 2, NIV). Amen!

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Ask students to form pairs. Ask each student to think of an area in their life that needs to be totally and completely given over to God. The students are *not* to share this with their prayer partners.

When students have had a chance to think of their area of need, ask each student to pray for the other person in their pair and vice versa. Have the kids focus their prayers, asking God to give their prayer partner the strength to turn over their challenge to Him. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

The human need for God's forgiveness and restoration is incessant and unquenchable. Lee Strobel, an American Christian apologetic author, wrote: "If you're a follower of Jesus but you feel distant from Him during this era of your life, if you're having difficulty resting easy in His forgiveness, could it be because you're blatantly refusing to let go of your animosity toward another person?"

God promised Judah that He would return to them if they would return to Him. The promise was conditional, but He who had promised was faithful. He would keep His word, though theirs would no doubt fail.

Through Zechariah, God gave Judah a reason to hope. Though buffeted and slandered by the enemy, He would not only help them rebuild their broken lives; He would remove their sin and dress them again in clean clothes. He would rebuke Satan!

God is speaking to you and me today, daring us to take hold of His wondrous offer of love.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*),* chapter 47.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS

OCTOBER12 2024

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Zechariah 1:1–3:5.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 47.

I want you back!



LARS JUSTINEN

flashlight

"The assaults of Satan are strong, his delusions are subtle; but the Lord's eye is upon His people. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but Jesus will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. Their earthliness will be removed, that through them the image of Christ may be perfectly revealed" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 589).

key text

"Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'and I will return to you,' says the LORD Almighty."

(Zechariah 1:3, NIV)

what do you think?

On a scale from 1 to 10, which of the following challenges would be most difficult (1) to beat, and which would be least challenging (10) to overcome?

___ Your father loses his job.
___ Your application to the college of your choice is denied.
___ Your grandfather dies.
___ Your parents decide to divorce.
___ Your best friend betrays you.
___ You fail the final of your most difficult class.
___ Your negligence while driving causes an accident.
___ You have a really bad habit that you can't seem to shake.

did you know?

Did you know that the name Zechariah means "Yahweh remembers" or "God remembers"? As is the case with many of the Bible's prophets, the name of the prophet is often a summary of the prophet's message. What is the significance of Zechariah's name? God through Zechariah wanted the returning exiles to know that He hadn't forgotten the covenant made with them at Mount Sinai when He gave them the Ten Commandments. In return for their obedience, God had promised to bless them, and He wasn't about to forget His promise.

INTO THE STORY

"In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo:

" 'The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Return to me," declares the LORD Almighty, "and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices." But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. Where are your ancestors now? And the prophets, do they live forever? But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your ancestors?

" 'Then they repented and said, "The LORD Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as he determined to do." ' "

" 'Shout and be glad, Daughter Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you,' declares the LORD. 'Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you.' "

"Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, 'The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?'

"Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, 'Take off his filthy clothes.'

"Then he said to Joshua, 'See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.'

"Then I said, 'Put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.

"The angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua: 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: "If you will walk in obedience to me and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here." ' "

(Zechariah 1:1-6; 2:10, 11; 3:1-7, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What is something that caught your attention in this passage?

_____
_____
_____

List two spiritual insights that you gained after reading the *Into the Story* passage.

_____
_____

What do you think is the main point that God is making to the people of Judah?

_____
_____

What word would you use to describe God's tone? Is He angry? calm? loving? judgmental?

_____

Why does God rehash the fact that many of Judah's descendants were disobedient? Why bring that up after Judah has undergone 70 years of brutal captivity?

_____
_____

Circle the promises God made concerning Judah.

Place an X by any Scripture in which you see God's grace extended to His people.

Why do you think God gave Zechariah a vision of Joshua, the high priest, dressed in dirty, tattered clothes? What do you think the dirty clothes symbolize?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down' " **(Revelation 12:10, NIV).**

"Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you" **(Acts 13:38, NIV).**

"Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered" **(Psalm 32:1, NIV).**

further insight

"As Satan accused Joshua and his people, so in all ages he accuses those who seek the mercy and favor of God. . . . But He who was the hope of Israel then, their defense, their justification and redemption, is the hope of the church today."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 585

"The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, faithful children of God."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 591

Sabbath

Read Zechariah 3.

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. . . . To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation" (Fundamental Belief 8, The Great Controversy).

How is the great controversy revealed in today's Bible passage? What was Satan's response concerning Joshua, the high priest? What was God's response to Joshua? What encouragement can you gain from this story when you are reminded of your sins?

_____

_____

_____

Sunday

Read Zechariah 2:10.

After reading the *Into the Story* section, explore the passage using the *Out of the Story* prompts. The book of Zechariah is made up of several visions that God gives Zechariah to encourage the remnant of Judah that returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the ancient Temple that was destroyed by Babylon.

Put yourself in the shoes of one of the returning members of Judah. Write a sentence expressing how these words would make you feel.

_____

Monday

Read Exodus 19:1-8.

This Sabbath's *Key Text* makes it clear that God stood ready to return to the people of Judah, but Judah had a part to play in the process. What do you think God meant when He said to Judah, "Return to me"?

_____

Many of God's promises to His people are conditional. What did God promise to do in today's Bible reading? What did the people of Israel—of which the tribe of Judah was a part—promise to do?

Do we sometimes expect God to keep His promises to us when we are breaking ours to Him?

Tuesday

Read Genesis 3:21 and Zechariah 3:1-7.

What common elements do you see between these two passages? The Bible calls Satan the "accuser of our brothers and sisters" (Revelation 12:10, NIV).

He tempted and led into sin Adam and Eve and as a result the entire human race plunged into the degradation of sin. After the fall of Adam and Eve, however, God sacrificed a lamb and clothed them in garments made of animal skin. The sacrifice pointed to the Redeemer, to Jesus' sacrificial death to save the human race from sin. In what ways did the clean garments that God gave to Joshua, the high priest, compare to the garments given to Adam and Eve?

_____

_____

_____

While Satan accuses us, God offers each of us a clean robe that represents Christ's righteousness (see Zechariah 3:4). If we accept His robe of righteousness, He will protect us against the accusations of the devil. What will you do to accept Christ's robe of righteousness?

_____

_____

_____

What ray of hope does this week's *Flashlight* shine on our path?

Wednesday

Take a look at this week's *Punch Lines*. This week's Scripture painted a picture of sin's devastating effects. While in vision, Zechariah saw Joshua, the high priest of Judah, dressed in filthy, tattered clothes—something that God would never tolerate, especially for a priest. Joshua's manner of dress symbolized Israel's degraded spiritual condition.

How does God go about fixing this condition?

Do you think Psalm 32:1 accurately captures how you feel when God forgives you of sin? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

Thursday

Read Psalm 139:7-12.

Think of a time in your life you felt abandoned. Perhaps it was after you failed a test, or committed a sin that you'd vowed never to do again. How did you deal with the feeling of separation from God? When you feel abandoned by God, how can the Bible help you reconnect with Him? How can godly friends help you return to God?

Write down your commitment to God to remain faithful to Him:

_____

_____

_____

Friday

Read Zechariah 3:7.

If you will walk in obedience to me and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here" (Zechariah 3:7, NIV). Those are the words that the angel of God spoke to Joshua in Jeremiah's dream. God promised Joshua and Judah a place in His kingdom, provided that they remained obedient to His requests.

In what area of your life are you struggling to obey God? Stop right now and pray, asking God to give you the willingness and strength to obey Him.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 47.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it by going to www.cornerstoneconnections.net and clicking on "Conflict of the Ages series." By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.