

Special Messages from 2018

Jesus in the Courtroom

Unedited Transcript

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There we go. Now I'm on. It's so great to be with y'all on this very cold Florida morning, and I'm excited to share with you a little bit of what I feel like Jesus put on my heart. Before we do that, if y'all would pray with me that'd be great. Father God, we thank you for a new day and a new day in which we can experience Your mercy and Your grace and Your love. Father, You know each of the men in this room. You know what brought them in here. You know the week that they've had. You know the day that lies ahead of them. You know everything about each of us. You know what it is we need to hear today from You, so speak, and speak clearly, and speak specifically to each of our hearts.

Father, I surrender myself to You. I surrender my heart and the things I've thought about and studied and prepared. I surrender my words. I give it all to You to be used however You so choose, but please Father, by your Spirit, come and speak to us, your children. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Pat told me that y'all are taking a look at who Jesus is. That's what you're spending your time on over the next several weeks. As I was thinking about what I wanted to share with you all, I started thinking a lot about who Jesus is to me and how there was a shift in that for me at one point. I've been doing professional ministry for a while. I'm currently pastor at Summit Church. I've been there for almost five years. Prior to that, I was a youth pastor for about seven years. I've been doing this for a little while. About three years into my youth pastor job, I decided that I didn't believe this stuff anymore. I decided, "I think I'm an atheist." I was currently working as a youth pastor at the time. The reason I came to that conclusion was, after three years of being a professional Christian, there were some things in my life that I thought, "I shouldn't still be struggling with this. This still shouldn't be an issue for me. If this is all true and if Jesus is who He says He is, I should be a lot better than I am right now."

Because I didn't feel like I was better, I started to think, "There's two answers to that. Either Jesus is who He says He is and He's apathetic towards me, He's not helping me get better, or I am trying to please a God who doesn't exist." For me at that moment, it was easier just to think, "Okay. God doesn't exist." I decided that I was going to be an atheist. I went home and told my wife, who was not happy about that. My atheism was real. It lasted for three days, but it was a real three days. After three days, I decided, "I can't be an atheist and still be the youth pastor, so I need to go in and quit my job."

I went into work and I decided, "This is a big deal to walk away from this, so maybe I should read my Bible one last time before I go in and quit my job." I decided I would read where I had stopped reading three days prior in my devotions. I was in the prophet Zechariah. I want to read to you what I read in Zechariah, and then talk about how I encountered Jesus in a way that surprised me. This is Zechariah three and I'm going to read the first five verses. "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. 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?' 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.'"

"Then he said to Joshua, 'See, I have taken away your sin and I will put fine garments on you.' Then I said, 'Put a clean turban on his head,' so they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him while the angel of the Lord stood by." This is God's Word. I read this passage and in this passage, you're getting a picture of the holy courtroom of God. As I read that and I realized, "We've got this courtroom scene and we've got Joshua who's standing there in filthy clothes, ready to face judgment." Whether or not you're a Christian or not, we all have a sense that we're on trial. We all have a sense that we're in a courtroom, that in fact, everything in our world communicates to us either we've measured up or we haven't measured up. That's why we have the dream that we show up to work or school naked. That's what that dream's about. It's about showing up and not being adequate, not being well-prepared.

This happens through TV and commercials. When I was in college, I remember I was so excited. It was the first time I had a TV in my own room and I had a credit card. What I found myself doing in college was staying up late and watching infomercials. From the time I turned 16, I always have desired to meet my abs. I've wanted to meet my abs, but I never have. I've always been a little bit pudgy in the middle and liked the donuts and the sugar. In college, I would watch these infomercials for ab workout machines. They'd start off with the guy standing on the beach with his gut hanging out, and then all of a sudden, he would magically show up and he would have eight pack abs. Then they would be like, "If you pay three payments of \$19.95, you can have those abs too."

This is not a joke. In college, I bought the Ab Roller, the Ab Flex, and the Ab Dolly. I also bought the Steam Buggy, but that had nothing to do with abs. It was about cleaning your bathrooms. In college, I spent \$200 on my abs and still to this day, I've never met one of my abs. None of it worked, but why were those infomercials so effective for me? They would present a picture that looked like me, the guy standing on the beach with his gut hanging out, and then they would say, "You don't measure up like that, but if you get this thing, all of a sudden you can become acceptable."

We live in a culture where we get this being on trial. I don't know today where it is that you feel like you're on trial, today where you feel like you don't measure up, or where you're being evaluated, but we all have that feeling. We have that feeling because there actually is a real courtroom. There is a real place where we will stand and be told whether or not we measure up or not. In this courtroom, Zechariah the prophet has this vision. He has this vision where Joshua, the high priest of Israel, and being the high priest of Israel meant that he was the representative of all of the people. You've got Joshua, the high priest standing in this holy courtroom. When the people hearing this vision heard that Joshua was standing there in filthy rags, they would've not only been scared for Joshua, but they would've been scared for themselves because Joshua represented them.

As the high priest, there were all these Old Testament laws that said, "In order to stand before God on behalf of the people, you have to go through these rituals. You have to do this ritual of bathing, you have to wear these certain garments." They knew what they had to do in order to be acceptable, and here Joshua is, and he shows up completely unacceptable. He has not measured up. He has not done the things that he needed to do in order to stand before God's holy courtroom without any fear. You've got Joshua standing there in the courtroom. Then it says you've got Satan there. You've got Satan there ready to accuse. That's what it says that the role of Satan in this courtroom, is to be the accuser.

Throughout Scripture, we have many different descriptions of Satan. Of course, we know that there was that serpent in Genesis that started the lie with Adam and Eve that God doesn't really love them, that they could be like God. We know that in the Gospel of Matthew, Satan was the one who tempted Jesus. The apostle Peter describes him as a roaring lion and as a murderer. We're told in the Gospel of John that he's the father of lies. Here in this vision, we actually see Satan in one of his greatest parts. That is as the outrage prosecutor in the courtroom of God's law. You and I, we know these accusations. We've heard this voice before.

Maybe even when you were trying to get ready to come here this morning, maybe a voice said, "You shouldn't go. It's not going to help you. You're such a mess. Nothing's going to help you. Why are you going to go and pretend like you could actually measure up?" Maybe when you try to share with someone about Jesus, maybe if you try to give one of those cards you start thinking, "Wait a second. If they knew who I really am, then they're going to see that I'm a hypocrite." Or when we try to pray and ask for something, maybe we hear a voice that says, "Why should God listen to you? You haven't been reading your Bible. You haven't been doing the things that you should be doing." Or when you fall into that besetting sin. You fall into that habit that you know is destructive, and then you hear after all that Jesus has done for you, we know that accusing voice.

Satan, even though he is the father of lies, when it comes to accusing us, he has plenty of truth on his side. The great preacher, Charles Spurgeon, once said, "Truly, dear friend, if Satan wants to accuse you, any page of our history, any hour of any day will furnish him what he needs for those accusations." We have an accuser who has a lot of truth on his side. There's one other player in this courtroom. It says then there's the angel of the Lord. You've got Joshua standing there in filthy rags, you've got Satan over to the side ready to accuse, and then you've got this angel of the Lord.

The angel of the Lord is an interesting character in the Bible. He appears throughout the Old Testament and then virtually disappears in the New Testament. When the angel of the Lord appears, he doesn't appear like Gabriel or the archangel Michael, where he's making some declaration of God. The angel of the Lord always speaks as if he is God. He speaks in the first person. A lot of scholars and theologians say that when you encounter the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, what you're actually encountering is a pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. You're encountering Jesus before He put on flesh.

In this courtroom, we got Joshua standing there in filthy rags, we've got Satan ready to accuse, and then we've got Jesus. Jesus is the only one who actually does anything in this vision. Joshua's just standing there filthy, Satan's standing there ready to accuse, but Jesus actually, physically does things in this vision. He does three things. He rebukes Satan, He pardons Joshua, and then He clothes Joshua. Very first thing Jesus does in this vision is He actually looks past Joshua in his filth and he makes eye contact with Satan and He says, "The Lord rebuke you. The Lord rebuke you, Satan." He says, "I have already chosen Joshua."

Essentially what Jesus starts this vision off by saying is, "Satan, you have absolutely nothing to bring here." It's almost as if Jesus is looking at Satan and He's reminding him of the battle that took place before the beginning of time. He looks at Satan and He essentially says Ephesians 1:4, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." The very first thing Jesus does, is He silences the accuser. He says, "You have absolutely nothing to bring here. I have already chosen to love Joshua." I love that He says this in front of Joshua because I can imagine that was a powerful thing to hear. As Joshua's standing there in filth, hearing the angel of the Lord, hearing Jesus

say to Satan, "Satan, I know you've got lots of accusations to bring, but I will hear none of it." I'm sure that had an impact on Joshua.

I have five kids. We're actually expecting our sixth. Four of them have been surprises from Jesus. Just so you know, it wasn't a planned thing. When my kids were little, it started with my oldest, Oliver. We would do this thing at bedtime where he would go through a list of all the things that he thinks would make me love him. He would say, "Dad, why do you love me?" I would say, "Why do you think?" Then he'd go through his list. He was like, "Do you love me because I'm so smart?" I'd be like, "No. You are smart, but that's not why I love you." He'd say, "Do you love me because I'm so fast?" "No. You do run very fast, but that's not why I love you." "Do you love me because I always obey you?" "No, definitely not because you always obey me."

After he would go through this list, he would say, "Dad, why do you love me?" Then my answer would always be, "Because I do. Because you're mine. Because I love you. That's it. I love you because you're mine." We're told in Deuteronomy, God's love has always been like that. In Deuteronomy, God comes to the people of Israel and he says, "I chose you, not because you were the biggest, not because you were the strongest, not because of what you could do for me. I chose you simply because you're mine. Simply because I love you." In a sense, that's what Jesus is doing at the very beginning. He's reminding Satan and in turn, also reminding Joshua that he's loved just because he's His. That's the first thing Jesus does in this vision.

The second thing He does, is he cleans him. He washes him, He takes away his filth. He says, "Look. I have cleaned you. I have taken away your sin." That's great. I know when we experience that, that's always such a relief. When we experience grace and mercy, when we're standing there filthy and dirty and then all of a sudden we're forgiven and cleaned, that's a great relief. What He does next is actually what made the biggest impact in my own heart on this day when I read it, because not only does Jesus clean Joshua, but then it says he dresses Joshua. He puts royal garments on him. It's one thing to be pardoned of sin. If you're pardoned of sin, you're free to leave God's courtroom knowing that you're okay. You're free to go. If you've been forgiven of sin, you're free to go without guilt and shame.

If you're clothed in the appropriate garments, if you're clothed in rich garments, not only are you free to leave God's presence without guilt, but you're free to stay in God's presence without fear. I think that's a really important thing that we see Jesus do in this vision. Not only does He clean Joshua, but He clothes Joshua. You say, "How does this actually work? How can Jesus just say, 'You showed up, you knew what you should've done, you didn't do it, you're filthy. I'm going to clean you and I'm going to clothe you and we're good.'" How can that be fair? How can that be just? Hundreds of years later, Jesus would actually put on flesh and come to earth.

When He was on earth, he would tell a story. He would tell a story about a wedding banquet that took place. It was a wedding banquet where none of the invited guests showed up. The king, who was throwing the banquet, says to his servants, "Go and remind the people who have been invited to come." The servants go and they remind the people who have been invited, and the people just aren't interested. They're too busy, can't come. They come back and they tell the king this. The king says, "Then just go out on the streets and invite anyone. Anyone can come to this wedding banquet." He does. The servants do and the people show up and the banquet hall is full. Then something interesting happens in this story that Jesus is telling. Jesus says the king notices that there is one person at the wedding banquet who showed up inappropriately dressed. The king's reaction to this is great anger and

he has the man taken out of the wedding banquet and it says, "Taken to a place where there's wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Essentially, whenever you hear "wailing and gnashing of teeth," that's the place of being separated from God. It's a horrible thing that happens to this guy who doesn't show up to the wedding dressed appropriately. In the story, you think, "Wait a second. None of these people knew they were going to a wedding. The servant went out and invited people off the street. How did anyone have the appropriate clothes?" It's because when they came into the wedding banquet, they were given the clothes that they needed to wear. This one guy chose to go into the banquet and not take the clothes, to go in there dressed in inappropriate clothing.

As Jesus is looking at Joshua, and as Jesus is cleaning him and then clothing him in rich garments, Jesus knows that in order to do that, and in order for this to be just and fair, that He would have to show up in the filthy clothes. That Jesus, when He's telling this story of this wedding banquet, is, He's not saying, "You're going to be the one who shows up at the wedding filthy and in the wrong clothes," He's telling that story to say, "That's going to be me. I'm going to show up in the filthy clothes. I'm the one who's going to experience the wrath and the anger of the holy God against sin."

In Second Corinthians 5:21 it says, "God made him, Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin, to become our sin, to be clothed in our filthiness, in order that you and I might become the righteousness of God." In this courtroom scene, you have Joshua standing there in filthy clothes, you've got Satan ready to bring all the accusations, and then you have Jesus. If Satan is the prosecuting attorney, in the courtroom, what does that make Jesus? It makes Him our defense attorney. As our defense attorney, He's actually set up an infallible defense. When Jesus goes and pleads our case before the holiness of God, Jesus isn't asking for grace. That's how I've always thought of Jesus, as that Jesus was constantly interceding for me and saying, "All right, God. Zach, he did it again, but boys will be boys. Let's let him go this one time. Let's show him grace one more time. Let's forgive him." That's actually not what's taking place.

When Jesus goes before the holiness of God as our defense attorney, as our advocate, He's not going before God pleading for grace. He's demanding justice. He's showing His nail-scarred hands and He's demanding justice, because it would be unjust for God to take punishment for the same sin twice. For the first time in my life, even though I kind of knew that before, when I read this passage and I all of a sudden saw that Jesus is not the one who's accusing me, He's actually the one defending me, He's actually my advocate, all of a sudden my view of Him completely changed. I had spent most of my life looking at Jesus as my example. I'd been looking at Jesus as, "Who do I need to be? How do I need to be?" When I didn't measure up, I felt awful and crummy and like, "I might as well not even try." All of a sudden, if Jesus is my defense attorney and He's not the one who's having to go before God the Father and plead for grace, but He's demanding justice, all of a sudden He's different to me.

I realized on that day when I read this passage, that I needed to repent. What I needed to repent of was not receiving the righteousness of Christ. I needed to repent of the fact that I believed that any of my sin was more powerful than the blood of God's own Son. Martin Luther, one of the men responsible for the Reformation said, "What is it about our pride that makes us believe that anything we have done or ever will do cannot be covered by the blood of God's own Son?"

Speaking of Martin Luther, after he nailed those 95 Theses to the door in Germany that prompted the beginning of the Reformation, we're told he had to stand before a council where he had to defend the Gospel. He did so beautifully, but he angered a lot of people. Because of that, he had to go into hiding.

He went to a place called Wartburg Castle. While he was in this castle, he wrote a letter to his friends talking about the spiritual depression he felt there. He described one incident in particular. It was late at night and he said all of a sudden he felt like Satan was in the room with him, and that Satan unrolled a scroll that was full of all his sins. He said Satan just kept saying to him over and over again, he kept going through the list over and over again.

Martin Luther said at one point he could not take it anymore. He jumped out of his bed and he said, "It's all true, Satan. Everything you just said is true. There's even some sins that you haven't listed. There are even some sins that you don't even know about. Write this at the bottom of your scroll. The blood of God's Son cleanses me from all my sin." Then we're told that Martin Luther, in his passion, grabbed an inkwell off his desk and hurled it at Satan who wasn't really there, who vanished, and the inkwell splattered against the wall and left a mark, a mark that supposedly you can still go and see today.

My question for y'all, as you begin this look at Jesus, is have you correctly identified the voice that's been accusing you? Do you know what the sound of the accuser is and do you know what the sound of Jesus is? If you don't have Jesus as your Savior, I wouldn't want to stand in that courtroom. If He is, Jesus said, "I have not come to condemn, but to save." If Jesus goes from being more than just your example, more than just a way to live, and He actually becomes your Savior, all of a sudden, His voice is very different to you. In First John 2, it says, "I write you these things so that you won't sin, so that you'll stop sinning, but if you do sin, if you keep sinning, know that you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one." He is the atoning sacrifice for your sins, and not only for your sins, but the sins of the whole world.

Jesus, primarily for you and me, is not our example. He's our advocate. He's our defense attorney. When the accusations come, and they will come, our response to that accuser is to look at the accusations and say, "It's true. It's all true. There's probably some things that you don't even know about," but then to look in the face of Jesus our advocate and hear Him say, "I chose you. I chose to love you not because of anything you can do or have done, but simply because you're mine." To allow Him to clean us, and then allow Him to clothe us in rich garments. Let's pray.

Father God, I thank you that in Jesus, we have not just an example of what we are supposed to be, but we have a Savior. We have a defense attorney. We have one who stands before you and demands justice, because He, Himself has paid the price for our failings and our brokenness and our sin and the sin done against us. Father, I pray as we go through our day and as we go through our study of Jesus, when we look at the things that He's calling us to and as we look at His life and try to exemplify His life, may we never forget that His main role in our life is as our Savior, as our advocate, as the one who chose us and cleanses us and covers us. We pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.