

Zech. 12 1-9 When God Gives Victory

In every competition there is usually a winner. And those of us who have played some kind of sport or spent time playing games with our family know what this looks like. Today, there will be a winner, a victor, declared in the Super Bowl. And the captain of our team is none other than God Himself. But, He is no ordinary captain. He is in a class all by himself. And, in his providence, He is working all of history toward a victorious conclusion. As Christians today, we live by the words of the Apostle Paul who says **“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 Cor. 15:57). And: **“But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere”** (2 Cor. 2:14). And, **“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”** (Rom. 8:37). If we go to the very end of the Bible we see God leading his people to victory. In Rev. 22:3-5 we read: **“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”** Through the Person and Work of Jesus, the Son, God is victorious. And HE IS and WILL lead his people to victory. This is the theme of the Bible, and the subject of Zechariah’s words, which we need to hear this morning. For nothing in principle has changed. I have 2 truths that are always present in God’s work of victory through his people: 1) God will confuse his enemies, and 2) God will give strength to his people.

1. God will confuse the enemies of his people. Look at vv. 1-4: **“The oracle of the word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him: “Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it. On that day, declares the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.”** As I’ve said before, I believe these words of prophecy find their fulfillment in the Kingdom of the Son, which began in power at Pentecost and will continue until one day when the Son hands the kingdom over to the Father. This means these words are being fulfilled now and will be fulfilled in the final judgment. But, the underlying truth behind these verses is this: The path to victory for God’s people includes the confusion of our enemies, who are also the enemies of God, the enemies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This truth is pictured in the **“siege”** of Jerusalem as the nations gather against it. And in v. 4, God will **“strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness.”** And He does this for the sake of his people pictured for us in the **“house of Judah.”**

This has been the case throughout the history of Israel, and now in the church. God confuses and thwarts the plans of his enemies as he brings victory to his people. We see this throughout the

Bible. I think of Israel in Egypt. Through Joseph God preserved his people through famine by leading them to Egypt. In the beginning, they found great favor. But, at some point, as they grew into a large group of people, Egypt became their enemy. They persecuted them with slavery, even trying to diminish their numbers by putting their male children to death. But, we know the story. God rescues his people. He leads them out of Egypt. Though it seems to Egypt that they are in control, and will overcome, God confuses their plans. I think particularly of the Red Sea. As the Sea opens up and the Egyptian armies follow, we read that God **“looked down on the Egyptian forces”** and threw them into a panic, **“clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily.”** And the Egyptians said, **“Let us flee from before Israel for the Lord fights for them.”** (Exod. 14:23-25).

Brothers and sisters, this is what we see today in the Church of Jesus Christ. Heb. 12:22 says, **“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering . . .”** This is NOW. And, God will protect his city, his people. One theologian says, *“All who attack her will become drunk with God’s judicial blindness, and will therefore stagger and fall beneath his judgments”* (Jer. 25:15-16; 2 Thess. 2:1-12).

Turn with me to 1 Pet. 2:4-8 where we see our truth displayed. He says, **“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.”** This truth is exactly what is being played out today in the Kingdom of the Son, in the “heavenly Jerusalem,” in the “latter-day Judah,” God will confuse the efforts and crush all his enemies, those who do not trust in God’s STONE, those who oppose the Lord Jesus Christ and his people.

In the Book of Acts alone, we see the Apostles preach the gospel of the kingdom. And when they preach, what happens? They are persecuted, put into prison, brought before magistrates, beaten, stoned, left for dead, etc. And what continues to happen? The gates of hell do not prevail. God uses suffering and persecution, which the enemies of the gospel think is helping them. But, NO, their efforts are confused. The preaching and teaching of the gospel continues. In 2 Tim. 4:18 after almost being fed to the lions, Paul says, **“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”** . . . A couple applications:

Application: No matter the plans of Satan, no matter the plans of those who oppose the Gospel of Christ, they will not succeed. Jesus says, **“I will build my church. The gates of hell will not**

prevail” (Matt. 16:18). And, “God works all things for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

App. The world does not see God’s works of providence for the good of his people. It is kind of like Joseph with his brothers. They meant to do him harm. But, God allowed those things for his good. This truth flows over even to the difficulties of life. No matter what comes your way as a Christian, God could no longer do harm to you than could a nursing mother leave her child.

2. God will give strength to his people. Look at vv. 5-9: **“Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.’ 6 “On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves. And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem. 7 “And the LORD will give salvation to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah. 8 On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them. 9 And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”** Here, we see a lot of truths concerning the victory God will give to his people. We see safety in Jerusalem (v. 6). We see salvation given to **“house of Judah”** (v. 7). We see protection (v. 8). We see the destruction of their enemies (v. 9). All of this comes under the umbrella of victory as God gives strength to his people. In v. 5. and in v. 8, we see that the **“inhabitants of Jerusalem”** even the **“feeblest among them”** will be as strong, as great as king David.

What a beautiful truth for the people of God! I love this picture given to us: the strength of David. You may immediately think of David as the great warrior king, the king who went out and conquered the enemies of Israel from Jerusalem, the great leader of many mighty warriors. But, do you remember the greatest of David’s physical achievements? When he was a young man, before he became king, before he joined the army, what did he do? You know the answer. Goliath! Let me retell the story. David’s father sent him to check on his brothers who were fighting the Philistines in the armies of Israel. The two armies were lined up against one another. And every day the Philistine champion, the very strong, large, Goliath would come out and challenge the armies of Israel, cursing their God, taunting and teasing King Saul and the army. . .

They were afraid. And no one wanted to challenge this Giant of a man. But who comes forth and says, **“I will go and fight for Israel?”** The young shepherd David. And David does the exact opposite of Israel’s armies. He says, **“Who is this Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”** Then what happens? His brothers get mad at him. Saul tells him he is only a youth. But, he is persistent. And finally, Saul says, **“Go. May the Lord be with you!”** Then, they load him up with a helmet, shield, and much armor. Well, David doesn’t know what to do with those things, as he had not worn such armor before. So, he leaves the armor and the weapons

behind and takes with him, his shepherd staff, a slingshot and five stones. Can you imagine? I am sure the Philistine army is laughing. Goliath comes with all his strength, his experience as a warrior, and all his weapons. He also laughs and says, “*Am I dog that you come to me with sticks?*” But, what does David say? He says, “**You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel . . .**” And what happens next? He runs into battle and slings one stone and it hits Goliath in the head, killing him. And he stands over the Philistine, taking his sword and cuts off his head. And when the Philistines see what happens, they run away! This was a miracle! Nobody would take that bet. But, there was no chance Goliath would win that fight!

WHY? God gave strength to David. Not physical strength, but faith, faith in Israel’s God, in David’s God. Before meeting Goliath in battle, do you remember what David told him? He said, “***This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand . . . that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord’s and he will give you into our hand.***” (1 Sam. 17). Brothers and sisters, these verses in Zechariah tell us that even the most feeble (the old, the lepper, the sick, the poor, etc.) will be like David, the greatest of Israel’s warriors. And who will have this strength? It will be the “***clans of Judah,***” the “***tents of Judah,***” ALL the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Brothers, there has NEVER been a time in Jerusalem where ALL the inhabitants have been given this same kind of strength. This means these verses must look forward to a time when this will be true, when all God’s people will be given strength. So, when is this? This will happen in the days of the Kingdom of the Son!

When did the fulfillment of this prophecy begin? I think of Jer. 31:31-34: “**Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.**” I think of Joel 2:28-29: “**And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; you sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.**” I think of Zechariah 4:6: “**Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.**” Brothers and sisters, we see the beginning of this fulfillment at Pentecost. So, what does this have to do with strength? Today, as the people of God, ALL OF US have been given the same Spirit; ALL OF US have been given strength; ALL OF US have the strength of David . . . And MORE! How! Well, King David did not give us this strength. He did not defeat ALL the enemies of God. His kingship ended with the grave!

But, we know, the story of David and Goliath is only a picture of the TRUE KING, the BRANCH (Zech. 3:8; 6:12), the MAN on the red horse (Zechariah 1:8), the true JOSHUA, the greater ZERUBBABEL. On his robe and on his thigh is written KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS. He is the true DAVID. And He did not merely conquer a large man. He conquered sin and death. And He did not conquer with any weapon. Instead, as a lamb led to slaughter, he laid down his life as a sacrifice for sin. And he conquered ALL of our enemies, even the wrath of God. He is our propitiation! And he says to us today, **“I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail”** (Matt. 16:18). He is doing this through his own power, as the Eternal Son who has conquered as a man, he now sits at the right hand of God where he gives his people STRENGTH through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is VICTORY!

Brothers and Sisters, in the Old Covenant, Israel never had such power. They were always a mixed community. But not so in the New Covenant. ALL God’s people have this power; they have this strength. In John 6:37 Jesus says, **“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”** Then, he says **“For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day”** (v. 40).

So, what does this mean for us? I will finish with three applications.

1. Victory is sure. Already, Christ has conquered sin, death, and the devil. Heb. 1:3 **“After making purification for sins, Jesus sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.”** Today, Satan no longer has any power to stop the building of the church. As we’ve seen, God will confuse the plans of the enemies of the gospel.

2. Victory will come through his people. Today, as Christians, we follow our Lord! As we live in godliness, obeying his commands, we also preach the gospel to the world. We are his ambassadors. We tell our neighbors, we tell our friends, we tell the nations that Jesus is Lord and that forgiveness can be found in the gospel. And this will be through the power of the Holy Spirit. Turn with me to 2 Cor. 2:14-17 says: **“But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.”**

3. God will always give strength to his people. We must recall the words of Paul who says, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”** (Phil. 4:13).

So, today, KNOW that Christ has overcome all the enemies of God. And YES, we wait for the consummation when sin, death, and the devil will be no more. But, this outcome is sure!