

It Is Finished: Gone in a Single Day

Zechariah 3:1-10

April 3, 2026 (Good Fri.)

St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom

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.

"Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.

"In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree,' declares the LORD Almighty. (Zech. 3:1-10 NIV)

Dear friends in Christ the crucified:

If you've attended all the Wednesday Lent services, Palm Sunday and last night's Maundy Thursday service, this text is the ninth sermon you've heard from the book of the prophet Zechariah. I'll bet you've never heard so many sermons drawn from Zechariah before. So much of the passion was foretold in that book: The thirty pieces of silver, the shepherd struck, the sheep scattered, looking at the one they have pierced, and riding to Jerusalem on a donkey—the Palm Sunday text.

This last text that I read from Zechariah, who lived about 520 years before Christ, is a most appropriate one for Good Friday. This text is the fourth vision in a series of visions the Lord Almighty showed his prophet. It fits in very well with what Jesus cried on the cross, the theme of this year's Lenten series: **"It Is Finished!"** Let's take a closer look at this vision.

The vision centers around a man named Joshua. Don't think of "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho" fame; this Joshua was also known in the book of Ezra as Jeshua, the high priest in Jerusalem at the time of Zechariah. As high priest, Joshua represented the people before God, "standing before the angel of the LORD," serving this manifestation of the Lord God.

Standing at Joshua's right side was Satan, the "enemy" and "accuser." The old evil foe was there to accuse Joshua, the representative of Israel. Satan was acting as prosecuting attorney before the Lord's court, and it appeared like he had an open-and-shut case: "Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes." Filthy as in soiled, stinky like he had just been in cow manure on the farm. Again, Joshua was representing his nation; the people as a whole were filthy, dirty in their sinfulness.

But 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?" Joshua—and his nation of Judah—had been rescued from their time of captivity in Babylon. However, this vision is pointing ahead to the spiritual redemption that would soon take place. The angel told his fellow angels to take off Joshua's filthy clothes, and in exchange put on fine, splendid garments, with a turban fitting

for a priest to wear. It was a vivid picture of the forgiveness of sins—the filthy robes of sin taken off, and pure, holy righteousness put on.

Then the Lord spoke through his angel to Joshua: “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 those standing here.” Having been forgiven, Joshua and the people would get to live, be rulers in God’s house, and live among the saints and angels in heaven. But for that to happen, the Lord promised to send someone special: “I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua!” This Branch was spoken of in Isaiah and Jeremiah as another name for the Messiah, a branch from the stump of Jesse and King David’s line. That Messiah would be a stone, a cornerstone for the church. Through this Messiah, the Lord promised, “I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.” Yes, all sin, everywhere, **Gone in a Single Day!**

Now let us see how this vision got fulfilled on that single day we call Good Friday. As the Lord told Joshua, he and his fellow priests were “men symbolic of things to come.” The Messiah to come was also High Priest. Jesus—the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic name Jeshua, in Hebrew Joshua, meaning “the Lord saves”—came to be the perfect representative of all people before God. We read in Hebrews 4:15, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.” Jesus is our great High Priest!

But then came Satan, the enemy. Satan succeeded in tempting us to sin. We fall into his traps, again and again. Our lives were filthy and stinky. Satan, it would seem, is successful in accusing us before God of sin. And on Good Friday the fire of God’s judgment came down. The Lord God hurled his wrath—onto his Son! Remember, Jesus came as our high priest, representing the world. The Son, who is the Angel of the LORD in this vision, took off our filthy, sin-stained, stinky clothes and put them on himself. Our sins were charged to Jesus. Therefore God forsook his Son on the cross, allowing him to suffer hell in our place. Therefore Jesus, who had no sin, became sin for us and died.

Jesus, however, was also the “burning stick” rescued from the fire. God did not abandon his Son to the grave but revived him. And all who are in Christ, believers in him, will therefore be redeemed, bought by the death of Christ and set free from eternal death and hell.

Jesus is now the Branch and Stone for his church. He is now the living vine, and we are grafted into him by faith for life. He is the living stone, the chief cornerstone on which the Church, made up of believers, is built. Jesus is our all-seeing Lord, watching over us, protecting us. By the price that Jesus paid on the cross, he has removed “all sin in the land,” all over the world. That includes our sin too. It is indeed **Gone in a Single Day.**

Look at the blessed results of that single day for us now. Our filthy robes of sin have been exchanged with Christ’s white robe of righteousness, as described beautifully in Isaiah 61:10: “I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness.” And in “that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree,” a way of describing the rest, peace, and prosperity that we will enjoy in heaven, all thanks to Jesus.

It all happened on a single day, Good Friday. Jesus declared it himself, just moments before he hung his head and died: “**It Is Finished!**” Zechariah’s prophecies are fulfilled: All has been paid for, all was now complete, all our sins, **Gone in a Single Day. It Is Finished,** indeed! Amen.