

## Zech. 12-14 (Prelude 1: Types of OT Prophecy)

These are the words of God to physical Israel in the day of Zechariah. And, these are the words to the Israel of God, the church, in our day. And before we look at specific verses in these chapters, I want to preach some sermons that will prepare us to look at them with more clarity. This is why I have called this sermon “Prelude 1.” And I want to begin this prelude with an overview of the types of prophecy in the OT. But before moving there, let’s begin by remembering our context. Zechariah is writing to Israel as they are coming out of Babylonian captivity. By the mercy and grace of God, they are returning to Jerusalem. There seems to be an attitude of repentance. There is clear God-given leadership in Zerubbabel as governor and Joshua as high priest. They have been given favor by Persia to rebuild the temple. And through Zechariah, God speaks great prophetic words of comfort. At the same time these words warn the people, as they return . . . not to repeat the sins that brought the judgment of God.

These prophecies primarily come through 8 visions (cps. 1-6). And within these visions, we see glimpses of the future; we see that God will send His Messiah. This Messiah is given many titles; He is a warrior. He is a king. He is a priest. He is a shepherd. He is a servant. And WE have the privilege of being able to look BACK at those prophecies through the lens of the New Testament, through the lens of Christ. For we know, as Jesus tells us in John 5:39: that the OT Scriptures **“bear witness of Me.”** (I cannot overstate this truth! Jesus Christ is the key to unlocking All the promises of God found in the Law and the Prophets as well as the rest of the OT!) The older I get, the more and more I need the magnification of my glasses. Well, Christ is “this pair” of glasses that enables us to see and understand prophecy. A couple applications:

Application: You can read the OT on its own terms and learn and apply a great deal. But, if you do not eventually make your way to Christ and the New Covenant, you will miss the most essential meanings and applications. We must remember that the OT is full of shadows and types and pictures that do not find their fulfillment until we get to the day of Christ. This is why the prophets give promises by saying, “In that day” “on that day” “in the latter days,” “at that time” etc. This is why the Apostle Paul can say to the Corinthians **“Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation”** (2 Cor. 6:2).

Application: This means we live in the “time” or “era” of proclamation in the “latter days.” Now is the time to proclaim the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the time to tell the world that Jesus is Lord and that **“there is no other name under heaven given among men that one can be saved”** (Acts. 4:12). One day, when the Lord Jesus returns, this time will come to an end. And we do not know that day or that hour. This is why Jesus says to us NOW (our mission as his church) **“Go therefore and make disciples . . . baptizing . . . teaching them to obey all his commands”** (Matt. 28:18-20). If we fail to do this mission (here at Grace), we will be disobedient to his commands. And, if this happens, we will cease to be a true church. May this never be!

Now, back to Zechariah. (Show books.) For me, cps. 12-14 are the most difficult words of prophecy I’ve encountered. Concerning cp. 14, Martin Luther says, *“Here, in this chapter, I give*

up. For I am not sure what the prophet is talking about.” I must agree. And, I confess from the outset that I don’t have all the specifics of these prophecies worked out in my mind (particularly cps. 12-14), which I will eventually come back to. With this in mind, I want to preach a “prelude” (“an action or an event serving as an introduction to something more important”) to chapters 12-14 that will help us think through these chapters, at least in a general way. In the coming sermons I want to be honest and transparent as I bring all of you along with me as we read these prophecies. Today, I want to explore 3 different types of prophecy in the OT: 1) Simple OT Prophecy; 2) Simple OT Messianic Prophecy; and 3) OT Kingdom Prophecy.

1. Simple OT prophecy. These are predictions that are clearly fulfilled in the OT, prior to the times of Christ. For example, God told Abraham that his family would live in Egypt for four hundred years (Gen. 15:13). Or, a man of God from Judah told King Jeroboam that in days to come, a king named Josiah would burn dead men’s bones on his altar (1 Kings 13:1-2). There are many of these examples. And when God’s people saw these prophecies take place, they were encouraged and comforted by the faithfulness of God’s Word.

Application: There is nothing like the encouragement and comfort for our faith than to see God fulfill his promises. In this way, God’s promises are like great boulders and rocks that stand through the storms of time. Today, God is faithful!

2. Simple OT Messianic Prophecy. These are prophecies about the Messiah, particularly before Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. There are numerous examples. We have prophecies of Jesus’ divine nature (Ps. 45:6; Ps. 110:1) his virgin birth (Is. 7:14), his birth in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), of his ministry to the Gentiles (Is. 9:1-7), of his signs, wonders and works on behalf of the poor (Is. 61:1-3), his rejection by hostile rulers, both Jew and Gentile (Ps. 2:1-2), of his death as an apparent criminal (Is. 53:1-12), and also his resurrection, ascension to the right hand of God (many). These kinds of prophecies are fairly clear. One theologian says, “*they are like arrows in the hand of a mighty warrior*” (D. Davis). These prophecies are very helpful in apologetics as we see them clearly and use them, not only to strengthen our own faith, but show to others the faithfulness of God in sending the Messiah.

Application: Memorizing and knowing where you can find such prophecies is very helpful. So, I must urge myself and all of you to spend time learning, memorizing, and using these prophecies as we talk to the world.

3. OT Kingdom Prophecy. Finally, we see many prophecies of a coming “kingdom,” or a time of “redemptive reign.” This is why today is called the “day of salvation” as the King comes and saves his people. These kinds of prophecies (there are many) look forward to a time (period of time) in the future when the kingdom of God will come in a special way, in such a way that it has not come in the OT, under the old covenants. Zechariah is full of such prophecies. Now, it is not as though God is not reigning. And, in his eternality, the Son, along with the Holy Spirit have ALWAYS reigned. There has never been a time when God is not King over his creation. But, there are many

prophecies that speak of a particular time when the Son will reign. These are called “kingdom” prophecies.

Do you remember when Jesus began his ministry? What is his first recorded message? In Matt. 3:2 He began to preach by saying: “**Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.**” Mark tells us that Jesus said, “**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel**” (Mark 1:15). Here, he is equating the gospel with the fulfillment of the kingdom of God. At other times He speaks of himself saying, “**the kingdom is near**” or “**it has come upon you**” (Matt. 12:28; Luke 10:9-11). AND, when Jesus teaches, what is his primary subject? Think of the parables. What do they teach about? They teach truths about the kingdom; a kingdom which has been veiled in the OT until the coming of Christ. He was saying, “*this kingdom about which the prophets spoke is fulfilled in Me.*” “*It has come upon you now and because of my coming it will continue.*”

But, there is more than just his coming, his birth, his life, and his preaching in those days two thousand years ago. Let me ask, “*Where is Christ now?*” . . . He is in *Heaven*, at the *right hand of God, reigning in majesty*. He was born. He lived. But, then what did he do? He died. Then, He rose again. He ascended. He sits at the right hand of the Father! Heb. 1:1-3 speaks of this truth clearly: “**Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.**”

Application: Today, Jesus is Lord! And He commands all men everywhere to worship him with a repentant heart and bow down to him as Lord. This is why Peter can say in his first sermon, “**Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified**” (Acts 2:36).

So, before speaking more directly of kingdom prophecies, I must ask, “*How does he reign now?*” Have you thought about this? He reigns by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God.

i. Holy Spirit. Today, the power of Christ’s reign as King is carried out by the Holy Spirit. Can you think of a King who rules in power? I think of Solomon. He was wise. He had great resources, a magnificent city, armies with their ranks, horses and chariots, great wealth to purchase the needs of the kingdom. I would say for a king to be successful as a ruler, he must have all these things (and more). If I come to you and say, “I am your king. I will rule over you. I will protect you. I will provide for you, etc,” what will you say? You’re no king. I know how much money you make and I know where you live. And as much as you might like me (or not) you will say, “*Jon, you don’t the power and the resources to rule over me as king.*”

Well, this is not the case with Christ! What did He do on the day of Pentecost? Christ sent the Holy Spirit, who is the effectual power of his reign in this world. Turn with me to Acts 1:7 his disciples ask, **“Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”** Here, I suspect the disciples do not get the answer they were looking for. Notice how he answers: **“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.”** Then he says in v. 8: **“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”** (Acts. 1:8). Here, he speaks back to what he had already said in vv. 4-5. He ordered them **“not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, in which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”** Today, we live by the power of King Jesus, who, by the power of the Holy Spirit is “building his church.” He is building his kingdom. And He will continue by the power of the Holy Spirit until it is finished, until all his enemies are made his footstool (Luke 20:43; Acts 2:35). Today, the gates of hell will not prevail against the rule of King Jesus.

ii. The Words of Christ. In Matt. 28:18-20, Jesus tells his disciples (and us) to “teach them to obey all my commands.” I will not spend much time here. But, the words of Christ are the words of God. And his words (the entire Bible) are the foundation, the bedrock, the basis of the kingdom. God has revealed himself to us. And, He tells us how to live; everything we need for life and godliness. As a football coach has his playbook, so do we have the Word of God. In this way, we can say that Christ rules by the power of Word and the Spirit. This is what is happening NOW. In principle, God has always ruled by his Word through the power of the Spirit. But, with coming of Christ, we see an escalation, we see a fulfillment of God’s promises to manifest his kingdom through person and work of his Son, in a NEW COVENANT. And, NOW, this is what is happening. Again, we can call this time the “kingdom of the Son.”

OT kingdom prophecies look forward to this time, to the kingdom of the Son. And as we will see more clearly next week, many of the prophecies of Zech. 12-14 use old covenant (old testament) language to describe that day. In their day, they are veiled revelations of the blessings that are to come in the day of Christ, his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension. And also, his return in judgment and the consummation of all things. In this way, in this time, we can say that ALL these things have been fulfilled and are being fulfilled in the Kingdom of the Son. And as we will see more next week, this is why we must interpret these kinds of prophecies typologically and figuratively through the lens of the person and work of Christ and the New Covenant we have in the NT.

Application. We still preach the same message. (fulfillment) And, this is what he tells his disciples and us to preach (Matt. 10:17). Today, we preach Christ and his kingdom. It has come. It is here now. And, he will continue to reign until he turns all things over to the Father. This message has not changed and it will not change in this day of proclamation.

Application: We preach the entire message of the Kingdom. There is salvation NOW. But, the kingdom is coming as well. This is why we pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on

earth as it is in heaven.” There will be a day of judgment, a day when the Son will appear, a day when he will separate the sheep and goats, a day of consummation when we will receive a new body. And there will be a new heaven and a new earth. We still preach all of this NOW. This is why the writer to the Hebrews say, “*You have come to the heavenly city*” (Heb. 12:22) or why the Apostle Paul can say, “*NOW, you are seated in the heavenly places with Christ*” (Eph. 2:6). And, There is coming a time when Jesus will turn the kingdom over to the Father. But, until then, NOW is the time. We are in the times of the Kingdom of the Son. These are the times in which the OT kingdom prophecies look forward to. Next, week, I will consider some of the difficulties involved in interpretation.