

**Text: Psalm 132**

**Title: “God Delivers”**

Well our Christmas celebration is in full swing here at Travis. I hope you’ll plan to be here tonight for the Christmas concert. Next Sunday is One Day. We’ll all be together to share in the Lord’s Supper. Then the climax of our celebration is Christmas Eve by Candlelight at 6pm. As you leave today grab some invitations to hand out to your neighbors and others you come across.

**ILLUSTRATION** – My little granddaughter Eleanor had a Christmas party at the preschool she attends. I was talking to her last week and her mom said, “Eleanor, tell PaPa what you did at school today.” Ellie say, “We had a birthday party for Jesus ... but He didn’t come.” It’s my prayer that we will experience the presence of Jesus at this celebration of His birth.

Now let’s open our Bibles to Psalm 132. In the birth of Jesus God was delivering ...making good ... on a promise He made long before. I want us to come away from our time in God’s Word this morning with the firm conviction that God always, always delivers on His promises. We’re studying a section of the book of Psalms known as the Psalms of Ascent, in Psalms 120-134. These fifteen psalms were sung by the OT people of God as they traveled up to Jerusalem for the three main festivals or holy days. And these psalms are helping us worship our way through the holidays so they can be holy days for us as God’s people.

This is a special psalm. Though his name isn’t in the psalm many believe it was composed by Solomon who was the king of Israel who built the Temple in Jerusalem. Particularly it may have been written for the dedication of the Temple. So as worshippers are traveling up the road to Jerusalem for this grand occasion they meditated on and sang about how God had faithfully orchestrated everything so that this city, Jerusalem, would become the place where His presence was concentrated for the worship of His people.

As we walk through this psalm I’m going to have to give you some Bible background and history, so hang with me. You need to understand this. And you may wonder what in the world this has to do with Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Stay with me and you’ll be surprised how God delivers. Maybe you’ll be surprised that, while they didn’t know it, these OT worshippers were actually singing about the coming of the Christ. **Read Psalm 132:1-5.**

So as they are going up to celebrate the dedication of the Temple they rejoice in how the temple came to be located in Jerusalem to begin with. They remember a promise David made to God. Now you won’t understand this without knowing about an event that is recorded in II Samuel 6-7. EVERYONE SAY II SAMUEL. Here’s what happened: King David had conquered Jerusalem and called it the City of David. EVERYONE SAY CITY OF DAVID. At this time the most important item for Israel’s worship of God was something called the Ark of the Covenant. EVERYONE SAY ARK OF THE COVENANT. The Ark of the Covenant had been with Israel for hundreds of years. It was a beautifully decorated chest that God told Moses to build. It was to be a visible symbol of the presence of God among His people. It’s very, very

important. Now one day the Ark of the Covenant was captured by Israel's enemy, the Philistines. EVERYONE SAY PHILISTINES. David was able recapture the Ark, and had now David had built himself a beautiful palace. EVERYONE SAY PALACE. But it bothered him that the Ark of the Covenant, the visible reminder of the presence of God, was still kept in a tent. So Psalm 132:2 says that David swore an oath that he would not rest until he had built a Temple (EVERYBODY SAY TEMPLE) where the Ark of the Covenant could be placed.

So as these worshippers traveled to the dedication of the Temple they remembered the fact that God had first put this vision in the mind of King David. We'll come back to that in a moment, because the next few verses connect us back to something else that happened in II Samuel 6-7.

**Read Psalm 132:7-9.**

Now this is backtracking just a little bit in the story. Remember I said that the Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines, then recaptured by David. Since then the Ark had been sitting out in a field. What a disgrace! Here's the single most important item reflecting the worship of Almighty God, and it has been left out in a field. That's what the worshippers sang about in Psalm 132:6. "We heard it in Ephrathah, we came upon it in the fields of Jaar."

Here's something interesting: Ephrathah and Jaar are places around where David grew up. Do you remember where David is from? He's from Bethlehem. So the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence, is sitting in a field near where a thousand years later God's presence in a human body would be laid in a feed trough in a manger. Amazing!

Well this will not do, and David determined that the Ark must be moved into the city, even if it would only be in a tent. And David and the people celebrated as the Ark came to Jerusalem. And it is this that the worshippers remember and sing about here in Psalm 132. In the glorious new Temple there was Ark of the Covenant. God had been so good to orchestrate all of this. But they're celebrating something else. Remember that David wanted to build the Temple, but God told David, "You're not going to build the Temple; your son Solomon will do that." But God had something big in mind for David. **Read Psalm 132:10-12.**

And here's the next thing the worshippers are celebrating as they make their way up to Jerusalem. David said, "God I want to build You a house (a Temple)." And God said, "No, David, you will not build Me a house; but I will build you a house ... a lineage. If your descendants obey Me one of them will sit on the throne of Israel forever and ever.

God made a covenant with David that is every bit as breathtaking as the covenant He made with Abraham to bless the whole earth through one of his descendants ... as breathtaking as His covenant with Moses when God gave them the Law as the basis for their relationship with Him. In fact, it's all one covenant. The way God will bless all the nations of the earth and establish His Law in the hearts of all people is through a Leader who would come through the lineage of David. And God is intent on delivering this. That's huge. But there's even more that God has sworn to do for Jerusalem. **Read Psalm 132:13-16.**

The city of Jerusalem would be heaven on earth. God's presence will dwell among them. He will bless His people with abundant provisions. There will be no poverty. And the priests who represent the spiritual life of the people of God will be clothed with righteousness and salvation. And all the people of God will worship and sing for the joy of their salvation.

And so everyone's hopes are high as they process into Jerusalem to dedicate the Temple for the glory of God. But there's something else that God swore to do ... and it goes back to the promise God made to David that there would always be one of his descendants on the throne of Israel. **Read Psalm 132:17-18.**

So God is planning to bring from David a Greater Son. In biblical times a horn represents strength. So a mighty, strong leader will come from David's descendants. His lamp will never go out. And He will be crowned with a glorious crown. Who can this be?

So all this is being celebrated in the singing of God's people as they make their way to Jerusalem for the opening of the Temple. We can imagine that there was dancing in the streets. That's what this song meant to them.

Now stay with me. Fast forward through history about 400 years, and it's a different story. David's son Solomon built the Temple for the Ark of the Covenant to rest inside the Holy of Holies. And Israel had a few decades of peace and prosperity. But starting with Solomon's sons, things began to fall apart. The spiritual life of God's people deteriorated. They became more and more rebellious with each new king. The Northern Kingdom that split from the House of David was utterly destroyed by the Assyrians. And after that Judah, the Southern Kingdom where David's descendants ruled, also rebelled against the Law of the Lord. Soon God brought judgment and discipline upon them by allowing them to be captured by the Babylonians who destroyed the city and burned the Temple.

And in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah the exiles returned to their homeland and to the worship of the Lord. And as they walk up the hill into the city we believe they sang these Psalms of Ascent that had been sung hundreds of years before. But this time, when they step into the city it's a different picture. Everything that their ancestors celebrated when Solomon built the Temple no longer existed. No Temple, no Ark of the Covenant, no righteous descendant of David ruling on the throne, no priests clothed with righteousness. But what about the covenant that God made with David that this city would always be a place where God dwelled and where a righteous king ruled?

Now there are two ways to look at it. One way is to see that David's sons didn't obey the commands of the Lord and led the people to rebel against God. And so God said, "Alright, you've messed up your end of the deal, so the deal's off." So maybe God's purposes were thwarted because His people were not strong enough to hang on. God's plan *did* succeed for a long time, so we shouldn't be too hard on God. It wasn't His fault; He just had bad material to work with. That's one way to look at it.

But remember, God swore an oath to David that there would never cease to be one of his descendants on the throne “forever and ever.” Forever is not just 400 years. It is forever. So maybe God isn’t finished, even though it looks like His plan has completely failed. Maybe there’s still an ember glowing deep down in that pile of ashes and ruins. Maybe God in His wisdom and grace knew that David’s descendants wouldn’t be able to keep their end of the covenant because they were sinners. And maybe God had already made provision for that. Maybe all along God was looking to a day long past David, and his son and grandsons and their descendants. God said in Psalm 132 that a horn will grow out of David (a strong ruler would come from him). Maybe, when God said that the lamp of the anointed one would never go out and that he would receive a crown of glory, God had in mind a Greater Son of David. And through that Son, God will one day rule, not just Israel, but the nations with an everlasting Kingdom. So maybe the people of God who sang this Song of Ascent didn’t know it but they were singing about Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of David.

Remember in the NT John the Baptist’s father Zechariah sang a song about the Messiah:

**Luke 1:68-69 - “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David”**

Sound familiar? And remember that an angel appeared to Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, when he learned that his fiancé Mary was to have a child. The angel said...

**Matthew 1:20-21 - “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”**

And remember when Mary was close to delivering Jesus, Joseph and Mary had to make this long trip to Bethlehem because the Roman Emperor wanted to take a census. So each family returned to their hometown for this. And ...

**Luke 2:4 - So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.**

Interesting! Joseph belonged to the house and the line of David. And Mary’s ancestors are also traced all the way back to David. So here is born in Bethlehem, David’s hometown, a Greater Son of David. When Mary delivered Baby Jesus in Bethlehem’s manger it was God delivering on a promise He made long ago to deliver us from our sins. It was God delivering on the covenant that He made with Abraham and Moses and David. And Mary knew this because the angel Gabriel had come to her and announced that she would give birth to the Messiah:

**Luke 1:32-33 - He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”**

So Jesus came, but He was not born like a king. He didn't live like a king, nor did He die or be buried like an earthly king. But He rose again and in doing so established what is now an invisible kingdom. But one day the reign and rule of Jesus' Kingdom will be universal and visible. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

But hundreds of years before this that didn't seem possible. It looked like God's plans had failed, or maybe He had forgotten the covenant He made with David, or maybe He just couldn't deliver. But, of course, God always delivers on His promises.

I've taken you on this journey through Bible history because I want you to glorify God for His power to deliver on the covenant promises He made to His people long ago. God always delivers. But I've taken you on this journey because God wants us to know that there will be times when it seems that He has forgotten the promises He made to us, or He has failed to deliver on His promises. What do you do when you've prayed and hoped, but you haven't seen God deliver?

1. **WAIT IN FAITH.** God's ways take time. And the waiting makes our faith grow stronger. God always delivers at just the right time.
2. **WATCH IN FAITH.** Watch for how our disappointments become His appointments to bring about His best purposes.
3. **WORSHIP IN FAITH.** Keep worshipping while you're waiting for God to deliver. Worship is an expression of your faith that God is always faithful ... always.
4. **WITNESS IN FAITH.** Your salvation is a gift of God through His Son Jesus Christ. When He promises to save you He doesn't forget or fail or falter. The life we have in Christ is called eternal life. God's not going to keep you, then suddenly lose you. When He promised to keep you for heaven, you can be sure He keeps His Word. One day you'll step into heaven and give glory to God because He always delivers!