

## Zech. 12-14 (Prelude Part 2: The Veiling of OT Kingdom Prophecy)

As we make our way back to Zechariah 12-14, and in order for us to understand these chapters with more clarity, last week I preached a message on three types of prophecy in the OT. By way of reminder, they were: 1) OT Simple Prophecy. These are prophecies in the OT that are clearly fulfilled already. For example, God told Abraham that his descendants would live in Egypt for 400 years (Gen. 15:13). There are many of these kinds of prophecies. And, they are very simple to understand. 2) OT Simple Messianic Prophecy. These are prophecies in the OT that speak about the coming Messiah, his virgin birth, his death, his resurrection, events in his life and ministry, etc. These prophecies are also easy to identify and easy to interpret. One example: Is. 7:14 says, **“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”** There are many of these.

Finally, 3) Old Testament Kingdom Prophecies. These kinds of prophecies look forward to the days of the kingdom brought about by the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. These kinds of prophecies use OT language to say, *“A day is coming”* or a *“time”* is coming when the kingdom of God will find its fulfillment. And we know these prophecies find their fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus the Messiah. They are often difficult to interpret. Why? They are veiled. They are hidden. (Think of woman who wears a veil.) In the same kind of way, OT kingdom prophecies are veiled until they are revealed with the coming of the Son.

Let me ask, “why?” I have 4 reasons: 1) They serve God’s purpose in the exaltation of the Son; 2) They serve God’s purpose in the progressive revelation of his redemptive truth; 3) They serve God’s purpose in probation; and 4) They serve God’s purpose in redemption. Let’s briefly think on these truths. Then, we will turn our attention to the Lord’s Supper. Again, “Why did God veil OT kingdom prophecies?”

i. They serve God’s purpose to exalt the Son. As we consider the OT, the “old covenant” it is really important for us to know that OT kingdom prophecies used OT “kingdom,” or old covenant language. The prophets used ideas and images through old covenant words and pictures. But, we know that those prophecies do not find their fulfillment until the days of the Messiah, and ALL that his person and work accomplish. They point forward to the new covenant. Those prophecies were meant to give comfort and encouragement to God’s people of faith in the old covenant. But, their ultimate purpose was/is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, the ONE who fulfills and reveals, the ONE who uncovers the veil. A great example is Jer. 31. Turn with me there. The entire chapter is a good example of OT kingdom prophecy that was veiled until the coming of Christ (There are sooo many of these kinds of passages in the prophets). Let me read just a few verses starting in v. 27: **“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD. In those days they shall no longer say: “The fathers have**

eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. "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." Brothers and sisters, those days are here! They are unveiled. They find their fulfillment in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who says, "**This cup is the new covenant in my blood. As often as you drink it remember me.**" Today, the Son is exalted because he is the fulfillment of the OT kingdom prophecies. It pleased God to hide all the treasures and wisdom found in the OT so that at the right time, Jesus himself would reveal them to his people.

ii. They serve God's purpose in the progressive revelation of his redemptive truth. In other words, God does not reveal himself and his plans to save all at once. We have at least 4 thousand years of revelation that began way back in the beginning with Gen. 3:15: "**I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**" Though these words were spoken to Satan, they are prophetic, as God in his mercy, promises to save his people from their sins. (And back to our previous truth for a moment. This verse says nothing about the cross. Yet, at the same time, it says EVERYTHING about the cross. In this way, it was hidden until it finds fulfillment in the cross of Christ.) At the same time, the entire Bible, the revelation of God in the words of the Bible, progressively work out this verse and its meaning. In the Bible OT we get truth about redemption, about salvation. But, it comes little by little in revelation. It is like a seed that I plant in my garden. And it begins to grow into a full-grown plant. I think of my pepper plants. I put the seed in the ground, give it water, and sunshine, and they grow. But, until they start producing the peppers, I often can't tell them apart. They have to grow into the full-grown plant. I know what pepper seeds look like, but won't know what they are until they are revealed.

In the same kind of way, OT kingdom prophecies must grow and mature until they find their fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus. In the OT God revealed a little to Adam and Eve, then to Noah, then to Abraham, then to David and Solomon, etc. This means, as OT kingdom prophecies they are not "literally" fulfilled. Though, they are fulfilled "literally" in Christ. The OT prophets were speaking in language Israel could understand. We humans cannot understand the spiritual without the physical (thus the incarnation). (Also, this is why OT kingdom prophecies are often poetic. Regular language does not do them justice. There is nothing like the pictures of the Old Covenant to describe the New Covenant!)

iii. Prophetic veiling serves God's purpose in probation. God is a God who tests his people. Prov. 17:3 says: **"The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the LORD tests hearts."** Think of Job. God gives him a "test" or a "trial" to prove his heart! And this time lasted only for a while. We might say, *"it was probationary."* I think of high school students who take remedial classes in college like "college" math or "remedial" English. Why are they taken? Well, the university wants to give them a time of testing to see if they can make it or not. In the same kind of way, in his mysterious providence, he has decreed that some of the deep places of his truths are not easily reached. They are reachable, but not easily. They need prayer, humility, integrity, hard work, patience, and then more prayer. Sometimes OT kingdom prophecies seem impenetrable. As Luther said about Zech. 14, *"I don't know what these verses mean."* Yet, he pressed on and still writes much about the chapter. In the same kind of way, this has been my experience with Zechariah and other difficult prophecies.

We must not give up on with hard prophecies and tests. This is why I keep pressing on. This is why I keep preaching Zechariah 12-14 (and other OTKP). Now, we have a great advantage as we know that ALL OT kingdom prophecies find their fulfillment in Jesus. But, his kingdom is great! And He is reigning now. And, he will come back when He will completely defeat sin, death, and the devil. And He will judge the world. And then he will create a new heavens and a new earth. And then, he will turn it all over the Father. Some OT kingdom prophecies find their fulfillment in different aspects of the kingdom of the Son, and even go beyond to the age when the Son will turn All things over to the father.

iv. Prophetic veiling serves God's purpose in redemption. This truth follows our truth on probation. Prophetic veiling contributed to Israel's rejection of their Messiah . . . which in turn resulted in the death of the Son of God. And what is the result? The salvation of the world! To put it another way, God's veiling of OT prophecies resulted in the redemption of the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:16). In Rom. 9 when he speaks about the majority of physical Israel of his own generation not being saved, says: **"But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring."** In the same context Paul asks Rom. 11:11: **"So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles . . ."** This is a great mystery brothers and sisters, but, the veiling of OT kingdom prophecies to physical Israel resulted, and will result in the salvation of the nations . . . souls to the ends of the earth. Do you remember Jesus' words about parables. In Matt. 13:10-13, we read: **"Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see,**

**and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.”** Let me restate what I have just said. Jesus’ generation of Jews did not receive his teachings on the kingdom. And in turn, he was crucified. Why? God’s plan that we might be saved, that Israel might be saved, that the world might be saved . . . that all his promises would come to fruition one day in the person and work of Jesus Christ. God veils these prophecies to serve his purpose to redeem the entire world.

So, by way of summary, why does God veil many prophecies of the kingdom in the OT? 1) First, they are veiled so the Son might reveal them in his time, 2) They are veiled so that God can reveal his plans progressively, over time, 3) They are veiled as they serve as a time of probation, and 4) They are veiled to serve God’s purpose of redeeming the world.

With these things in mind, let’s turn our attention to the Lord’s Supper.