

**Open Your Eyes!**  
*3-Year Bible Reading Plan*  
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**Bible Text:** Zechariah 3:1-7:4  
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Well, this morning I've got good news for you and that is that the passages that I'm asking you to turn to are a little bit more familiar than they have been in weeks gone by. I want to encourage you to begin in the book of Zechariah. I know you may be thinking, "Well, Zechariah is not that familiar of a section of the Bible." Well, he is the second to the last book of the Old Testament and he happens to be the longest of the minor prophets so technically he's the easiest to find, but today we're gonna be in the book of Zechariah 3 and we're also at some point in the message gonna find ourselves very briefly in the book of Revelation 12, one single verse there in chapter 12, but I know some of you like to mark your place and be prepared therein, but the majority of our time today is gonna be spent in the book of Zechariah 3.

Now again, much like the book of Haggai last week, we find ourselves on the backside of the Babylonian captivity. What we see as far as prophecy is concerned is not just the fulfillment of the building of the temple but the expectation of the Messiah, and if you take the book of Zechariah and you begin to look at it from what we might call a bird's eye view, the first half of Zechariah is somewhat eclectic at best. In fact, the Lord gives him a series of visions, very unique, very intriguing, in fact, almost one of those that you're going from vision to vision and wondering what the Lord is speaking of and what could this possibly mean. By the time you get to the second half of the book of Zechariah, we have almost a play-by-play account of what you and I know as the second coming of Jesus Christ, I mean, it speaks of the manner and the means and even the location and the times. It's one of the most vivid and most detailed accounts of what you and I commonly refer to as the Second Coming.

Well, today as we go into chapter 3, I want to look in the midst of the visions, in the midst of all the prophecies to a passage that probably is the most personal to you and I tomorrow morning when our alarm clock goes off, and I want to challenge you from the book of Zechariah to open your eyes. Now I know each of you are looking at me this morning, your eyes are technically open, some of you, you don't go to sleep until point 2 so you're okay with me there, but what I mean by open your eyes is to the world that is around you. You see, we live in a world that is dominated by the physical and it is ruled by the material, but allow me to give you a Meyerism this morning: everything that you experience in the physical material world is simply a visible manifestation of a spiritual

reality. In other words, the world that we can't see, the world that we can't touch, the world that we can't smell, is actually more real than the world that we can, and in Zechariah 3 the curtain is gonna kind of peel away and we're gonna get a glimpse what's really happening around us as we walk through life, what is the struggle that is before us and behind us and beside us, and I want to encourage us today open our eyes to what's really happening around us.

In the book of Zechariah beginning chapter 3, verse 1 it says,

1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. 4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. 5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by. 6 And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, 7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.

As you read that account, it appears like some type of celestial or shall I even say cosmic courtroom drama. Here is Joshua, the high priest, standing before this character known as the angel of the Lord, we'll unpack that in just a moment, when all of a sudden Satan shows up to resist him. Is this an account of what was happening in the Israelites' life in the sixth century BC? Of course it was, but it's also a picture for you and I of what occurs on a regular basis in our life.

Today I just want to address three simple questions/realities. The first one is this: who is represented here? Who do we have in this story? And I want to begin with the easiest to recognize, Satan. That's a name that easily flows off our lips but I think oftentimes is difficult to ascertain, but this is the one who used to be Lucifer, this is the one whose name used to be Lighted One, the one who adored and praised the Lord, and now his name as Satan means accuser. In fact, the first time you really see the word Satan used in your Bible chronologically is in the book of Job, and what does Satan do in the book of Job? He consistently accuses Job before the Lord, and so what we have here is this entity, and later we're gonna talk about some of his other names in Scripture, known as Satan, the adversary, the accuser who is accusing Joshua, the high priest, before the angel of the Lord.

Now it's that angel of the Lord character that gets a little bit sticky at times. In fact, as you begin to do a study in Scripture of the angelic host, we have declared in song today

about the cherubim and the seraphim, those are classifications of the angelic realm but allow me to be very clear, what we know as a biblical description of the angelic host is very different than the Hallmark store. They're not chubby little guys playing harps, okay? In fact, the biblical picture is men of valor and men of war. In the book of Isaiah, there is an angel that kills 185,000 men in one night with one sword and Jesus makes this statement in Gethsemane, "If I brought a couple legions of angels down, I could wipe out everybody on planet earth." And that's just your run-of-the-mill angel. Then you've got your seraphim and the, "Holy, holy, holy." You've got your cherubim with authority. But the Bible declares that there are three angelic beings who are actually given names, at least for our knowledge. We have Gabriel who is the angel of communication, the Christmas story he's very prolific. We have Michael the angel who shows up in Daniel and Jude and other places who is this warring authority over the people of God. And then the third one is Lucifer, the one who's in this story, Satan, the accuser and the adversary. But then there's this angel of the Lord and there are many as you read through the Old Testament, see a distinct comparison between the angel of the Lord and the Lord himself.

Now let me make this very clear for those of you who may struggle with that. You do realize that when we celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus, that was not when he was formed in creation. He has always been. Jesus has always been in existence. He is the Lord himself as a part of that Triune deity, but yet he physically became flesh some 2,000 years ago to live, to die and to be raised again, and by the way according to Zechariah, he's coming back one day soon.

That being said, when you go to Genesis 16, the first reference to the angel of the Lord, do you know what Hagar says about him? "I saw God face-to-face." When you get to Genesis 22 and Abram has Isaac, the child of promise, on the altar of sacrifice, the angel of the Lord implores the Lord's name for himself in that setting. In the book of Judges 2 and in other places, you see this uncanny resemblance that if you're taking notes and you like theology of what we call a Christophany, it is a physical appearance of the Lord Jesus before his physical birth at what we know as the Christmas season. In fact, here in this passage in Zechariah 3, you'll notice there are two things the angel of the Lord does here that no other angel ever does and no other creature does. The first is this: he uses the personal pronoun for the Lord to speak of his own advice. He doesn't just say, "I'm speaking for the Lord," he said, "The Lord said, the Lord rebuke you." He used it himself to refer to himself and, secondly, he tells Joshua, "Your filthy garments I have made clean." No angel can make your garments clean. No man can make your garments clean. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can take your filthy garments and make them clean.

So what we have here is Satan, the fallen one, the adversary, we have this representation of Jesus Christ, and then there's Joshua and I know what you're thinking, "Well, I'm not a high priest, I don't go into the day of atonement and make sacrifices of turtledoves, etc." That's right, but you and I live 2,500 years after this story took place, Jesus has come, he has lived, he has died, he has raised from the dead, and according to Revelation 1:6, he has made us kings and priests and one day we shall reign with him. You see, on the other side of the empty tomb, you needed to show up at a certain day, at a certain time, and have the right person there to offer the sacrifice, but ladies and gentlemen, the tomb is

empty, you no longer need a material physical sacrifice to atone for your sin, you no longer need to have another human being stand between you and God for the Bible says in 1 Timothy 2 there's one mediator between God and man and that is the man Christ Jesus. You realize that as a believer in Jesus Christ, the Bible says you're a priest. You don't need anybody or anything else to be between you and God.

So let's look at this story again because it's not just the story of Joshua, the high priest, it's your story that as you walk through the paths of life, you walk with your Savior Jesus, guess who's there every step of the way? That's right, Satan is. Every time you desire to do what the Lord wants you to do, every time you seek holiness, every time you desire to worship, guess who's there? That's right.

Open your eyes, you have an adversary and I have an adversary who wants to wreck our lives, which brings up the second point, it's what? What does Satan really do? What does he actually do in our lives to wreak havoc? And this is where Revelation 12:9 comes in handy because we find ourselves in a chapter in the Bible that describes the history of what we might call spiritual warfare beginning all the way back with the founding of the people of God, the nation of Israel, with the birth of the Messiah, in fact, chapter 12 ends with the coming of the Lord. Well, there in verse 9 of chapter 12 of the book of Revelation, whom we know as Satan is described with unique terminology. He is called the devil, the red dragon and that old serpent. It's almost as if in one single verse we don't want to mistake who this guy really is. So I want to take those three descriptions, I want to take those three titles and hopefully unpack what it is that the enemy does in your life that makes everything what it appears to be.

The first is this, the word "devil." It's common. We hear that term all the time, "Oh, the devil this, the devil that." It simply means "adversary." I want you to hear me clearly and this was probably best described in C. S. Lewis' book "The Screwtape Letters": the moment you got saved, the moment you asked Jesus to save you, you immediately had a target on your body and Satan as your prime enemy. He despises everything you are.

Now let me illustrate this in very practical terms. You and I are about to embark on one of the greatest time periods of our calendar year, football season. It's here. That's right and we're getting ready for it and you know and I know at the end of the season there's really only one game that you've gotta win, right? Oh, you know what it is. You see, it doesn't matter if you go 1-10 as long as you win that one game, right? Because there's an adversary out there and you don't like anything about them and they don't like anything about you. Notice I have not used particular schools, I'll let you fill in your personal blank. However, let me go down just the road to one of our local institutions of higher learning otherwise known as a high school, if you go into the football field house, you will notice that there is a digital countdown clock, it's not counting down to the first game of the season, it's counting down to the arch rival that they play during the season because at the end of the day, there are those whom we play but there is one who is our adversary. In fact, the definition of an adversary when it comes to football is if they were playing the devil and his demons, you'd struggle who to root for. But that's the adversary. I want you to hear me clearly, when it comes to your life, your existence, your relationship with

Jesus Christ, the devil is your arch rival, he is your adversary, and he wants nothing but havoc upon and in your life.

The second description used in Revelation 12:9 is that old serpent and that takes us back to the garden of Eden where he messed us all up. He will tempt us. He will lure us. He will try to convince us that the things of this world are worthy. He will try to demonstrate to us that if we just rationalize things out, surely we know better than God does.

But notice that other description, the old red dragon. Hm, I don't know about you but when it comes to a dragon, whether mythical or literal, the one word that comes to mind is, "Run!" I mean, that's nothing you play with, right? In fact, one of the better descriptions we have in Scripture is in 1 Peter 5:8 where it says that our adversary, our enemy, the devil himself roars like a lion in our lives. Now it's interesting, we teach our children to not even pet a stray dog because they might have some type of disease, we come around the corner and we see a red fox or some animal that's not typically known as domestic, what do we tell our children to do? Get away. Get in the car. Run! The devil is called a dragon and a lion and yet we think we can play with him. We think we can lie down in life and just kind of pet the mane of his fur and say, "Oh, it's okay for me to play around with this stuff." What does he want to do? He wants to destroy you.

Now Christian, let me tell you something very clear: the devil cannot as a believer in Jesus Christ, he can't take your soul away. He cannot take your eternity away. He cannot take your seat in heaven away. But let me tell you what he can take away: he can take away your joy. He can take away your health. He can take away your marriage, your kids, your prosperity. I mean, he can take it all. Don't believe me? Read Job. He took it all but the Lord said, "Ah, there's one thing you can't touch and that's who he is, his soul." You understand that when Satan came before Joshua, the high priest, he wasn't coming just to give him a hard time, he was there to destroy him.

So the last and most important question is this: what do we do? Now having our eyes opened, what do we do? The first thing is this. Please, oh please, realize what is really happening around you. You know, it frightens me that even among evangelical Christians, it doesn't matter who you go and look at the data or the research, almost half of us, and I'm gonna use the personal pronoun there, half of us, half of you, half of them, when asked is the devil a literal entity in this creation, almost half of us say, "Nah, he's just something of our imagination. He's just a force of evil." I've got news for you, you need to realize he is real. He was real in Joshua's day and he's real in your day and one of the ways that he gets us so much is we don't think he's real so we've already allowed him to have the upper hand in our lives. Please, oh please, people, realize that as believer in Jesus Christ there is a real enemy, a real adversary, Satan, devil, whatever name you want to use from Scripture. He is real.

The second thing is this, realizing what he does in our lives, what he did in Joshua, the high priest's life, the second thing you need to do is this, you need to rebuke him. You need to put him in his place. But allow me to share with you how you do that. You know, I mentioned that there were three angels that were named in Scripture. One of them is

Michael the archangel, and all the way toward the end of your Bible in the book of Jude verse 9, Jude 1:9, it alludes back to the book of Deuteronomy 34 because it says there that Moses' body was buried and no man knows the exact location thereof. In Jude verse 9, and this is a message for another day, the Lord sends Michael the archangel, the biggest of the big, to get the body of Moses. Guess who shows up? The devil does. Satan shows up and he begins to argue with Michael the archangel about who should get the body. Allow me to share with you what Michael does not do: he does not say, "Ah, who are you? I got this." He doesn't say, "Oh, I'm bigger than you. I can defeat you." Michael the archangel takes a step back and says, "The Lord rebuke you." If Michael the archangel isn't gonna take him one-on-one, why would you? And when I say that you realize he's real and you rebuke him, that means you call on the only one who is more powerful than him, the Lord Jesus Christ himself and say, "Jesus, you need to take care of this guy because I don't have the ability to do so."

Last but not least, we need to resist him. We realize he's real, we rebuke him through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we resist him. You say, "Well, you just said I'm not supposed to take him one-on-one, so how do I resist?" The book of James 4:7 gives us the formula, it says submit yourselves therefore to the Lord and resist the devil and he will flee from you. I think one of the erroneous pictures that we have when it comes to spiritual warfare is like, "Alright, devil, you want it? Come get me!" That is the dumbest thing you can do. Do you know what the biblical picture is? When he accuses you, when he begins the process of deceiving you and destroying you, you not only call on the Lord Jesus Christ but instead of fighting him down at his level, you submit yourselves to the Lord, in other words, the best way to counteract the ploy of the enemy is to get more faithful to the things and the person of God. In other words, quit looking at his strategies and start looking at the one who provides victory. Submit yourselves, surrender yourselves to the Lord, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Now today I don't want to open up the binder of all the issues and aspects of your life, but I understand what it's like to walk this planet. You've got issues, I've got issues, you've got struggles, I've got struggles, we've all got areas of concern, everywhere we turn the enemy is accusing us and deceiving us and desiring to destroy us, yet how many times do we say, "Don't worry, God, I got this. I can make it through. I can just persevere." Just like the garden of Eden, isn't it? What do we need to do? We need to surrender. We need to submit ourselves to him. Then we are resisting and it says the devil will flee from us. It's not about fighting him, it's about actually trusting that Zechariah 4:8 is true, not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, today as we talk about that world around us that maybe we can't see in the visible but we realize according to Scripture it is even more real than real, maybe today you realize there's never been that time in your life where you've surrendered to the Lord. Maybe you realize today there's never been that time in your life where you've submitted and you have believed and every time you turn the corner, destruction lies in wait. Maybe today is the day you say, "You know, it's time for a new path. It's time for a change." You know, the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. You say, "Well, how do I do that? Is there

something special I have to say or do or class I have to sign up for?" No, the Bible just says cry out to him. Just call out to him. Let me encourage you to do that this morning. You don't have to do so out loud, in fact, you don't even have to use the same words that I might use but maybe your cry to the Lord would go a little something like this. "God, you know I'm living a life of destruction. You know I'm living a life of defeat. God, I believe today that the only answer to my sin problem is Jesus Christ and, God, I believe, I believe today that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. And God, today I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. And God, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much, God, I believe he took the punishment of my sin on his cross and, God, I believe three days later when he rose from the dead, he made it possible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. So God, today I don't have all the answers to all the problems of life but I do know that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. The best way I know how, I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today who had that conversation with the Lord. Can I encourage you to do something? In just a few moments after I pray and we stand up, just step out and step forward. We've got a lot of people who would love to celebrate with you, to celebrate what the Lord is doing in your life. Maybe today that conversation took place years ago, maybe even decades ago, but if you'd be honest with yourself and honest with the Lord, life's been more about defeat and destruction than it has victory. And maybe today it's not about stepping forward but it's about walking out of here in just a few moments no longer playing around with the enemy, no longer snuggling up with the enemy but submitting yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ so that you might resist the enemy.

*Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, thank you that you have not designed our lives to be lives of deceit and destruction. You have designed us to live in victory and in a relationship with you. Help us, O God, just to respond appropriately. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

I'm gonna ask you to stand with us as John leads us, whatever decision, I'll be right here at the front.