

Do You Trust Jesus?

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[0:00] Zechariah 12, we'll read the first nine verses. This is the word of the Lord concerning Israel.

! On that day when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations.

All who try to move it will injure themselves. On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness, declares the Lord.

I will keep a watchful eye over the house of Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. Then the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, the people of Jerusalem are strong because the Lord Almighty is their God.

On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a fire pot in a wood pile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place.

[1:29] The Lord will save the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem's inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah.

On that day the Lord will be like David and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the Lord going before them.

On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attacked Jerusalem. It was the summer of 1588.

The huge Spanish army of the Lord going before them. The huge Spanish army set sail from Spain to go off the waters of England.

The Pope had blessed them, had given all the sailors and soldiers indulgences, which just meant that if they were to die, there was not going to be any purgatory for them. They would go straight to heaven.

[2:36] The idea was simply enough to snuff out the Reformation in England, to bring back England into the Catholic fold.

And so off the Spanish armada went. I'm looking back in the back and we have some English folks here.

They're remembering their history tonight. So off they sailed. It's a long, it's a rather complicated story because history is like that. It's rarely like a story that we would write.

But because of weather, because of better planning, because of better tactics, the smaller, the outgunned English were able to drive them away.

The Spanish were forced to retreat and they retreated around Scotland, out into the North Atlantic. And in the North Atlantic, the mighty Spanish armada didn't fight men anymore.

[3:38] Instead, they fought the very winds of God. And some of the strongest storms in centuries, the weather of that summer and that fall was incredibly bad.

Some of the strongest storms of centuries crashed against the armada. And when it was over, half of the ships were sunk.

10,000 men were lost. And the ships went back into Spain. And so England, the Reformation was safe.

Queen Elizabeth, in response to this, Queen Elizabeth I, she minted medals that on one side, in Latin, said, 1588. Jehovah blew and they were scattered.

And then on the other side of the medal was a church building with waves and storms blowing against this church building. And in Latin it said, assailed, but not injured.

[4:48] Assailed, but not injured. And that's a perfect summary of what we see here in Zechariah 12, 1-9. We see the church assailed.

And yet, she's uninjured. She's intact. She stays in her place. God is within her. She cannot fall. We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed.

Perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not abandoned. Struck down, but not destroyed.

That's the good news of Zechariah 12, 1-9. And actually, that's the good news of chapters 12, 13, and 14.

As a whole, it's one oracle. It belongs together. It's woven together. The thread that's winding these three chapters together is a phrase.

And you saw it maybe five or six times even as Pastor John read it. But as we read chapters 12 and 13 and 14, you're going to see it again and again and again. And it's these three little English words.

[5:51] On that day. On that day. And so from Zechariah's perspective, there was this great day coming when all of history would come to its head.

And the world and God's people would have their final conflicts. And yet what we see is as much as the world and the nations try to attack the church, try to attack Jerusalem, they cannot destroy her.

God says, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock. An immovable rock. And so let the secular, the godless governments, rise like a storm.

And let them gather like the Spanish armada around the people of God. But this battle, Zechariah 12 tells us, is going to be their destruction, not ours.

So that's what we're going to be looking at. And the question is, is why? Why is the future so clear? Why is it such good news for us? Well, look who is saying this.

[6:59] Verse one, it says, this is the word of the Lord concerning Israel. This is the word of the Lord. The Lord. And this is who's going to give it. The Lord who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundations of the earth, who forms the spirits of man within him.

So he creates heaven. He creates earth. And then he knows how to knit together the spirit of a man within him. So who is saying this?

It's the Lord. And he's saying this is how it's going to be. This is how it's going to be. Well, the Lord, the great I am, the eternal one, the one who was and is and is to come, is the one who is saying this.

Now, remember, Moses saw God or a symbol of God in the burning bush. And Moses, go to Pharaoh and tell him to let my people go. So there's mighty Pharaoh.

And now it's God versus Pharaoh. Who's going to have their way? The people of God or the nations? And so that was an earlier battle in this conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

[8:20] And Moses says, well, who should I say is sending me? Who has the authority to go to Pharaoh and tell him to do this? I am who I am, the Lord, the eternal one.

And so he knows the end from the beginning. He decreed it all, the Lord of creation. He's the master.

He's the master. Master of history. So what he wants is the way it's going to be. He forms the spirit of man. History does not have man at the middle.

You've seen that picture so many times of Leonardo da Vinci, a sketching of man spread out with a circle around saying, man is the measure of all things. Man is in the middle. History is not that story.

History is not the long story of what man is going to do and what man wants to do. It's not the long autobiography of man. It's God's story. And so you can look at the world. You can look at the news.

[9:24] You can look in the high places and realize that it's not man who is writing this great story. It is God who is saying, this is the way it's going to be. And like every author, every good author, he knows how his story is going to end.

And that's who's talking. And he says, I will make Jerusalem immovable.

I will make God's people immovable. And so brothers and sisters, this is really a messy, uncertain time for us in many ways. We have every right to hope because God has spoken.

The future is clear. He's not a man that he should lie. He's not a son of man that he should change his mind. He said, this is what is going to happen. And so what we are doing is we are living every day going closer and closer to that future, to that day that he is talking about here.

So look at what he says. Look at what the Lord says. I'm going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Now, the cup in the Old Testament, the cup in the Bible is a picture of God's wrath.

[10:37] Now, God had already made Israel drink this cup of wrath when he sent them into exile. Jesus drank the cup of wrath. Remember on the cross, Lord, if it could be your will, take this cup away from me.

And here the Lord says, I'm going to make you a cup. So here's a picture of you. Here's a picture of the church. We are a cup. And he says, you'll hold my wrath.

And they will put their lips to you to drink you dry. And when they do, they won't find the sweet wine that they were looking for.

They won't find victory and joy. They'll find a wine that will send them reeling, that will send them staggering, drunk, away in agony and confusion.

Listen to how one commentator put it. And just picture this. Picture this. What a scene. A huge bowl of wine.

[11:41] Several men, representatives of Syria and Ammon and Moab and Edom and Philistia and Phoenicia, crowding around the bowl and setting their lips to it.

They are a thirst to gulp down Israel. But strange to say, one after another, steps back, reels and staggers as a drunkard.

For God has made this to be a bowl of reeling. And they are rendered impotent by the wine of the wrath of God. And they stagger about like drunken fools. The city of God stands undefeated. Assailed. But not injured. So that's the good news of Zechariah 12. God has made the church invincible, indestructible, immovable.

She will not fail. God is here. God is with us. And so let the nations gather around like wolves, tearing us to pieces. But with every bite, their bellies will rot.

[12:49] Later in chapter 14, all part of the same oracle, he says about all the nations that fought against Jerusalem, their flesh will rot. While they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

The church is the world's kryptonite. We're like antifreeze to a dog. We taste so good. They can't stop drinking.

But to drink is die. And that's what the Lord is saying. The more the church, the more the world wants to devour us, the more they experience God's wrath.

In verse 3, the picture changes. And now it's not a cup of poisonous wine. We're not this cup of poisonous wine to the world. We're this rock that's immovable. Immovable.

Can't be pushed. Can't be shoved aside. Can't be gotten rid of. So whatever they do, here they are. They're punching. They're kicking. They're clawing. They're scraping at this rock, trying to move it.

[14:03] Trying to get rid of it. Trying to get it out of their lives. But the harder they strike, the harder they fight against it, the more damage it does. It's like wrestling.

A circular saw that's on. You're not going to win. That's what he's saying. God says, I will make Jerusalem immovable. And so we can look out.

And we can look at our culture's rising hatred for God and his people. We can look at people heaving in their anger. The nation's rage. The people's plot in vain.

But the one enthroned in heaven, he's enthroned. He's the king. He's unassailed and unassailable. And he laughs.

He's with us. And someone says, but they're strong. And that's what we can, that's when we become afraid. When we look out there, we look at the governments, we look at the people, and we can see their weapons.

[15:08] We can see that they are strong. They have forces, and they have police powers, and they have guns, and they have courts, and they have illegal laws. They have strength. They have political power.

They have the hearts of the people. But what about the strength of all the nations? Well, in the next verse, verse 4, he says, I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness.

So the horse and the rider were the tanks, so to speak. Were the strong. Were their weapons of battle. And so when they come crashing into Jerusalem, the picture is the horses go mad.

And with panic. And the riders with madness. And so against the church, the strength, the weapons of the enemy, they're useless.

They do more damage than harm to God's people. In the ancient world, if you had an elephant, you were quite something.

[16:12] The only problem was, elephants are hard to trade, and when they get panicked, they run over their own people as much as they'll run over the enemy. That's sort of what's happening here.

God is saying, I will strike them with panic, and so they'll strike each other down. Think about how many times in Israel's history, God says, I will fight for you.

And then he makes them mad, and they are terrified, and they strike each other down. No strength will prevail.

Why? Because I will keep a watchful eye over the house of Judah. And so we can't think for a moment that God doesn't see, and that God doesn't hear, and that God doesn't know what they're saying, what they're planning, what they're scheming.

They whisper their plans in the secret places of their hearts. And even there, God hears them, and his eye is on them, on us.

[17:16] He's watching over us. And because he watches over us, we're strong. The church isn't going anywhere. Empires and nations will fall, will come and go, but the kingdom of God, Daniel 9 says, will fill the earth.

So God makes us strong against them. Verse 5 says, then, and this is our second point, then the leaders, I guess it's not our second point, but the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, the people of Jerusalem are strong, because the Lord Almighty is their God.

They're strong. So the leaders are going to look at the people. Pastors will look at the sheep and say, wow, the sheep are strong.

The sheep are persevering. The sheep are enduring, even in hard times. Why? Because the Lord Almighty is their God. So the question is, are you strong or are you weak?

Well, you're weak in and of yourselves, but what this is saying is, is you're strong because the Lord Almighty is your God. Are you sand or are you a rock that is immovable?

[18:33] Well, you're a rock because the Lord Almighty is your God. So that's the first thing. Yes, the nations will gather. The enemies will circle around Jerusalem, will circle around God's people, seeking to destroy them like a pack of wolves, but the church is immovable, invincible, assailed, but not injured.

Now, in the second place, God says, I will make the leaders strong. I will make church leaders strong. That's verse six. I will make the leaders of Jerusalem like a fire pot and a wood pile like a flaming torch among sheaves.

And so, do you get the picture? Here are the leaders and they are a fire. And they're going to set the world on fire. Isn't that what the apostles did?

Isn't that what the gospel does wherever men go and preach it? It sets the world on fire and the other enemies will come at them, but it's like throwing wood on a fire to put it out. It's like fighting a man who has a torch with straw.

Your weapons are worthless before the fire. Again, isn't that what you see in Acts? Stephen confounds the Sanhedrin. Paul stumps anyone who opposes him.

[19:51] He goes right into the heart of Athens and he puts all the philosophers on trial. We saw that last week. So, it's not just a one-way battle. We're not just victims here.

We're not just in the city under attack. That's verses 1-5. Yeah, the enemies are attacking us, but here now the picture in verse 6 is here's the church who is now advancing against the world and the gates of hell cannot prevail, cannot stand against them.

The gates are thrown down and hell is emptied. So, who can stand against the gospel? And who can stand against a gospel minister wielding the sword of the Spirit?

The Lord says in Jeremiah, my word is like a fire. My word is like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces. In the context, how do you tell a true prophet from a real prophet?

Well, a real prophet is wielding the fire. It's wielding the hammer. The strength is not in man. The strength is in God. So, in October, we think of the Reformation a lot because it was October 31st that Martin Luther nailed those 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church to set off the Reformation.

[21:13] And how the popes and how the emperors hated him, they wrote against him. They said, a bull is loose in the vineyard. They wanted to do anything they can to put him down.

And they raged and they wrote and they sent men to kill him. They put him on trial. And they set some of these reformers on fire. But they were helpless before God's men. Helpless before men who were carrying the gospel.

So, yeah, sometimes they died. I think we need to be clear here. This is not some sort of promise of invincibility or eternal life.

The promise is the gospel and the church will survive. But, yes, the leaders, sometimes they died in the Reformation. Sometimes they die now.

Sometimes they are burned. But what Zechariah 12 is trying to teach us is that that's not losing.

[22 : 16] That's winning. That's not defeat. That's victory. To die a martyr is to overcome. It's to win the last battle.

To die a martyr is to win the field. And it's not the worst thing in the world. If you read the accounts of those who have suffered and have been martyred, you read it again and again, and you'll see that Jesus never forsakes his people.

They're in prison. They die, but they die happy. They die, but they die winning. They die, but they die strengthened.

They die, but they die victorious. There's a lot more things worse than death. Like unfaithfulness. Like retreating in the day when you should be advancing.

So I just want you to think. Think for a moment. So here's God promising. The church will be assailed, but they'll be uninjured.

[23 : 33] And that'll be true of the leaders as well. And I want you to think also for a moment of how does God care and protect his people? How does he make them immovable and strong?

Well, we've been looking at Zechariah and there was a leadership problem, but he answers that leadership problem by giving them good leaders. So how does God make a church immovable and strong?

Well, this passage teaches us that he gives them strong leaders. So pray for your pastors. The health of the church, not totally, but to a great degree, depends on the leadership.

The direction, the spirit, the heart of the church depends to a great degree on the pastors. And so pray for your pastors. Weak shepherds lead to weak people. Weak shepherds lead to vulnerable people.

And we're men just like you. We saw Paul this morning. He could be afraid. We're men just like you.

[24 : 41] But we want to be instruments of God. We want to make you strong. We want you to thrive and flourish. We want you to be assailed but not injured. And so pray for us.

Well, Zechariah 12 is full of good news. First, we saw that the church, God's people are immovable. The second, we saw that on that day, and that's now, and that's all the way to the end, God's going to make her leader strong.

And now in the third place, no one is going to be left out. No one is going to be left out. No one is going to be missing. No one is going to miss the strengthening. No one is going to, there's not going to be any child left behind, so to speak.

That's what we see in the last three verses of this section. The honor of the house of David and of Jerusalem's inhabitants will not be greater than that of Judah. The feeblest will be as strong as David and the house of David will be like God.

The whole idea is there's not going to be any sort of distinction between the lesser and the greater.

The more important, the royal, the leadership and the common people, everyone, Judah,

Jerusalem, the commoners, the house of David, no one is going to be left behind.

[25 : 51] No one is going to be left unstrengthened. God's word is casting an umbrella over all of his people. So from the least to the greatest, from the top to the bottom, God says, I'm going to sustain them all.

I'm going to strengthen them all. And so maybe you say, but I'm not anybody special. I'm not anybody special. I'm not a leader.

I'm not remarkable. I'm a weak Christian. I'm not strong. I can't imagine being a martyr. I'm not. And what these three verses are saying is God's not going to miss anyone.

God's promise of strength and help and defense is going to be put over the whole group. All of us will make it. All of us will make it to the end.

All of us will feel the wind and the waves and they'll crash against every single one of us, but from the least of his people to the greatest of his people. It will all be assailed, but not injured.

[27 : 00] And all of our ships will make it to that shore. So, why will the least of the greatest be strong? Why is the whole world rushing to its great final end, but it will be their end and not ours?

Well, you see something of it in verse 8. Because who's in the lead? Who's leading God's people?

Well, he mentions the house of David. The house of David. And then he says something very shocking to our ears. The house of David will be like God. Like the angel of the Lord. And surely that's pointing in some way to Jesus. He was David's son from the house of David. And yet, he was David's Lord. And so, in one way, Jesus super fulfilled even this promise because he wasn't going to be like God.

He was God. And he wasn't going to be like the angel of the Lord. He was the angel of the Lord. We've already seen him in chapter 1. He's the commander of the armies of God.

[28 : 19] The commander of the armies of heaven. And he is the one who's in the lead. He's the one who is with these people. He's the one who is in charge.

He's the one who is in the city. So, Jesus Christ took on the world and overcame it. He said, don't be troubled.

I have overcome the world. How we need to remember that. Don't be troubled. I have overcome the world. When did he say that? He said it right before his cross.

And so, to overcome is not to somehow step around the cross, not to miss death altogether. It's to overcome through the cross. And so, he has overcome and so we will overcome because we're united to him.

We're joined to him. We're chained to him. He's bringing us home. And so, yes, it may be through death, but with God, death leads to resurrection. And the church might be swallowed whole.

[29 : 18] The enemies might be thinking, we have them now. They put the cup to their mouth. They start to drink her dry, but that day will be their end, not ours. Now, just think about the cross.

The world thought they had him put away. The world thought we're done with him. We've won.

We've swallowed him up. He's gone. But the cross didn't finish Jesus.

And all the angels or all the demons of hell gathered around him to drink him dry. The leaders gathered around him, mocked him, thinking we're done with him. But what happened?

He disarmed them, putting them to shame. The cross was his victory. And the resurrection was his justification.

So Christ overcame, and so we will overcome. Christ is seated on high, and so he's able to give gifts to his people. So we will have strong leaders.

[30 : 19] Christ has overcome, and so not one of us will be left behind. No one will lack the strength that they need to endure, because he has overcome. That's the good news of Zechariah 12, 1-9.

That's the good news that we can throw in the face of the devil. That's the good news that we can throw in the face of a world who wants to destroy us and this growing hatred. She will not fail.

She will not fail, because God is with her. The Son of God is our Lord, and he goes before us. And so, as we end, I want to end with three just quick applications.

And the three quick applications, the first is, expect increasing persecution. Remember those three little words that are tying this all together, on that day.

From the Old Testament's perspective, it was, when Jesus comes, when the Messiah comes, it's going to usher in the great day of the Lord. the Lord. And, then he came.

[31 : 25] And the New Testament sort of expands that perspective. And it says, now in these last days, this is the day of the Lord in a certain sense.

It's the day of his salvation. It's the day of his redeeming his people. But it is going to that one final day when everything is fulfilled.

So here we are. We are, in some way, at least in some part, beginning to be in what Zechariah 12, 13, and 14 calls that day.

Now, in that day, Zechariah was saying, the nations are going to gather around. Persecution is going to happen. But the Bible also seems to paint a picture of greater and greater persecution the more we get closer to the end.

That the bad become worse and the good become better, so to speak. Things start to clear up and the enmity and the violence and the hatred become more clear, more defined.

[32 : 35] In the end, 2 Thessalonians tells us the man of sin will be revealed, the Antichrist. And there will be a great defection, a great falling away.

Jesus says, the love of many will grow cold. Will the Son of Man find love? The conflict of the ages, this conflict that started in the Garden of Eden between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

You can follow that conflict all throughout Scripture, all throughout history. But that conflict will come to a head and the closer we get to the end, the more violent the conflict will get.

And the seed of the serpent will do everything it can to destroy the church. Expect it. Don't be surprised. We can't think that the good life is the guaranteed life.

It's not the promised life. Jesus said, in this world you will have trouble. So that's what this passage is teaching us and that's something we need to apply ourselves to.

[33 : 48] We need to have the right frame of mind. We need to have the right expectations. We have a couple of marriages coming up and part of all good premarital counseling is talking about expectations going into it.

So much of the joy or the sorrow or the misery of a marriage can be decided by what expectations that couple is bringing into the marriage. So what expectations are we bringing to the future in our life and the world?

I think the Bible says we need to expect greater persecution not to be surprised by it. The second quick application is this boldly stay the course.

Boldly stay the course. Why does Zechariah tell us this? Why does the Lord want us to know what we find here? Why does Zechariah talk about the church as Jerusalem being immovable?

Well surely it's to give us hope and encouragement because we know how the end's going to be.

We know we're going to win and so if you're going to if you know your team is going to win you know the end is secure it's taken care of then all you have to do is to stay on the team stay the course finish it out and that's something of what Zechariah is telling us to boldly continue to boldly stay the course so Zechariah is telling us what is God going to do in the rise of this rising tsunami of persecution?

[35 : 23] We can't think of the world as it's all one sided the world is going to persecute us and that's the whole bit of it that's all of it no what Zechariah 12 is saying you don't need to be afraid because along with the persecution the strength will come along with the persecution God will make Jerusalem immovable so don't lose heart stay the course the church might be all around defecting and they are in our country the gospel is getting jettisoned all over the place so let them defect you stay the course the world might be breathing threats let them threaten you stay the course you know it is part of our heritage as Christians it is part of our blood it is part of our inheritance we know how to suffer and to continue we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses Hebrews 11 says it is our ancient brothers and sisters who went before us who suffered and overcame and Hebrews says we are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses of brothers and sisters watching so boldly stay the course they won through bloody seas and we will too the third and final application is there is no safe place except for in the church there is no safe place except in

Jerusalem in the church what does this passage show us it shows us very simply it is safe to be in Jerusalem it is safe to be with God's people but it is not safe anywhere else how does it end on that day verse 9 on that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem in Jerusalem in the church joined to Jesus safe God is for you it might be dangerous the nations might be all around but you are safe you are immovable invincible nothing can destroy you but outside the people of God not joined to Jesus you are on God's hit list according to verse 9 the nations the peoples that have attacked my people the people that are outside this Jerusalem

I will set out to destroy all those nations so whether you like it or not you have to make a decision whether you like it or not we are all caught up in this war this conflict between God and the devil the seed of the serpent the seed of the woman the dragon and the woman the war is going on it is marching to its end of that final day so you have to decide what side you are going to be on and what Zechariah 12 is saying the only safe place to be is in Jerusalem to be in the city of God it might not seem like that it might seem like joining the church is joining the unsafe side the unpopular side the fragile the weak it seems like the world is going to win and it seems like the world has all the strength and all the might and it does seem like that and it seems like going into Jerusalem is like going into a besieged city where you know it's just a matter of time before the city falls seems like sure death but to that I want to say it sure seemed like the cross was a loss but it was a victory and what did Jesus say take up your cross and follow me you have to join the losing side so to speak in order to win you have to take your cross up to live you have to lose your life in order to keep it we can't miss it God is turning the whole world upside down all those who lift themselves up he's going to put them down and all those who humble themselves he's going to lift up and he's putting the pride of man in his place and I know it seems like joining the church joining

Jesus is like joining the losing side but what is the

Lord who stretched out the heavens who laid the foundations of the earth who formed the spirit of man say the one who says this is the way it's going to be well right now Jesus is saying come to me come to me repudiate your sin hate your sin turn your hatred against it confess it beg for mercy and I'll make you safe and I'll make you strong and so the question is do you trust Jesus or not are you going to take God at his word or not because by the eye of sight maybe by the eye of reason it seems like joining yourself to Jesus is joining the losing side but Jesus is saying no the cross is the way to life death is the way to life joining me joining the unpopular is the way to be safe not just for now but forever so do you take

[41 : 22] Jesus at his word do you throw your lot in with him or not let's pray heavenly father I want to pray especially for any here who are making that decision they're sitting on that fence maybe afraid maybe like Nicodemus a disciple in secret and I just pray that you would you would give them grace and faith to boldly step out from the shadows and to put their name down to say I am following Jesus I am leaving the world and I am joining myself to the people of God these are my people this is my savior and this is my God give them grace in order to do that and

I pray for those who are vainly clutching to their own lives trying to make it work to keep themselves safe to be strong all on their own Lord I pray that you would so shake them that they would see that their strength is not enough that they need you that you would disabuse them of all their illusions of strength and grandeur just pray Lord that you would have mercy on us thank you for these promises thank you for your word for us that the church is immovable that we don't have to worry about her survival because you have said she will survive and it doesn't matter what the nations are doing she will thrive and she will grow and so I pray Lord that you continue to do that here that you would make us strong, that you would make us bold, that we would not live our lives and make decisions based on fear, but we would do it in great confidence, knowing that you have told us what is going to happen. You have told us the end, so help us to boldly stay the course. I ask this in Jesus' name for his sake. Amen.