

# Satan exists

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[ 0 : 00 ] that we're given that we'll spend a few minutes looking at this evening. When we go to see a concert or a play or a drama of some kind in the community centre or in some other venue, we tend to see what the performers want us to see.

There's just that gap, and on the side of the stage there's the curtain. But behind the curtain there's a whole lot of activity going on. We're just seeing the performers.

We're just hearing the artists. But behind the curtain there can be people working with laptops and tables and sound desks and all kinds of things. And all that has a bearing on what's going on, but we just can't see it.

And that's true in our experience at the more general level as well. There is a physical realm that we are very well aware of and no one would deny.

There are things that we can see. There are things that we can hear. There are things that we can pick up and feel and touch. But behind that there's a spiritual realm.

[ 1 : 15 ] And in this fourth vision, Zechariah and we, with him, we in a sense get to see behind the curtain. We get to see and listen in to what's going on in the spiritual realm.

And the first point I want to note as we consider this vision tonight is the fact that Satan exists.

Satan exists. We saw this this morning, although I didn't get very far into the sermon, so we didn't see it very clearly.

But we see this again in the evening in this passage. Satan exists. He is real. In Mark chapter 9, we have that disturbing account of the little boy who has been taken hold of by Satan.

And he was in such a state because of that. He is the one who is trying to destroy this little boy. He is the one who has caused the father to be in such a state of turmoil and grief.

And Satan is the one who is trying to discourage Joshua to the extent that Joshua would get out of the place of prayer and intercession.

[ 2 : 33 ] Verse 1. Verse 1 says, Then he showed me Joshua, This is Zechariah speaking, He showed me Joshua the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, the Lord himself, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

Now the Joshua that we read of here is not the Joshua that we were speaking about for many months as we studied the book of Joshua. This Joshua was the high priest in Zechariah's time. And we know very little about him. Although he was the high priest at a time when God's people actually had to some extent gone to sleep.

The commentators, the ones I've read, suggest that Joshua the high priest was he was actually trying hard to serve the people of God well. But here, as he comes before the throne of God, Joshua the high priest, as he comes before the throne of God, on behalf of the people of God, he is under attack.

Satan has him in his sights. Satan exists. That's the point. Some people today laugh at the idea that there is a devil.

[ 4 : 02 ] And no one laughs more heartily than the devil does when he hears such things said. He laughs with them. The devil loves nothing more than to have people believe that he's not real.

One of the commentators, Bentley, says this, one of Satan's chief purposes in this world is to try to convince everyone that he does not exist. He likes us to think of him as some vague spirit drifting around, causing a few little annoyances from time to time.

He's highly delighted when we think of him as a figure of fun with a forked tail and horns coming out of his head. And he enjoys it most when we behave as though he were a figment of our imagination. He likes us to ignore him so that he can be undisturbed as he gets on with his evil work of disrupting the building of God's kingdom.

And that's what Satan was doing in Joshua and Zechariah's day here. That's what he had been doing.

[ 5 : 12 ] The building work, which I mentioned a minute or two ago, that had for many years ceased. Why had it ceased? Well, the people had faced opposition from the surrounding nations.

The people had faced opposition and pressure in a political sense. And so when the going got tough, they stopped. It was all these pressures.

It was all these struggles. And so they stopped. But here, Zechariah has shown that the one who was behind all these pressures and struggles and attacks that caused the work to stop was Satan. That was the case back in that day. And that's still the case today. When you and I put down the gospel tools. But when you and I stopped making spiritual progress.

When we lose our zeal. When we stop seeking God's kingdom first. And his righteousness.

[ 6 : 23 ] And we put our preferences and our concerns before God's work. When we stop seeking that God's kingdom would grow and be built through gospel outreach.

There can be many apparent reasons for that on the face of it. Individuals in churches can fall out. We see that happen often in every church.

People who work once together closely say, well, I can't work with him anymore. You know, there's tension between us. So we just can't do that anymore. And that can be the presenting reasons for that.

There can be complications in our home. There can be inordinate pressure that comes through work. And these are the reasons that we give. For not being able to put our hand to the plow.

But behind all that we need to remember. There is an enemy at work. Satan exists. He is real.

[ 7 : 23 ] He is disruptive. He will do anything. To bring a halt to gospel work. He will use any tactic to stop us coming to Jesus.

He will use any distraction to stop us becoming more like Jesus. So we must be alert to him. Satan exists.

We're shown behind the curtain here. 1 Peter 5.8. Be alert. And of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion.

Looking for someone to devour. So that's the first point. The second point to note here is Satan accuses. Or he accused Joshua, the high priest here.

Still in verse 1. Don't worry. We'll gather peace quite quickly. 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.

[ 8 : 31 ] Now this ties in very directly with the picture that we're given of Satan in Revelation 12.10. Where he's described as the accuser of our brethren.

The accuser of the brethren. And that's what we find Satan doing here. He has the finger pointed. He has a critical eye peeled on Joshua.

And he is accusing Joshua. And we're not actually given the words recorded for us that Satan uses to accuse Joshua. But it's clear that what he's doing is he's telling Joshua that he shouldn't be where he is.

Before the throne of God. Likely Satan is doing what we're going to sing of at the end. When Satan tempts me to despair.

And tells me of the guilt within. It's what Satan is doing. Here is Joshua. The high priest. And he's coming before God.

[ 9 : 32 ] He's coming before God on behalf of the people. He's coming to the place of prayer. He's seeking to come into God's presence. Which is exactly where Satan would have him not be.

William Cowper said. Satan trembles. When he sees the weakest saint.

Upon his knees. Satan trembles. When he sees the weakest Christian. Upon his knees.

And so in order to keep us off our knees. In order to keep us distant from God. He accuses us.

And he tells us of our guilt. In order that we will despair. And not come to God in prayer. Because Satan knows.

[ 10 : 35 ] That he is. He is disabled. He is disarmed. By the prayer. Of God's people. Alistair Begg. I couldn't quite find the quote.

But the paraphrase is this. Alistair Begg says. Prayer is the missile. That Satan has no defense against. And yet it's a missile.

That is rarely launched. Prayer is the missile. That Satan has no defense against. And yet it's a missile.

That is rarely launched. And that's true isn't it? And can you identify. With this. Because certainly I can. You know you go to pray.

You set aside a few minutes to pray. And every possible thing that could happen. Happens. In order to stop you praying. You know. There's a fracas in the house.

[ 11 : 34 ] The phone is going crazy. There's a million pressing thoughts. Of things that are undone. That suddenly rush into our minds. And we are being told.

You have no time to pray. You'll do it later. But don't get on your knees just now. And when we eventually get on our knees in the closet. When we eventually sit down through.

In one of the chairs in the prayer meeting. You can almost hear the voice of Satan. As he accuses you. Why are you praying? What are you doing here?

Why do you think God would listen to you? When you're such a hypocrite. And you're such a failure. And you're such a shambles of a Christian. Do you think you even are a Christian? I don't know why you're on your knees. I don't know why you think God is going to listen to you.

[ 12 : 37 ] You hear some cheek, don't you? That's a voice we hear. It's the voice of Satan.

Satan accuses. Third point. The Lord rebukes Satan. The Lord said to Satan.

As we move towards verse 2 here. 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. The Lord rebukes Satan. Notice that. Joshua has nothing to say. We don't read about Joshua.

Preparing a defense. In order to speak. A word of rebuke to Satan. Joshua says nothing. He has no rebuke for Satan. Because he has no defense.

[ 13 : 40 ] Joshua knows his sin. He knows that he is guilty before God. He knows that the people that he is representing as a high priest.

They are guilty before God. He knows that in and of himself. He has no right. To come into the presence of a holy God. God. And neither do you.

Neither do I. You know Satan's accusations. They are actually true. But his motivation is evil.

See we because of our sin. We deserve the fire of hell. That's the bad news.

Of our sin. And the consequences of our sin. But the good news. Of the gospel. Is the Lord. Who stood. In our place.

[ 14 : 40 ] The Lord. Who was. When he was accused. Before he went to the cross. Remember. He said nothing. And as he went.

To the cross. He determined. That in so doing. He would snatch us. From the fire. And going to the cross.

He determined. That those who. Who believe in him. Would not perish. In the fires of hell. But would be saved. And then when Satan.

Accuses. Those. Whom Jesus. Has saved. The Lord. Rebukes. Satan. On our behalf.

That's got to be a word of encouragement. For someone here. We see our sin. We hear. The voice of Satan.

[ 15 : 41 ] As he. He runs through the. The. The summary of our. Of our sins. Over the past. Few days. We go to our knees.

When he rushes. To us. With a whole. Raft. Of accusations. And they're all true. And yet. The message.

The message. We have here. Through this. Vision. That Zechariah. Gives. Says that the Lord.

When we are trusting in him. He rebukes.

Satan. And he says. Is not this man. A brand. A brand. A burning stick. That I have snatched.

From the fire. The Lord rebukes. Satan. Next point. Is the Lord removes. Our sin.

[ 16 : 42 ] Verses three. And four. 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. And it's a picture for us. It's a very. Graphic. It's a very. Distasteful.

Picture. It was a shocking one. In that day. Because. The high priest. Was considered to be. The most. Holy person. Now we look around.

And we see people. And. We can all think of people. That we. We consider to be. To be holy men.

And women. Now we look up to them.

And Joshua. Is someone. Here. Whom the people. Of God. Would have looked up to. As a holy man. One of the commentators.

[ 17 : 40 ] Webb. Speaks about. The high priest. And he. He says this. Because of the. Crucial importance. Of what they did. The high priest. Was to avoid. All uncleanness.

They were forbidden. To marry a woman. Who had any form. Of sexual contact. With another man. Or to touch. A dead body. They were to observe. Strict dietary laws. All Israelites. Were obligated. To avoid. The moral evils. Prescribed by the law. Adultery. Stealing. Murder. Etc. The ceremonial regime. The ceremonial regime. Required of priests. Symbolized. Something more. Namely. Perfection. The total. Purity. Required. For access. To God. And so that's how the people. Saw. The high priest. This profoundly. Holy man. And yet. In this vision. Zechariah. The high priest. The high priest. The high priest.

[ 18 : 38 ] As God sees him. And his clothes. Are filthy. The word used.

Without being. Rude here. Literally. Means. That his clothes. Were covered. In excrement. It's a graphic.

And. Putrid. It all is. Imagine. You were. Called up. To. Boys and girls.

Listen up. For a wee minute. Imagine you were. You were called. To appear. Before the. The queen. You know. You get a letter. To the post. Invitation.

Buckingham Palace. High tea. With the queen. Now. What would you wear. That would be. The discussion. What kind of dress. What kind of ball gown. What kind of. Suit.

[ 19 : 34 ] What would you wear. Because you'd want. To look your best. Before you. You went. To see the queen. Imagine. Appearing. Before the queen.

Wrapped. In a whole. Load of. Dirty. Nappies. Dirty. That's the picture. You know. We're appalled. To think of that.

And yet. That's what we look like. Before. Not the queen. But the king. Of kings. Even the best of us.

We are. Filthy. That's our problem. That when we see our problem.

When we. Admit. Our problem. When we. Ask the lord. To help us. His promise. Is that he will.

[ 20 : 34 ] Take off. Our filthy. Sin. Stained. Rags. That's what he says. In. The. The next verse.

And this takes us to. To our final point. The lord. Makes us. Righteous. Joshua. In the next part. Of this vision. Uh.

He's stripped. Of his. Filthy. Clothes. But now. He's dressed. By the lord. Then he said.

To Joshua. See. I have taken away. Your sin. And I will put. Rich garments. On you. Notice here.

That Joshua. Doesn't say. Well. I now see.

That I. I'm dressed. In a terrible way. Let me go to the wardrobe. And pull something else out. That's more appropriate. Let me make something. That will make myself. Presentable. Joshua. I can't do that.

[ 21 : 29 ] He has nothing. To clothe himself with. And so the lord. Has to clothe him. And it's the same. For us. You know. We can try.

And clothe ourselves. With religion. Uh. We can try. And clothe ourselves. With a whole. Portfolio. Of good works. But it's not enough.

Even our best. Effort. Even our best. Good works. Are like filthy rags. Before God. Isaiah tells us that. In chapter 64.

All of us. Have become like one. Who is unclean. He says. And all our righteous acts. Are like filthy rags. And so we need the lord. To clothe us.

And the promise. Of the gospel is. That. He will clothe us. If we come to him. Just like the prodigal son. Remember. He's off to the far off land.

[ 22 : 29 ] He's in a. Estate. And then he determines. He will return to his father. And he's stinking. And he's dirty. And he's disheveled. Shereveled.

And yet the father. Receives him. He takes off his filthy clothes. And he puts. Clean robes on him. You can read the story. In Luke 15. And that's the promise.

Of the gospel. The lord. Promises. That he will clothe us. With the. Richest. Of garments. And what are they? Well they are. The robes of.

Of Christ's righteousness. Think back to the mountain. From this morning. The mount of. Of transfiguration. And Mark is trying to.

Describe the. The striking. Shining. Amazing. White. Gleaming. Clothes. That Christ. It is robed in. And the promise.

[ 23 : 30 ] For us is. That when we trust in Jesus. He takes our. Rags off us. And he clothes us. With the righteousness. Of Christ.

Romans 13. 14. Clothe. Yourselves. With the lord. Jesus. Christ. And so that's the picture. That we are given. It's a picture of the gospel. Jesus taking. Our. Our sin stained clothes. Off us. And giving us. His perfect robes.

Of righteousness. God made him. Who had no sin. To be sin for us. He took our filthy rags. On himself. On the cross.

He did it. That we might become. The righteousness. Of God. God. And then. Just as we come to. A finish here.

[ 24 : 29 ] Zechariah. It's as if he's. Watching from the sidelines. And all of a sudden. He can't contain himself. Anymore. As he. He sees what's going on. And verse five. Then I said.

Put a clean turban. On his head. We get the picture. Of everything else. Being stripped off. And all these. Righteous clothes. Being put on. But still. The turban. Is soiled.

And so. Zechariah says. Put the. The clean turban. On his head. The turban. Was the. Was the headgear. Of the high priest. When the high priest. Entered the most. Holy place.

He wore this turban. And it had a gold plate. On the front of it. Inscribed with the words. Holy to the Lord. And that too. Was soiled. And so.

It had to be replaced. If Joshua. Was to be. Able to serve the Lord. And so. It was replaced. So they put a clean.

[ 25 : 26 ] Turban on his head. Verse five. 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 walk. In my ways. 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. So the charge. That's given to Joshua. Now. As one who is stripped. Of his filthy rags. And clothed.

In the righteousness. Of Christ. The charge. That's given to him. As a charge. To live a holy life. And if you're a Christian. Here tonight. You've been stripped.

Of your sin. And clothed. With the righteousness. Of Christ. There is a charge. Pressed upon you. And I. We are called.

[ 26 : 21 ] To live. A holy. Life. 1 Peter. 1. 15 and 16. Just. As he who called you. Is holy. So be holy.

In all you do. For it is written. Be holy. Because I am holy. Matthew 5. 48. Jesus says. Be perfect. Therefore.

As your heavenly. Father is perfect. Now could Joshua do this? Not a chance. Can you do this? Can I do this? Not a chance. This. Is a charge. That would only. Be fulfilled.

In and through Christ. Our great high priest. The one we see in. Hebrews 4. We have no time to go there. The one who ascended. Into heaven. But did not sin.

[ 27 : 18 ] Not ever. He is the one. Who fulfilled this charge. In perfection. And in the last part. Of this vision. We are pointed.

Again. And again. To Jesus. He is the one. Who is to come. Verse 8. He is the. The suffering. Servant.

Verse 8. He is the branch. Verse 8. He is the. The stone. The all-seeing one. He is the cornerstone. Of his church.

Verse 9. He is the Lord. Almighty. Verse 9. He is the one. He is the only one. Who in one single day. On the day of Calvary.

Would remove the sin. Of all. Of his people. Verse 9. And he is the one. Who will bring.

[ 28 : 16 ] The peace. And the contentment. Of verse 10. Into every. Person. Who will put their trust in him. So have you put your trust in him.

And if not. Will you put your trust in him. We'll pray. Our heavenly father.

We thank you. That you are a God. Who knows. Our limitations. And so you are a God. Who speaks to us. In these simple ways. Where we are given pictures.

Pictures. Where we see ourselves. And pictures. Where we see. Jesus. And the work. Of Jesus. And we ask. Lord. That tonight. As we. See once more. The vial.

Of our own sinful hearts. We ask. That we would not. Turn away from you. We would not. Listen. To. The devil. Who would seek.

[ 29 : 22 ] To drive us away. But we ask. Lord. That we would look. To. And trust. In. The Lord Jesus. The one who died. To take away our sin. And who promises.

To clothe. Each one of his people. With the righteousness. That he himself. Has worked out. And we ask this. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen.