



STORY 51

A Change of Clothes

ZECHARIAH 3

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Read Zechariah 3.
- Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.
- Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

What happens when a nation that was supposed to be holy isn't so holy? Or even worse—what happens when the priests who were supposed to be holy weren't holy? We know that Israel was supposed to be holy. God told them through Moses, "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). Israel was called to be holy—set apart from the other nations—based on *who* they worshiped (Yahweh alone) and *how* they worshiped (loving God and loving others). But God's people also needed holy priests to lead them, teach them, and model holiness for them. These priests would work in the temple and make sacrifices so God's people could be forgiven. They were very important, and so it was important they remained holy. It was so important, God designed special clothes for them. These special, clean clothes symbolized their important

1
Read

2
Teach

job. But there was one big problem with these priests. These “holy” men were often not very holy. So what happens? Any guesses? In the story we’re looking at today, something very unexpected happens. And something very important!

TELL THE STORY

Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook



Play *The*
Biggest Story
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
We are terribly
dirty, but God
makes us
perfectly clean!

Have you ever been playing outside when it started to rain? I bet when you got home your parent said something like, “Let’s get you out of these filthy clothes and get you cleaned up.” Well, something similar happened to Joshua, the high priest during the days of the prophet Zechariah. He came into the holy place where priests would meet with God, and he did so “clothed with filthy garments” (Zech. 3:3). His “holy” clothing was as dirty as if someone splattered diapers on him. Yuck! Do you know why he looked so filthy to God? Not just because of his filthy clothes but because he had not been acting holy. He was not loving God and his neighbors! This sinner had no right to stand before God and offer sacrifices for other people’s sins.

Now if it wasn’t bad enough that Joshua was filthy, guess who was standing next to him—Satan, that slithering serpent we read about in the garden of Eden. Satan was up to his old tricks. He was accusing Joshua, saying something like, “Ha, some *holy* priest. This man is a mess! God, you should throw him out of your temple and toss him into hell.” God could have listened to Satan, because, after all, Joshua was a mess. But God didn’t. He told Satan to leave. And he showed mercy to sinful, messy Joshua. “This man,” he said to Satan, “is like a stick I have saved from a roaring fire” (see 3:2). God not only saved the high priest from the judgment he deserved but also forgave him and clothed him

with his own holiness. He stripped him of his yucky garments and clothed him with a clean white robe, a clean white sash, and clean white hat. He then told Joshua to start living like he looked. Pure. Holy. Set apart. No more dirty tricks. No more walking in his own ways. From now on, he was to be holy as the God who saved him is holy.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

Do any of you wonder why God told this story about changing the clothes of one of his priests? It's definitely a picture of how God forgives our sins, but it's even more than that. And the clue that there's something more is a strange bit about a "Branch" (3:8). What, or who, is the Branch? The Branch was the better, perfectly holy high priest who was coming. The prophet said that Joshua in his new, clean garments looked like this Branch. That promised, future, perfect high priest is called the "Branch" because he will come from King David's family tree. He might look like just one branch on a tree with lots of branches, but he will do what no high priest has ever done before. He will "remove the sin of God's people in a single day" (see Zech. 3:9). Can you guess who the Branch might be? Yes, it is Jesus, the Snake Crusher! When he died as a punishment for sin on the cross, that very moment, on that one day in history, all our sins—past, present, and future—were paid for. Totally forgiven! This priest took our stinky, filthy clothes and gave us his clean, perfect clothes.

This calls for a celebration, don't you think? Absolutely. And that is absolutely how the story in Zechariah ends. With a celebration. A feast! Come join the party. Grab a seat at the table. Enjoy some figs (or at least some yummy food) with some friends. Grab a glass of grape juice, and let us drink with thanks to the God whose perfect priest makes our terribly dirty selves cleaner than clean!

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

- QUESTION:** When God told his people to be holy like him, how were they supposed to treat other people? And who were they supposed to worship? Why can't God be around unholy people?

TAKEAWAY: Because God is holy, only holy people can be in his presence.

Memory Verse
Behold, I have
taken your
iniquity away
from you, and
I will clothe
you with pure
vestments.
ZECHARIAH 3:4

2. **QUESTION:** If we picture God’s holiness as something perfectly clean, what would it look like to be unholy? What things make us unholy, or dirty, in God’s eyes (since we know it’s not dirt)?

TAKEAWAY: Our sin makes us dirty, or unholy, in God’s eyes.

3. **QUESTION:** Why couldn’t God’s people go into the temple and meet with God? What did the priests have to do to be allowed to be in God’s presence? What did Joshua fail to do? What did God do for Joshua?

TAKEAWAY: To be in God’s presence we must be cleaned from our sin.

4. **QUESTION:** Who did the angel of the Lord say was coming to remove the sin from Israel in a single day? Who is the Branch? Since we have all sinned and become unholy or dirty, how can we become clean? How does the story in Zechariah end, and why is that the perfect response?

TAKEAWAY: Let’s celebrate that Jesus, the promised high priest and Branch from David’s family tree, has removed our sin.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Exchange Dirty for Clean Relay

Supply List: cotton balls (two per child), painter’s tape, garbage bags, straws

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make dirty cotton balls by coloring them with marker (one per child). Using wide painter’s tape, make 10-foot lines perpendicular to the start line (one per team). Place dirty cotton balls at the start of each line, and place garbage bags and clean cotton balls at the far end of each line.

Divide children into teams and assign each team a line of tape. Give each child a straw. The first person on each team blows a dirty cotton ball to the end of her tape, puts the dirty cotton ball into the garbage, picks up a clean cotton ball, and blows it back to the start. If the child blows the cotton ball off the tape, she

must stop and put it back before continuing. The first team to have all its players finish wins. Remind children that through Jesus, God has made us clean.

Option 2: Dirty Swamp

Supply List: none

Have children stand on one end of the room. Have one child be the crocodile and stand in the middle of the room. The children say, “Crocodile, crocodile, may we cross your dirty swamp?” The crocodile replies, “Only if you are wearing the color _____.” Any children wearing that color can pass freely to the other side. Then the crocodile says, “I’m hungry! Try to cross my swamp!” The remaining children try to cross the room without being tagged by the crocodile. If tagged, that child becomes a crocodile and helps tag children in the next round. Continue play until one child remains. Remind children that we make ourselves dirty with sins (not swamps!), but God wipes us clean through Jesus.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Dirty Laundry Relay

Supply List: laundry baskets, robes, sashes, hats

Before Class: Gather supplies. Fill each laundry basket with a robe, sash, and hat (one per team). Place baskets on the far end of the room.

Divide children into teams. The first person on each team must run to the team’s basket, put on the items inside, pick up the empty basket, run back to the team, take off the items, and put them back into the basket. The second child then carries the filled basket down to the other side and repeats the process. The first team to have all its players finish wins. Explain that God gave Joshua new clothes to show that God makes us clean.

Option 2: Exchange Dirty for Clean Relay

Supply List: cotton balls (two per child), painter’s tape, garbage bags, straws

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make dirty cotton balls by coloring them with marker (one per child). Using wide painter’s tape, make 10-foot lines perpendicular to the start line (one per team). Place dirty cotton balls at the start of each line, and place garbage bags and clean cotton balls at the far end of each line.

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CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: A Life Change Picture

Supply List: cardstock, dirt, paper plates, glue sticks, crayons, scissors, wipes, craft sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print pictures of an Israelite priest on cardstock (two per child). Place a small amount of dirt on paper plates. Make a sample craft.

Give each child two priest pictures. Set glue sticks, crayons, scissors, craft sticks, and dirt on each table. Have children color the priests and cut them out. Have them make one of the priests filthy by rubbing dirt on his clothes but keep the other priest “clean” (use wipes to clean children’s hands). Have them glue a craft stick between the two priests (back-to-back). Encourage the children to retell the story of how God made Joshua clean.

Option 2: Bubble Painting

Supply List: bubble solution, tempera paint, bowls, bubble wands, cardstock, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a variety of colored bubble solutions by mixing half a cup of bubble solution with 1 tablespoon of tempera paint in bowls. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of cardstock. Set crayons, bubble wands, and colored bubble solutions on each table. Have children write “God makes us clean” on the paper, then have them blow bubbles onto the paper and watch as the bubbles pop into interesting patterns.

Option 1: Dry-Erase Plates

Supply List: white plastic plates (not paper), permanent markers, dry-erase markers, paper towels

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a plate. Set permanent markers on each table. Have children decorate the outside edge of the plate, leaving the inside undecorated to be used as a whiteboard. Have them write the Big Truth on the back of the plate with permanent markers. Provide dry-erase markers that children can use to draw or write sins that make a person dirty before God, then use a paper towel to wipe those sins away.

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Supply List: bubble solution, tempera paint, bowls, bubble wands, cardstock, crayons

Before Class: Gather supplies. Make a variety of colored bubble solutions by mixing half a cup of bubble solution with 1 tablespoon of tempera paint in bowls. Make a sample craft.

Give each child a piece of cardstock. Set crayons, bubble wands, and colored bubble solutions on each table. Have children write “God makes us clean” on the paper, then have them blow bubbles onto the paper and watch as the bubbles pop into interesting patterns.



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