

The Minor Profits

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Well, I beg your indulgence again because I have some material that I want to share with you from the pen of Dr. James Montgomery Boyce, who is now with the Lord, and also from a noted Jewish scholar, Dr. David Barron, who published this book 102 years ago on the visions and prophecy of Jeremiah.

And I was so smitten with the contributions that both of those men make, I've decided that our time would be better spent hearing from them than it would be hearing from me.

So I beg your indulgence because I know sometimes listening to content being read can be boring, but I assure you there is nothing boring about this and nothing unimportant about it.

So bear with me if you will. We are talking about a time period very strategic in the history of Israel. This is referred to as the post-captivity period.

Israel had been consigned because of their idolatry and unbelief. They had been consigned to being overflowed by the Babylonians and carried into Babylonian captivity where they will spend and have spent 70 years.

[1 : 25] When the time period is up, God is returning them to their land, but there are only about 50,000 who return from the captivity. You've got to remember 70 years later produces a couple of new generations.

And while these people were in Babylon for these additional 70 years, they grew up and they married and had children and grandchildren and settled down and started businesses, built homes and all the rest of it.

So out of all of those that could have returned, only about 50,000 did. And now we are confronted or Israel is confronted with the rebuilding of the wall under the direction of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the temple that will be overseen partly by Nehemiah and by Zerubbabel.

Zerubbabel will not be king, but he has been appointed governor of Jerusalem when they come back to the land to rebuild it.

And of course, Nehemiah will be in charge of building the wall. So I want you to keep in mind the time frame that we are talking about, which is approximately 500 years before the birth of Christ.

[2 : 41] And this is again referred to as the post-captivity period. In other words, Israel as a nation has been punished by their slavery, if you will, in a foreign land.

But those who enslaved them, the Babylonians, have themselves been overrun by another enemy. And they were the Medes and the Persians. So the Medes and the Persians had a certain degree of sympathy for those who had been captives of the Babylonians.

See what I'm saying? So they were of a mind to let them go. And this, by the way, is of the same time period that we are talking about in connection with Esther, Queen Esther.

And in the book of Esther, it's in that time frame. So keep that in mind, if you will. And let's look now to the pen of Dr. James Boyce. And he is with the Lord now, so he knows more about what he wrote than he did when he wrote it.

I'm just going to break in. And he's talking about the prophet Zechariah. And he says, Zechariah must have wondered at this point how God could possibly bless his people after all they had done.

[3 : 52] That means their debauchery, their depravity, their idolatry, the 70-year period of captivity. Now they're back in the land trying to pick up the pieces and get on with being a country again.

And the text goes on. The fourth and most dramatic vision seems like an answer to just such questions. Zechariah saw Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord.

Now this is one of the many visions that Zechariah is being given. And when we are talking about Joshua the high priest, it has nothing to do with Joshua who was the successor of Moses many years earlier.

This is many years later and an entirely different Joshua. And this Joshua is designated as the high priest at the time. Zechariah saw Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord.

Although he does not say so, it probably took place in the remembered or anticipated temple in Jerusalem where Joshua would be performing his functions as priest.

[5 : 07] Now what's happened to the temple? It's been raised. Broken down. All of the items of the temple have been carried off to Babylon. They will be returned, however.

And Darius the Mede and Ahasuerus, who are going to permit the Jews to return to their land, are also going to return to them all of the treasures of the temple that the Babylonians had stolen and taken with them to Babylon.

They're going to see to it that all of those items of furniture are brought back and the other things that accompanied it. As Joshua performed his important function of representing the people before God, Satan appeared at his right side to accuse him.

Now for that we need to go to Zechariah chapter 3. If you will open your Bibles to that portion, please. Zechariah chapter 3. We've already covered this material once.

But in my further studying, I just became convicted that there were too many good things that I glossed over and did not give enough attention to. So that's what we're doing now.

[6 : 18] In chapter 3 of Zechariah, here's the vision. Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord and Satan at his right hand to accuse him.

Well, what is that all about? In the vision, Satan has access to the presence of the Lord. And we will see, well, we probably won't see today, but eventually we will see how that Satan is referred to in Revelation 12 where he is cast out of heaven down to the earth and he is called the accuser of the brethren.

What does that mean? That just means that we all have plenty of grounds for satanic accusation against us for our sin.

Everybody does. And Satan delights in pointing out to God the failures of his people. And they are plenty.

And we'll talk a little bit later about Martin Luther and how he dealt with that. But I want you to keep in mind this setting that we are talking about here. The Lord said to Satan, verse 2, The Lord rebuke you, Satan.

[7 : 43] Now here we've got the Lord saying and the Lord rebuke you. This, I think, is a clear indication for the necessity of a Christophany. This is a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus, even in this vision.

The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you. Is this not a brand plucked from the fire? He's talking, of course, about Jerusalem and the people, the population in it.

And he is suggesting that they have been rescued as a brand plucked from the fire. So continuing on with what he has to say here. As Joshua performed his important function of representing the people before God, Satan appeared at his right hand to accuse him.

Bear in mind now, this is the vision that he's being given. Since we are told later that Joshua was clothed in filthy clothes, representing his and the people's sin, Satan must have been pointing to those and declaring forcefully that Joshua was unfit to stand before the Lord in his office.

And is that not true? Of course it is. Of course it is. Joshua said nothing in the vision. Presumably he had nothing to say. Well, by the way, who has any defense to offer against their sin?

[9 : 09] This is one reason why when men stand before God for the final judgment, every mouth will be closed.

No one will have anything to come back with. Joshua had nothing to say. Presumably he had nothing to say. He was sinful and being sinful was unworthy.

But God spoke and his words were a rebuke 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? Then Joshua's filthy clothes were taken away, and rich garments and a clean turban were put on him, while the angel of the Lord stood by.

There are a number of important doctrines in this story. We see the deity of the angel of the Lord clearer here, even than in the previous chapter.

[10 : 10] It is he who speaks to Satan, saying, The Lord rebuke you. But he is himself called the Lord. Another doctrine is God's divine choice or election, for the Lord has chosen Jerusalem.

It is not Jerusalem that chooses him. Again, the picture speaks of God's grace. More important than any of these other doctrines, however, is the picture of salvation, presented by the clothing of Joshua in clean garments.

This taps into a rich stream of biblical imagery. In Isaiah 64, 6, in a passage that would no doubt be known to Zechariah and the biblically literate returning exiles, Isaiah wrote, all of us, and by the way, Isaiah wrote this 200 years before these exiles who were living in the time frame we're talking about, because Isaiah was a couple of hundred years earlier than what Zechariah was.

And Isaiah wrote, All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are as filthy rags.

Job said, I put on righteousness as my clothing. Justice was my robe and my turban. Job 29, 14. One of the Psalms of Ascent, which the children of Israel sang as they were going up to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the feast days, one of those Psalms was sung by the people that said, May your priests be clothed with righteousness.

[11 : 53] May your saints sing for joy. Isaiah speaks of the Messiah being clothed with righteousness, in that righteousness will be his belt, and faithfulness to sash around his waist.

Isaiah 11, 5. And he put on righteousness as his breastplate. Toward the end of his prophecy, Isaiah rejoiced that he was clothed in God's righteousness.

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 righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

And now I turn to the pen of Dr. David Barron, who had this to utter, that I think is helpful and very enlightening, as he describes this vision that Zechariah is seeing, and the characters who are in it, and what they are doing as he goes on to explain it.

And Dr. Barron says, I want to remind you, he was an Orthodox Jew who came to faith in Jesus as his Messiah well over a hundred years ago, and has written a number of commentaries, and this is one of the finest.

[13 : 12] Dr. Barron says, regarding this vision that Zechariah is witnessing, Here we are brought face to face with one of those mysteries of revelation which must be classed among the things which we know not now, nor can as yet fully understand.

And that is, namely, the position of Satan in God's economy in general, and his relation to the moral government of this world, and to man in particular.

And I just want to inject something here as I give you a brief aside. I am satisfied, and we will be seeing this later on, how that the adversary is far more involved in the affairs of men and governments throughout history, including today, than what we give him credit for.

And no, as I've made clear in the past, I am not one of those that wants to blame the devil for everything. We've got enough orneriness and sin in us that we can conjure up a lot of evil on our own without any help from the adversary.

But I want you to understand that he is the great coordinator. He is the great chief of conspiracy, and he works in fashions and ways that we know not, and I'd like to explore some of those later, but we cannot take time for it now.

[14 : 39] But let's move on. How and why, how and why we may not yet fully know, but the fact is clearly brought before us in Scripture that the great adversary of God and man is permitted to appear before God not only in his earthly courts of the temple, as in this vision, but in heaven as the accuser of the brethren.

And it is especially in his role as the accuser that the fiendish nature of the old serpent is brought out. It was he who brought sin into the world.

It is he who deceives men and nations and spurs them on to sin and rebellion against God. And yet, and listen to this, and yet when the seduction is accomplished, he turns around and becomes their accuser.

Isn't that slick? He is the one who tempts us to sin, and then when we cave in to him, he points out our sin, and he becomes the accuser of the brethren.

And as Dr. Barron has stated, I do not understand the mechanics of how it is that Satan actually has access to the Almighty in heaven.

[16 : 05] But he had to have had access, otherwise we would not be able to account for the book of Job. And we would not be able to account for that passage in Revelation 12 that talks about the adversary in heaven with God before the throne, and he is cast out.

And he is cast down to the earth. And when he comes down to the earth, he comes down with great fury and wrath because he knows that he has but a short time.

And the time is just a few years. And that's the tribulation thing that is being talked about here. So bear in mind, I'm going to read that paragraph again. It is really, it has got Satan's fingerprints all over it.

Listen to this. It was he who brought sin into the world. It is he who deceives men and nations and spurs them on to sin and rebellion against God.

And yet, when the seduction is accomplished, he turns around and becomes their accuser. This truly is like himself.

[17 : 16] And I must skip some of this content, but it is, this is very poignant. And I've heard about this. I have not actually seen it with my own eyes. But my understanding is that it is available for tourists to be able to witness even to this day.

And here is what Dr. Barron is speaking about, as he says in his book. Some of my readers, may have visited the Wartburg Castle in Germany and had pointed out to them the black spot on one of the walls of the room which Martin Luther occupied during his benevolently intended imprisonment.

And you might recall that it was during, I think, that period of three months that Luther translated the entire New Testament from Greek into German.

Dr. Barron continues, The legend connected with it, that black spot on the wall, is this. One night during this mournful solitude when suffering from Great Depression, because as he himself expresses it in a letter to Melanchthon dated May 24, 1521, just a hundred years ago.

Now this was a personal letter that Martin Luther wrote to who was arguably his best friend, a former reformer named Melanchthon.

[18 : 55] And he says in his letter, I do, Martin Luther says, I do see myself insensible and hardened, a slave to sloth, rarely alas, rarely praying, unable even to utter a groan for the church, while my untamed flesh burns with devouring flame.

Quite an admission. The great reformer dreamt that Satan appeared to him with a long scroll in which were carefully written the many sins and transgressions of which he, Luther, was guilty from his birth and which the evil one proceeded to read out, mocking the while that such a sinner as he should ever think of being called to do service for God or even of escaping himself from hell.

As the long list was being read, Luther's terrors grew and his agonies of soul increased. At last, however, rousing himself, he jumped up and exclaimed, It is all true, Satan, and many more sins which I have committed in my life which are known to God only.

But right at the bottom of your list, Satan, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. Then, grasping the ink stand on his table, he threw it at the devil who soon fled, the memorial of it being left in the ink splash on the wall.

Hmm. Well, you can see, if you know anything at all about Luther in his having been excommunicated by the Pope from the Roman Catholic Church, having already issued what he did and placing it on the castle in the church on the front door of the church there and the Wartburg castle, he had virtually the entirety of the papacy and the cardinals and all of the dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church coming down on him and calling him heretic and consigning him to hell and everything else that went with it, I do not think it would be within the constitution of any normal human being not to suffer from some real depression and doubts and questions and fears and you cannot help but wonder

[21 : 50] Luther thinking things like who am I, one mere man, one mere mortal, to stand against the dignitaries and the authorities of this august body that had been in position for over a thousand years and tell them that they are wrong and having been dismissed from their assembly as a heretic and I am now to continue this work and insist that they are all wrong and I am, can you not imagine the anxiety of soul, the depression, the questions, the fears, the doubts, all of these things settling in on him as they would on any normal man, I can scarcely imagine what that must have been like, the pressure had to be enormous and all the while, Satan is eager to point out to him Martin's own shortcomings and failures and the only panacea for him is simply the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin, that was what he ultimately came down to.

This is a remarkable vision that we are talking about here. It has to do with restoration, it has to do with forgiveness, it has to do with looking 500 years into the future of what the finished work of Christ was going to bring to pass for a fallen humanity.

All of this is built into this either prophetically or as he saw it in the vision. It's just remarkable, remarkable stuff. So let us take a minute if we may and look back at Zechariah chapter 3 and verse 4.

He spoke and said to those who were standing before him saying, remove the filthy garments from him. Again he said to him, see I've taken your iniquity away from you and I will clothe you with festal robes.

This is a picture of Israel being restored to their rightful position before the Lord as represented by the priest here.

[24 : 03] Let them put a clean turban on his head. All of course which is the picture of cleansing and forgiveness. So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments while the angel of the Lord was standing by.

And the angel of the Lord admonished Joshua saying, this is in the vision, thus says the Lord of hosts, if you will walk in my ways and if you will perform my service, then you will also govern my house and also have charge of my courts and I will grant you free access among those who are standing here.

Now this is a little bit reminiscent, is it not? If you will walk in my ways and if you will perform my service. Were not those the conditions that were imposed upon them even before they were led into captivity?

captivity? And of course they turned a deaf ear to it and they didn't do it. And they literally thumbed their nose at God, embraced the idolatry and everything else. And just as Jeremiah and others predicted, God led them into captivity.

He told them well in advance, not only that it was coming, he even told them who it was coming from and what they were going to do when they got there and that they were going to carry you into captivity.

[25 : 23] And the leadership of Israel literally thumbed their nose at God and at the prophets who delivered the message. And when Jeremiah delivered his message, they took it in and showed it to the king.

And the king took the scroll that Jeremiah had written and ripped it and threw it in the fire. And then God told Jeremiah, write it again.

And he wrote the same thing again. That's the prophecy of Jeremiah. Jeremiah. And it was all based upon the condition that Jeremiah says to the leadership of Israel, if you will repent, God will repent.

God will change his mind and that nation from the north will not come against you. God will protect you. And of course, in their arrogance, they flouted it and what Jeremiah predicted actually came to pass.

Now, what we have here is a beautiful little frustration of God being the God of the second chance and the third chance and the fourth chance.

[26 : 32] And do you know what conditions all of these? Same thing. Every time. God's magic bullet is repentance. Repentance. When you change your mind, when you change your mind about your sin, sin, then you change your attitude towards sin, then you change your actions.

It has to be in that order. So here, these people had gone through a cycle. Repent or else. And they refused to repent. And the or else came.

And they were carried into captivity and paid the penalty. Now they are back in the land again. And guess what the message is? Same thing. Okay, you paid the penalty for your last sins.

Now, you are in a position to run it through again. What are you going to do? This is a new cycle because it's two generations later.

Two or three generations later. So we're talking about new people. And by the way, the repentance, the repentance and acceptance of God's truth for one generation is not valid for the next generation.

[27 : 44] Every generation has to do this for themselves. You cannot repent for your grandchildren or your children. That's the principle that is set here. And it is a beautiful concept.

It is as clear as it could possibly be. The clean turban on his head, clean garments, if, if, verse 7, if you will walk in my ways, if you will perform my service, then, this will be the outcome.

Then you will also govern my house, and also have charge of my courts, and I will grant you free access among those who are standing here. Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you, these people, remember, are in this vision.

Indeed, they who are men, who are a symbol for behold, I am going to bring in my servant, the branch.

And you know what he's going to do? He is going to put an end to this business of sin and idolatry and rejection. He is going to provide a blanket forgiveness for all of humanity for God will be in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

[29 : 16] This is what is coming and this is what Zechariah is predicting. And he is here described as the branch. And we'll see that term used in other places and in each and every instance it always refers to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the branch. And it's very significant why he's called the branch along with other names as well. And it is something that I think you will find to be very very enriching indeed.

So in that day verse 10 declares the Lord of hosts every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree. What's that a picture of?

Well it's a picture of peace and prosperity and tranquility and that's what's coming for Israel later on. But do you know what? There is a terrible interim that is going to exact a heavy price upon Israel for their continued unbelief.

And we are seeing that even now and it has been played out in a lot of the persecution that the Jews have undergone for literally centuries now. So the food is here and thank you for your kind attention.

[30 : 25] I appreciate your bearing with me while we read that material but I just could not get to you any other way. Joe what? Your thought here that they're given here in the Old Testament scripture I think Paul brings out to us doctrine to us Gentiles in Philippians.

I think it's chapter 3 of Philippians. He mentions there where God sees us as perfect. When you accept Christ God sees you as perfect regardless of where your stage is in terms of maturity as a Christian he sees you perfect.

Right. That's our position. You want to live up to that. You know Paul says live up to what God sees you as basically perfect so each day you try not to sin you try to do what God wants you to do.

Now you're going to make sins but then even though you commit another sin you're still perfect for he forgave that and you just go on that. Thank you Joe. We have a position in Christ that cannot be improved upon because it is fixed and it is based upon the work of Christ himself.

But in that position we have a practice to accomplish and our practice involves our growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ. You cannot grow in your position but you grow in your practice.

[31 : 42] John? Do you think God will give to the United States a second can of free outlaw abortion and getting married and money?

I'm counting on it. I'm hoping that that will be the case. Yeah. The question is will we have what it takes to stand up in opposition to what's going on?

Are we willing to pay the price? Because when you start with a I don't know what else to call it other than just simple opposition when you oppose powerful interest there is always a price to pay for doing so.

Question is are we willing to pay the price or are we just going to hunker down and roll over and play dead? We've got a lot of we've got a lot of Christians who are so what shall I say who are so passive that we are intimidated.

We are intimidated into silence. And a verse comes to mind that says something to the effect of let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Maybe it's time that we start saying so and speaking up and we're going to pursue this a little more later on.