

The Victorious King

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[0 : 0 0] I want to begin reading from Hebrews chapters 10, 11 and 12, reading around a famous portion about the cloud of witnesses, those Old Testament believers who set an example of persevering faith for us.

But I want to begin Hebrews 10 and verse 32. Remember those earlier days after you had received the light when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering.

Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution. At other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

So do not throw away your confidence. It will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

For in just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay. And, but my righteous one will live by faith and I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.

[1 : 1 6] But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved. Now, faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

This is what the ancients were commended for. And then you have in chapter 11 that great cloud of witnesses. And then chapter 12, verse 1.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. And now again, at the end of the book of Haggai.

Now, the last four verses. Chapter 2, verse 20. The word of the Lord came to Haggai a second time. On the 24th day of the month, tells Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, that I am going to shake the heavens and the earth.

[2 : 4 0] I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers. Horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother.

On that day, declares the Lord Almighty, I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord Almighty.

Right, let's turn for the last time to the book of Haggai and think about working and waiting.

I imagine we all appreciate and understand the power of encouragement, encouraging words. It's something that we try and instill in others, perhaps, or has helped us to keep going.

Things like, don't give up. It's worth waiting for. It's going to be worth working hard at. Keep on going. As parents, we tell our children that as they want to learn new skills or as they face new challenges in their education.

[3 : 52] For our older teenagers and students, it's a message that needs to be heard when there's so much uncertainty and confusion about education now to imagine that things will get better, that there are prospects for them.

In the projects that we engage in, in the setbacks that we endure, words of encouragement can often help us to stay the course when otherwise we might want to give up.

And the Bible encourages persevering faith. That's why we read from the book of Hebrews. It's a great example. There, discouraged believers are told, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

He is the author of your faith. He began it and he is the perfecter of your faith. And he'll defend your faith. There's those great clouds of witnesses who were able, by faith, to keep hoping, to keep trusting, to keep obeying.

We're told to set our eyes on the prize, to consider the goal of our faith, to ultimately, to so anticipate life with God, life with Jesus, our Saviour, that would encourage us to keep on going.

[5 : 11] But the challenge is that we live in an instant age, don't we? Where we expect everything now. We want our best life now.

And the idea of waiting can be really hard. I read a couple of articles this week, in a sense, reminding the world that because we live in an instant culture, it can be very hard to share the gospel.

Maybe especially with that group known as Generation Z. So if you're 10 to 24 years of age, you're Generation Z, in case you didn't know that. And when you're used to technology and making everything instant, instant access to information, to entertainment, whatever it may be, the idea of waiting really hard.

And we discover in the Christian life, God's timetable often doesn't match ours. And that's a real challenge to us. Faith is to be future focused. And that's really hard when we want to live in the moment.

And so it's important for us, as we're communicating faith to a younger generation, to bear in mind the realities we enjoy right now of hope and peace and purpose and meaning and joy.

[6 : 28] Those are realities now, but also encourage a different focus on the future at the same time. But anyway, here we are back on the temple building site with Haggai.

We hear God's last words to Zerubbabel, Joshua and the remnant. Those words that come through Haggai. And it's words of encouragement. To keep on working.

To keep on building. And to keep on waiting. And there's a reality that we don't always get a sense of here, but history bears out.

The reality for Zerubbabel and the others is that while they had this promise that the wealth of the nations would stream in when God shook the heavens and the earth, they wouldn't see that reality.

Zerubbabel is told he'll be God's signet ring, but he won't be a powerful king. In fact, he'll very quickly fade off the pages of history.

[7 : 30] There is a wonderful promise for the people of God, but they won't have their glory restored. But they have a promise.

A day is coming. And more than that, a glorious future victorious king is coming. So they're encouraged to work and they're encouraged to wait. It kind of makes sense in our Advent season that we find ourselves in that we have this theme of waiting.

Zerubbabel and the people, they had to wait and they had to work for you and me today. We are also waiting and working. Now we, unlike them, we have seen the first coming of Jesus, our king.

We have that evidence of his decisive victory over Satan's sin and death to give us forgiveness and new life and new hope. But we're also waiting.

We're waiting for his return, for his return to make everything new, including us. And in the meantime, we too are called to work by faith. And we'll think about that as we go.

[8 : 34] So, first word of encouragement from God through Haggai for Zerubbabel and the people is that they are to wait for God's future salvation.

So again, remember, Zerubbabel is working here. He is overseeing the rebuilding project. He wants God to be central.

He wants the temple to be central to the life of the people of God. He wants God to return in glory that that would make for restoration and renewal for the nation.

He wants to establish, once again, this place of sacrifice and this place of worship so they can enjoy access to God. And God gives him a promise through Haggai.

Verse 21. God tells Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, that I'm going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers.

[9 : 36] Horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. God's promise is this. I will act. I will act in cosmic judgment on the nations, which will mean salvation for the people of God.

A shaking of the heavens and the earth. If I had a snow globe, I would hold it up at this point. You know, imagine a snow globe when you shake it up or you turn it upside down and the street scene of the little village is on its head.

And everything's all a blur and a whirl. And God is going to come and shake all things in a decisive way. One day soon, as Zerubbabel is told, empires will be overturned.

Enemies will be defeated. The rule of God will be firmly established. And it's important for us to recognise that God through Haggai is choosing his language very deliberately.

As a way to remind Zerubbabel and the people to look forward, to look back rather, so that they might keep looking forward with hope. It would certainly call to their mind the great song of the sea that Moses and the people sang after knowing freedom from Egypt.

[10 : 54] So Exodus 15 verses 3 and 4. The Lord is a warrior. The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled in the sea. It's very like Haggai too. Or we might think of the words of Rahab at the beginning of the conquest of the promised land by the people of God.

She speaks to the spies. In Joshua 2 verse 9. I know that the Lord has given this land to you and a great fear of you has fallen on us. We have heard how God dried up the water of the Red Sea and what you did to Sion and Og whom you completely destroyed.

And the point is this. The God of the Exodus, the God of the conquest of the promised land is still the all-powerful God. And he is still their God.

And he is still working for the salvation of his people. And that's good news for Zerubbabel. That's good news for us. The hope is not in our working.

The hope is that we wait on God because he will work and he will work in salvation. So we are to wait on God and trust his salvation. Why does this matter for us today?

[12 : 06] Well, we too must look back to give hope for our future. So we recognise that the church, that the Old Testament history is also our story.

So those great acts of judgement and salvation are intended to give strength to our faith. But more than that, more than Zerubbabel and the people of his day, we look back at that decisive moment of judgement and salvation.

The cross and the resurrection where Jesus is judged in our place for our sins. Bearing our guilt and shame and facing the anger of God.

And our salvation is secured as he dies in our place. As he takes our sin and he credits his perfect righteousness to us, giving us forgiveness and giving us new life.

And then he rises from the dead on the third day in victory. And salvation is secure. And that past event is to give us hope that final salvation will surely come.

[13 : 15] When Jesus comes, he will ensure that his people will be with him to enjoy him forever in a perfectly restored world.

And to enjoy that, you and I need to have faith. So this word of encouragement, wait for God's future salvation, it's also important because it stands as the answer to our discouragement.

When we feel worn down, and in a sense who hasn't felt worn down this year, our answer is to look to God's faithfulness.

Just as the author to the Hebrews was speaking to the people in his day. We look and we listen to that cloud of witnesses who had faith beyond what their eyes could see.

Who had faith that God was working things out for good despite great difficulties and trials and challenges in their life.

[14 : 21] We listen to the cloud of witnesses that we find in the Bible. That we find in the history of the church. Indeed, in the experience and the testimonies of one another to God's faithfulness.

To our promise-making, promise-keeping God. That the answer to our discouragement is that we would encourage one another to see the faithfulness of our God.

And this message about waiting for God's future salvation is also critically important. Because future judgment, future salvation, we are told, will come and it will come soon.

We have the parables, the kingdom parables of Jesus. Where he pictures himself, for example, as a king who goes away for a time.

But he returns and when he returns he expects a household who are prepared, who are working for him. And so we must be prepared for the certain return of Jesus.

[15 : 28] We must have our faith in him. Not in our own working, but in the working of God. In his finished work on the cross and through the resurrection.

But we too must be about the business of Jesus. We must be working. We must be spreading his glory through the world.

We must be sharing his love with others. We must be communicating in our work, in our words, in our witness, the hope that comes from knowing and trusting Jesus.

So we wait for God's future salvation. And we also, in verse 23, second word of encouragement, we wait for God's victorious king. Now, the internet really does teach you about anything and everything, doesn't it?

From the weird to the wonderful. Well, I was reading this week in the Gentleman's Gazette on the topic of what is a signet ring and how to wear them like a gentleman.

[16 : 33] So if you ever need advice, gents among us, the Gentleman's Gazette is the place to go for how, where and why to get yourself a fashionable signet ring.

And they actually spoke about the history of the signet ring. It was a form of identification. It also was a way to show the job title you had, the family you belonged to, the rank that you enjoyed.

The signet ring was a seal for a letter to give proof of the authority of the contents to ensure that nobody tampered with it.

And for many cultures over thousands of years, the signet ring has been an important sign of status, confidence, authority. And here's this rich promise of Haggai 2 verse 23.

On that day, declares the Lord Almighty, I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and I will make you like my signet ring. For I have chosen you, declares the Lord Almighty.

[17 : 39] Zerubbabel will be like God's signet ring, God's entrusted agent with God's authority. And this is wonderful news for many reasons, but one of the wonderful messages of this is that it means that a former curse has been reversed.

And I'm trying to find Jeremiah 22. It's where we find words spoken against a man called Jehoiachin, who was Zerubbabel's grandpa.

And he was a wicked king. He was one of the last kings and he found himself going into exile in Babylon. And listen to how Jeremiah speaks of Jehoiachin. Jeremiah 22 verse 24.

As surely as I live, declares the Lord, even if you, Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off.

I will deliver you into the hands of those who want to kill you, those you fear, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and the Babylonians. And that happened in Jehoiachin's day.

[18 : 44] But now, here's Zerubbabel being told, I'll make you like a signet ring. Now, here's the hope of the Davidic line, the line of kings and the line of the family of David is being restored.

There's hope too in the fact that here is God working. Our hope is always in God taking the initiative. And it's here. I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel.

I will make you like my signet ring. I have chosen you. Great encouragement for Zerubbabel. And it's important for us as we want to find encouragement here to recognise that this is both speaking of Zerubbabel and speaking of one much, much greater than Zerubbabel.

As is so often the case with prophecy, it speaks of a particular situation, but it also looks further towards ultimate climax.

So Zerubbabel, what do we know about him? He was chosen as guardian of God's people. There's honour there. He was chosen to rebuild the temple.

[19 : 48] And we've seen him be faithful to that task. He was chosen to restore David's family line. But as I said earlier, he very quickly disappears off the scene.

But in Zerubbabel and in the book of Haggai, we see hope for the people of God being tied both to God's temple, which is being rebuilt and now being tied to God's king.

God's temple and God's king. And if Zerubbabel is the sign and he's given these words of encouragement, then Jesus is the reality that the sign points to.

And he is the great word of encouragement to us. When we read in Matthew chapter 1, the genealogy of Jesus, we see Zerubbabel is listed in the genealogy, but we need to recognise at that most basic level, he is not the climax.

The family line doesn't stop here as if to say, God's saviour is Zerubbabel. No, Jesus is the climax. He is the saviour that Zerubbabel anticipates.

[20 : 54] Jesus will come as God's chosen king for his people. And that will not just be a small political entity. That will be a vast spiritual kingdom taking in all the nations of the world and peoples and language and cultures, people bowing the knee to King Jesus from all around.

It's the glory of God spread in a new way. And it's in Jesus that the promise, the covenant promise to David would be fulfilled. Zerubbabel was not going to be a king that reigned forever.

David wasn't. Solomon wasn't. But Jesus. Jesus came to be that king who would rule forever in perfect righteousness. But Zerubbabel, he would restore the temple.

But Jesus, Jesus didn't simply restore the temple. He replaced the temple and what the temple represented. So that now we recognise that Jesus is the meeting place with God.

If we want to know God, we don't need to go to a building. We need to go to Jesus. And the great news, Jesus lives in our hearts by faith. So he's always present with us. Jesus is also the one who is the priest, our great high priest.

[22 : 04] And he is the one who has offered himself as the perfect sacrifice. To forgive our sins and to reconcile us to God. Jesus, he is the true temple who brings to us the presence of God, who reveals the glory of God to us in a new way.

We see the glory of God in the face of Jesus, in the life of Jesus. And Jesus will rule with God's authority. Not for a short while.

Zerubbabel was there briefly and then disappeared. Jesus will rule forever. Takes us to those words that we so often hear at this time of year.

And no wonder, because they're wonderful. Isaiah 9, verse 6. For to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given. And the government will be on his shoulders. And he'll be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace. There will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom. Establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness.

[23 : 15] From that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. So some final words of encouragement from the book of Haggai.

Just like Zerubbabel and the people of his day, we live in our day of small things. Where we feel small, where the church feels small and weak and insignificant.

But our hope is not in ourselves. Our hope is in our great God and our great King and Saviour, the Lord Jesus. Just like Zerubbabel and the people of his day, we are to keep looking forward to that promised coming day.

That day when Jesus will return to finally, once and for all, establish his kingdom. To once and for all, deal with his enemies.

To establish a kingdom of perfect righteousness and peace. Where there will be no sin, there will be no death, there will be no sadness or pain or mourning or loss or anger or hate or division.

[24 : 27] Where there will be perfect love. That's our hope. And so we keep looking forward, trusting that just as God has been faithful in the past, so he will be faithful in time to come.

And in the meantime, like Zerubbabel, we work. We are to work to keep God central. To keep God central in our own lives.

And you know as well as I do how challenging that can be. With all the distractions, with all the fears and the worries, with all that needs to be done. To keep God central.

To keep God central in our church. To not be distracted by all the many things that we could be doing. To make sure that we're about the word of God. We're about the gospel hope.

And we work to make his glory known. In our everyday life. In the small things that we are called to. Whatever we're doing, whether we eat or drink, whatever we do, we can do it to the glory of God.

[25 : 31] And so we should. So that people might see and that people might believe. And we do that trusting in his presence. He is the God who is with us.

Trusting his promises. And also trusting that his timetable is perfect. And then finding the kingdom that Jesus is perfect.

It's perfect. He will soothe to his tender and the Father's voice. Amen. Let's do it. Oh, yeah. If I'm for each other praying day. He will soothe the resurrection. So that everything is perfect. And then when that happens we will be. Also lighter our oppose. Oriete will cycle our tourism. He will soothe the validation towards our His point. There, leading from our oz. Number two. And at the mr.

Kent What we're finding? Him. In 10 1987 When we do this miracle we're finding and how we're experiencing Jesus. And he will back Gorbuk. Of course there. So that we do it. And he will hold on his thoughts.