

Connecting Through the Word
Jesus Christ, Our Advocate and Protector
Zechariah 1-4; 1 John 2:1-2

Zechariah 3:1-10

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"

3 Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments.

4 And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments."

5 And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

6 And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua,

7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.

8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.

9 For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.

10 In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree."

1 John 2:1-2

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Zechariah was a young man (Zech. 2:4) when God called him to minister to the struggling Jewish remnant trying to rebuild their temple in the ruined city of Jerusalem.

The elder Prophet Haggai had delivered two of his messages before Zechariah joined him in ministry, and the two of them served God together for a short time.

Notice Haggai's first and second message:

August 29 and October 17 in the second year of Darius' reign

Zechariah's first message:

November of second year of Darius' reign.

Haggai had gotten the building program going again after sixteen-years of inactivity.

Zechariah would now encourage the people to finish their work. God gave the young man "good and comforting words" to assure the people that, in spite of the hard times, God was with them and would see them through.

Zechariah 1:13 & 17

And the LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me....Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem."

The prophet had two major emphases as he began his ministry to the remnant: God was calling them to repent, and God was assuring them of His personal concern.

Zechariah 1:2-4

"The LORD was very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD.

The Living Bible

Zechariah 1:5-6

Your fathers and their prophets are now long dead, but remember the lesson they learned, that God's Word endures! It caught up with them and punished them. Then at last they repented. "We have gotten what we deserved from God," they said. "He has done just what he warned us he would."

Again, like in Haggai, we are reminded that we need a Word from God!

Matthew 24:35

"Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words remain forever.

Psalms 119:89

Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

Psalms 119:160

The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

In Zechariah, "Thus says the Lord of host..." is used 44 times.

Zechariah 1:3

Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Return to Me," says the LORD of hosts, "and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts.

The city of Jerusalem is frequently in the news these days, and people are asking, "What is the future of this ancient city? Can

the Jews hold Jerusalem? Will it be attacked again?" The answers to these and many more questions are found in the Book of Zechariah. The city of Jerusalem is mentioned forty-two times in this book. God makes it clear that He is in control of the destiny of the city:

Zechariah 1:14&17

So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. ...Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'"

Zechariah prophesied at a time when Jerusalem was still in ruins. In 586 the Babylonians had destroyed the city and had taken the people captive to Babylon.

In 536, after the fall of Babylon, Cyrus permitted a remnant of the Jews to return to their land, and in 520 they laid the foundation for the temple. But the work stopped, and it was not until 520 that the Jews again began to rebuild God's house. This was under the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah.

But Zechariah did not see a weak nation in a ruined city; he looked down the centuries and saw the future of the city and the coming of Jerusalem's King, the Messiah. He knew the temple would be rebuilt (1:16; 4:9; 6:12-14; 8:9).

In Chapter 1, God calls His people to repent and comforts them and then promises to vindicate them.

In Chapter 2, God promises to restore His people.

The vision of the man with a measuring line who is measuring Jerusalem. God is the property owner of Jerusalem.

Zechariah 2:5, 8, 10-12

⁵ And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.'"

⁸ *For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye:*

¹⁰ *Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD.*

¹¹ *And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.*

¹² *And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem."*

Chapters 3 & 4

Zechariah 3 and 4 focus on Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two leaders of the Jewish remnant who knew how tough it is to lead.

Joshua was high priest and had the concern for the spiritual life of the people

Zerubbabel was governor and had the responsibility of managing the civil affairs of the nation. But their work wasn't easy.

Zerubbabel was trying to motivate people who were discouraged and selfish, and Joshua was trying to educate people who were disobedient and sinful. Is there any hope for a defiled and discouraged nation, or a defiled and discouraged church or individual?

Yes, there is! God gave the Prophet Zechariah two visions that speak to us today and encourage us to keep serving the Lord no matter how difficult the people or circumstances may be.

1. God cleanses His people for service (Zech. 3:1-10)

Haggai's first message (Hag. 1:1-11) and Zechariah's call to repentance (Zech. 1:1-6) are evidence that the spiritual level of the Jewish remnant was very low. Most of these people had been born in Babylon, where there wasn't much religious example or instruction to nourish their worship of Jehovah; and

the difficult circumstances in their own land tested their faith greatly.

The accused (3:1a, 3). Joshua stood before the Lord as a representative of Israel, a people He had called to be a holy nation of priests (Ex. 19:5-6). He wore filthy clothes, not because he was sinful personally, but because the people had sinned and were unclean in God's sight. The emphasis here is on the nation collectively and not on Joshua individually, for both Joshua and Zerubbabel were "men symbolic of things to come" (v. 8). God had chosen Jerusalem and had plucked the Jews out of the fire of Babylonian Captivity (v. 2). What God did for Joshua symbolically He would do for Israel personally: the iniquity of the land would be removed in a day (v. 9).

To "stand before the Lord" means to be in a place of service (Gen. 41:46; Deut. 10:8; 1 Sam. 16:21), so the Jews became defiled while they were attempting to serve the Lord. If their service was unclean in God's sight, what must their deliberate sins have been like! The Hebrew word translated "filthy" denotes the worst kind of defilement possible for a Jew. According to Merrill Unger, the word can be translated "excrement-covered."

Since the priests were commanded to keep themselves clean at all times, on penalty of death (Ex. 28:39-43; 30:17-21), Joshua's wearing filthy garments would be a terrible personal embarrassment and an offense against God's law. Those garments were "for glory and for beauty" (Ex. 28:2, 40), but the Lord saw neither glory nor beauty as He beheld His servant.

The accuser (Zech. 3:1b). Zechariah has described a courtroom scene, in which Joshua is the defendant, God is the Judge, Satan is the prosecuting attorney, and Jesus Christ is the defense attorney, the Advocate of God's people before the holy throne of God (1 John 2:1-2). The word "Satan" means "adversary" and refers to the enemy who resists God's work and God's people. Satan has access to the throne of God (Job 1-2)

where he accuses God's people (Rev. 12:10). When Satan talks to us about God, he lies, but when he talks to God about us, he tells the truth!

God's throne is a throne of justice and God is a righteous Judge. Knowing this, Satan pointed out Joshua's defilement, which symbolized the defilement of the nation, and insisted that a holy God punish His sinful people. It seemed like an airtight case, except for one factor: the grace of God.

The Advocate (Zech. 3:2-5). Christ's present ministry in heaven is twofold. He's our High Priest, interceding for us and giving us the grace we need for life and service here on earth (Heb. 4:14-16; 13:20-21); and He's our Advocate, representing us before the throne of God when we do sin (1 John 2:1-2). Don't get the erroneous idea that the Father yearns to punish us and the Son pleads with Him to change His mind, because that isn't the picture at all. The Father and the Son both love us and want the best for us, but God can't ignore our sins and still be a holy God.

This explains why Jesus took His wounds back to heaven with Him (Luke 24:39-40; John 20:20, 25-27): they prove that He was "delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Rom. 3:25). Satan cannot accuse us, nor God condemn us, for sins for which Christ died! *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:1).

The Lord rebuked Satan on the basis of His own electing grace: He had chosen Jerusalem and the Jewish nation in His own love and grace (Deut. 7:7-11; Pss. 33:12; 132:13). He had not chosen them because of their good works, so how could He condemn them for their bad works? *"Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us"* (Rom. 8:33-34).

God proved His grace to Israel by rescuing them from Babylonian Captivity; the Jews were "a brand plucked out of the fire" (Zech. 3:2; see Amos 4:11). Scripture often compares Israel's sufferings to going through the fire. Their trials in Egypt were like being in a furnace (Deut. 4:20), and the exile in Babylon was compared to being refined in the fire (Isa. 48:10; see 43:1-6). When Israel goes through the Tribulation in the end times, it will be an experience of refining (Zech. 13:9; Jer. 30:7).

The answer (Zech. 3:4-5). The same Savior who died for our sins arose from the dead and now intercedes for His people at the throne of God (Heb. 7:23-28). *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). God's reply to Satan's accusation was to say to the angels before His throne, "Take away the filthy garments from him." This is forgiveness.

He gave a word of assurance to Joshua: *"See, I have taken away your sin"* (Zech. 3:4). Believers today know they are forgiven when they confess their sins, because they have the assurance of His promise. According to 1 John 1:9, God is not only faithful [to His promise], but He is also just [toward His Son] and will not condemn His people for sins for which His own Son had already been condemned.

But God in His grace goes beyond forgiveness and clothes us in His own righteousness. "I will put rich garments on you" (Zech. 3:4). Adam and Eve tried to hide their guilt under garments of their own making (Gen. 3:7), but God killed animals and clothed them in skins (v. 21). Blood was shed that sin might be forgiven. *"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness"* (Isa. 61:10, Luke 15:22).

The climax of the cleansing (forgiveness) and robing (righteous in Christ, 2 Cor. 5:21) was the placing of the special turban on Joshua's head; for the golden plate at the front of the turban

was inscribed: HOLINESS TO THE LORD (Ex. 28:36-38; 39:30-31). It was this that made him, the people, and their gifts acceptable to the Lord. We have no righteousness of our own, but we come in the righteousness and merits of Jesus Christ, our Savior (1 Peter 2:5).

The assurance (Zech. 3:6-7). The Lord Jesus Christ gave a charge to Joshua, because cleansing and restoration always involve responsibility. Joshua and his fellow priests weren't put on probation; they were cleansed and restored to service. But the continuation of their service depended on their faithfulness to the Lord and His Word. It's a privilege to serve the Lord, and we must never take it for granted.

"I will give you a place among these standing here" (v. 6) indicates that Joshua's service was in cooperation with the angels of God! (See v. 4, *"those who stood before him."*) The angels are God's servants, obeying His every command without fail, and God's earthly servants are united with them in accomplishing His will. *"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:10). God's invisible messengers play a vital part in His plans both for Israel (Dan. 10:10-21; Matt. 24:31) and the church (Heb. 1:13-14).

The announcement (Zech. 3:8-10). This remarkable announcement to Joshua and his fellow priests focuses on Jesus Christ and presents three different images of the coming Messiah: the Priest, the Branch, and the Stone. Zechariah will say more about the priest in 6:9-15. In their priestly ministry, Joshua and his associates were *"symbolic of things to come"* (3:8).

"The Branch" is an image of Messiah frequently found in the prophets (Isa. 11:1-2). Here Messiah is called "my servant the Branch."

He is also "the Branch of the Lord" (4:2),

"The Branch of righteousness" raised up for David (Jer. 23:5; 33:15),

"The man whose name is the Branch" (Zech. 6:12-13).

These four titles parallel four aspects of the person of Christ as seen in the four Gospels:

- Branch of righteousness for David—Matthew, Gospel of the King
- My servant the Branch—Mark, Gospel of the Servant
- The man whose name is the Branch—Luke, Gospel of the Son of Man
- The Branch of the Lord—John, Gospel of the Son of God

"The stone" is another image of Messiah found often in Scripture, revealing several aspects of His ministry.

Messiah is the cornerstone (Ps. 118:22-23; Matt. 21:42; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:7; see Zech. 10:4),

A stone of stumbling (Isa. 8:14; 1 Peter 2:8; Rom. 9:32-33), the rejected stone (Ps. 118:22-23; Matt. 21:42),

The smitten stone (Ex. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4),

The smiting stone (Dan. 2:34-35).

At His first advent, Jesus was a stumbling stone to Israel who rejected Him, but He became the foundation stone for the church. At His second advent, He will smite the kingdoms of the world and establish His glorious kingdom.

The seven "eyes" on the stone probably speak of our Lord's omniscience (Zech. 4:10; Rev. 5:6). This could be translated "seven facets," making this stone a precious and beautiful jewel because of the way it is engraved (cut). But the text refers to an inscription that God engraved on the stone, not a jewel, and it doesn't tell us what the inscription says. Some of the Church

Fathers interpreted this engraving to mean the glorified wounds on Christ's body, but we have no indication from the text that this interpretation is warranted.

The key message of this difficult verse is the removal of Israel's sins in one day. This miracle of grace is described in Zechariah 5 and 12:10-13:1, and will be considered in later chapters. At the Second Advent, when Israel beholds the One whom they pierced (12:10), they will repent and be cleansed. *"Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment?"* (Isa. 66:8)

When that happens, God will fulfill the promises of peace that He has made to Israel through the prophets. Resting under one's vine and fig tree (Zech. 3:10) is an image of peace and security (1 Kings 4:25; 2 Kings 18:31; Micah 4:4), something that Israel has always longed for but has never found.

Knowing that God would forgive and cleanse His people and restore the ministry of His priests must have encouraged Joshua greatly. In the next vision, God will encourage His servant Zerubbabel.

2. God empowers His people for service (Zech. 4:1-14)

The young prophet had seen four wonderful visions, and the experience had exhausted him. He fell asleep and had to be awakened by the "interpreting angel" before God could reveal the fifth vision to him. Seeing divine visions and understanding their meanings made Daniel very weary and like a man who was dumb and without strength (Dan. 10:8, 15-19).

The vision (Zech. 4:1-3, 11-14). In the holy place of the tabernacle, in front of the veil and to the left of the altar of incense, stood a golden candlestick with seven branches (Ex. 25:31-40). At the end of each branch was a golden lamp, and it was the high priest's duty each morning and evening to trim the wicks and provide the oil needed to keep the lamp burning (Lev.

24:3). This candlestick provided light in the holy place so the priests could see to burn the incense on the golden altar each morning and evening (Ex. 30:7-8).

But the candlestick that Zechariah saw was totally unlike the one Moses had put into the tabernacle. Along with the seven branches and lamps, this candlestick had a bowl at the top into which olive oil dripped from two olive trees (Zech. 4:3), which symbolized Joshua and Zerubbabel (v. 14). The candlestick also had seven pipes going from the bowl to each lamp, making a total of forty-nine pipes. No priest had to provide the oil because it was always coming from the trees. Seven pipes to each lamp assured an ample supply of fuel to keep the lights burning.

The lampstand in the tabernacle was symbolic of Messiah, the light of the world (John 8:12), who one day would come and give the "light of life" to all who would trust Him. The light from the golden lampstand would shine on the table in the holy place (Ex. 26:35) and reveal the loaves of bread, Christ the bread of life (Ex. 25:30; John 6:33, 35, 48, 50-51).

The tabernacle candlestick also spoke of the nation of Israel, the nation God had chosen to be a light in a spiritually dark world (Isa. 60:1-3; 62:1). (The seven-branched candlestick, the menorah, is the official symbol of the modern State of Israel.) The light was burning very low when the remnant returned to the land to rebuild the temple, and Zerubbabel wasn't sure there was enough power to keep the work going.

Believers today must keep in mind that the church is a light in a dark world, and we must depend on the Holy Spirit to enable us to bear witness (Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:14-16). In Revelation 1-3, local churches are symbolized by individual lampstands, and the purpose of a lampstand is to give light. If we don't do what Christ commands us to do, He may take away the lampstand (2:5).

God provides the power (Zech. 4:4-10). When Solomon built the temple which the Babylonians destroyed, he had almost unlimited resources at his disposal. His father David had fought many battles and collected spoil to be used in building the temple (1 Chron. 26:20, 27-28), but the remnant didn't have an army. Solomon was monarch of a powerful kingdom that ruled over many Gentile nations and took tribute from them, but the Jews in Zechariah's day had no such authority.

That's why God said to them through His prophet, *"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit"* (Zech. 4:6). The word "might" refers to military might, what people can do together, but the remnant had no army. "Power" refers to the strength of the individual, but Zerubbabel's strength was no doubt waning. "Don't be discouraged!" was the prophet's message. "The Spirit of God will enable us to do what an army could never do!" Had they forgotten what Haggai said to them? "My Spirit remains among you. Do not fear" (Hag. 2:5).

There are three ways we can attempt to do the work of God:

- we can trust our own strength and wisdom;
- we can borrow the resources of the world;
- we can depend on the power of God.

The first two approaches may appear to succeed, but they'll fail in the end. Only work done through the power of the Spirit will glorify God and endure the fires of His judgment (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

With their limited resources, completing the temple must have looked to those Jews as impossible as moving a mountain, but God told Zerubbabel that he would, by God's power, level the mountain and make it a plain! Jesus told His disciples that exercising faith like a mustard seed (small but alive) could move mountains (Matt. 17:20; 21:21).

What "mountains" was Zerubbabel facing?

- Discouragement among the people,
- opposition from the enemies around them,
- poor crops,
- an unstable economy,
- people not obeying God's Law

Problems not too different from those the people of God have faced throughout the centuries. The answer to these problems is prayer that releases the Holy Spirit's power. When the early Christians faced problems, they turned to God in prayer, and He answered by giving them a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:23-31).

"We say we depend on the Holy Spirit," wrote Vance Havner, "but actually we are so wired up with our own devices that if the fire does not fall from heaven, we can turn on a switch and produce false fire of our own. If there is no sound of a rushing mighty wind, we have the furnace all set to blow hot air instead. God save us from a synthetic Pentecost!"

God finishes His work (Zech. 4:7b-10). God assured Zerubbabel that he would complete the rebuilding of the temple and the people would rejoice at what God had done through them. Zerubbabel would "bring out the capstone [the last stone to be placed in the building] with shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'" (v. 7b) Another possible translation is "Beauty! Perfection!" That wasn't what some of the people were saying when the foundation of the temple was laid (Ezra 3:10-13) and while the temple was under construction (Hag. 2:3).

God gave a clear promise that Zerubbabel would complete the temple (Zech.4:9), which reminds us of God's promise in Philippians 1:6, *"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ"*.

It also echoes David's words to his son Solomon: *"Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord God—my God—will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord"* (1 Chron. 28:20).

To some of the Jews, the project was but a "small thing" (Zech. 4:10) in comparison to Solomon's grand temple, but we must look at God's work through His eyes and not the eyes of the people of the world. Great oaks grow out of small acorns and great harvests from small seeds. When Messiah came to earth, He was but "a shoot...from the stump of Jesse" (Isa. 11:1) and was "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). The church began with 120 people and today ministers around the world.

Bible history is the record of God using small things. When God wanted to set the plan of salvation in motion, He started with a little baby named Isaac (Gen. 21). When He wanted to overthrow Egypt and set His people free, He used a baby's tears (Ex. 2:1-10). He used a shepherd boy and a sling to defeat a giant (1 Sam. 17) and a little lad's lunch to feed a multitude (John 6). He delivered the Apostle Paul from death by using a basket and a rope (Acts 9:23-25).

Never despise the day of small things, for God is glorified in small things and uses them to accomplish great things.

God and His servants must work together to accomplish His purposes. *"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13). God supplies His servants with the Spirit, and the people are encouraged as they see Zerubbabel on the job with the plumb line in his hand, making sure the walls are straight. While Zerubbabel is working, the eyes of the Lord are watching over His people and monitoring the nations of the earth. (The phrase "those seven" in Zech. 4:10 refers back to 3:9, the eyes of the Lord, meaning His omniscience.)

The vision climaxes (4:14) with God calling Zerubbabel and Joshua *"the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."*

What a noble title for His servants! As the two olive trees, Joshua and Zerubbabel received the empowering Spirit of God and kept the light of Israel's work and witness burning. Oil is a general symbol for the Holy Spirit in Scripture.

Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil, and the words "Messiah" and "Christ" mean "anointed one." The holy anointing oil was not to be prepared by anybody but the priests or be used for any other purpose than for anointing God's servants (Ex. 30:22-33). *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me"* (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18-19).

If our God is *"Lord of all the earth,"* what have we to fear? If He promises us the power of His Spirit, why should we falter and fail? Let's remember Joshua and Zerubbabel, men who are encouragements to all who seek to serve the Lord in any way.

There are no "small places" or "small ministries," and there are no "big preachers." But we do have a great God who can empower and bless servants who are dedicated to Him. He can cleanse us and He can empower us, so let's trust Him and do His work!

There were four persons in Old Testament who had a direct confrontation with Satan.

Eve, Job, David, and Joshua the Priest

From their experiences we will learn:

- The *targets* Satan aims at in your life;
- The *weapons* he uses to attack you;
- The *purposes* that he wants to achieve;
- The *defenses* God has provided for you.

Satan The Deceiver: Eve

Satan's Target - Your Mind

Satan's Weapon - Lies

Satan's Purpose - Ignorant of God's Will

Our Defense – Inspired Word of God

Satan The Destroyer: Job

Satan's Target - Your Body

Satan's Weapon - Suffering

Satan's Purpose - Impatient with God's Will

Our Defense - Imparted Grace

Satan The Ruler: David

Satan's Target - Your Will

Satan's Weapon - Pride

Satan's Purpose - Independent of God's Will

Our Defense - Indwelling Spirit of God

Satan The Accuser: Joshua the Priest

Satan's Target - Your Heart and Conscience

Satan's Weapon - Accusation

Satan's Purpose - To Make You Feel Guilty

Our Defense - The Interceding Son of God

SATAN THE ACCUSER

Rev. 12:10; 2 Cor. 10, 11; Job 1:6, 7; 2:1, 2; Zech. 3:1-7

Intro: Satan's strategy to deceive, destroy, to devour.

Satan the deceiver: Eve, her mind, lies, to make her ignorant of the will of God. The Word of God. Satan the destroyer: Job, his body, suffering, to make him impatient with the will of God. The Grace of God. Satan the Ruler: David, his will, pride, to make him independent of the will of God. The Indwelling Spirit of God.

Satan the Accuser: Joshua the High Priest, (Zechariah 3:1-7)

Satan's Target: Your heart and conscience

Satan's Weapon: Accusation

Satan's Purpose: Make you feel guilty

Your Defense: The Interceding Son Of God!!!!!!

Satan's strategy is to make the disobedient Christian doubly defeated.

SATAN'S TARGET - YOUR HEART AND CONSCIENCE

The scene in Zech. 3 is in heaven. The setting is that of a courtroom: God is the Judge, Joshua the high priest is the defendant, and Satan is the prosecuting attorney trying to prove Joshua guilty.

Satan appears to have a case because Joshua is wearing filthy garments. (Priest were to always wear clean white clothes).

The time of Zechariah's vision: Israel back in the land after the Babylonian captivity. But still committing sins.....
Joshua represented the people before God.

Satan's accusations - just imagine them.

Joshua's heart must have been broken. What defense did he have.

The Same with us when we as Christians sin and disobey God. Satan attacks us in our conscience. “Some Christian you are. You go to church, read your Bible, witness, serve as a teacher, etc. And look what you’ve done. If the people at church knew what kind of a person you really were, they would throw you out.

Before we sin while he is tempting us:
Satan whispers, “You can get away with this!”
After we sin, he shouts at us: “You will never get away with this.”

It’s enough to make a Christian give up in despair.

SATAN’S WEAPON - ACCUSATION

When Satan talks to you about God, he lies.

When Satan talks to God about you, he sometimes tell the truth. He is “the accuser of the brethren.” He has access to the throne of God. There he reminds God about the condition of His saints. We know about this accusation because we feel it in our hearts.

“See what Abraham did - He lied to his wife”
“See what David did - He committed adultery with his neighbor’s wife and then killed her husband” “Judge him, Judge him!!!!”

“God, did you just hear Peter, He is cursing and swearing!!!”

IMPORTANT: We must learn to distinguish between Satan’s accusations and the Holy Spirit’s conviction:

A feeling of guilt and shame is a good thing if it come from the Spirit of God.

When the Holy Spirit convicts us, He uses the Word of God in love and seeks to bring us back into fellowship with the Father.

When Satan accuses us, he uses our own sins in a hateful way, and he seeks to make me feel helpless and hopeless. Judas listen to the devil, and went out and hanged himself. Peter look at the face of Jesus, and wept bitterly, but later came back into fellowship with Christ.

When you listen to Satan’s accusations:

You feel hopelessness and despair and experience spiritual paralysis. “My situation is hopeless” I’ve gone too far, The Lord would never take me back.”

SATAN’S PURPOSE - TO BRING AN INDICTMENT BY GOD’S WILL to make you feel guilty!

Satan wants you to feel regret and remorse, but not repent. He wants you to focus on yourself and your sins. If you once look away by faith to Jesus Christ, you will repent, confess your sins, and find cleansing and restoration of fellowship. As long as you feel guilty you are under indictment and you are moving farther and farther away for the Lord.

True conviction from the Spirit will move you closer to the Lord.

Satan wants you to feel guilty.
Your heavenly Father wants you to know you are forgiven.

Many churches and pastors help Satan out. You always go home feeling guilty and worn out. Major on guilt and forget to share the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

Paul and the Church at Corinth:
2 Cor. 2:6 “*The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him.*”

They had heeded Paul’s instructions in his first letter and responded so that they made to offender feel so guilty and then they wouldn’t forgive him. So now 2 Cor. 2:7 “*Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be*

overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

Excessive guilt and sorrow can only lead to depression, despair and defeat. Sometimes even to destruction.

OUR DEFENCE - THE INTERCEDING SON OF GOD

It is true that Satan stands at our right hand to oppose, resist and accuse us. But it is also true that Jesus Christ stands at God's right hand to intercede for us.

1 John 2:1

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”

Hebrews 7:25-26

“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Remember the court room scene: Joshua the high priest is standing before God dressed in filthy robes. He is guilty. Satan stands at Joshua's right hand to resist him and accuse him. But Jesus Christ is at God's right hand to represent Joshua and to restore him.

This explains why Jesus Christ returned to heaven with wounds in His body. Those wounds are the ever lasting evidence that He died for us.

Does God close His eyes to the reality of our sins. Of course not. God will never defend His children's sins, but He will defend His children. (Abraham)

When you listen to Satan's accusations, you will focus your attention on yourself and your sins; and this will only lead to defeat and despair. But when you listen to the Holy Spirit's conviction, you will look by faith to Jesus Christ in heaven, your Advocate at the throne of God. You will remember that he died for you and that God cannot reject you, because you belong to Christ. It is because of the heavenly intercession of the Son of God that you and I can defeat Satan's accusations.

The stages in the experience of Joshua the high priest.

1. There is Satan's resistance.
2. God's rebuke of Satan vs. 2
Based on God's grace toward His people.
We are saved by grace. Our relationship to God is not based on law or merit; it is based wholly on grace.
God's Redemption At Christ Expense.
3. Joshua's Restoration.
God ordered them to remove the filthy clothes and put on holy garments. No probation but straight back to service.

Unconfessed sin in our lives is a foothold for Satan. He will use that sins as the basis for accusation. **Instead of feelings of conviction** that bring us back to God, we have **feelings of condemnation** that convince us we cannot go back.

Guilt destroys our joy, peace and our fellowship with God.

Proverbs 28:13 *“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”*