

PostExilicProphets 22-01-05a

Good evening, welcome to the Wednesday night Bible class at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the fifth day of January 2022. We continue our excavation of the book of Zechariah or exposition depending on how you choose to look at it.

We are in chapter 11, the finishing up the first of the two burdens that form the latter section of this book. We did a detailed review last time. I will not review the review except to say in broad terms that this structure greatly facilitates understanding the message of the book once it is observed.

And so I will give a real quick recap of that. But first let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask his blessing on our fellowship and on our study. Father, as we embark on a new year, we're so grateful that the sustaining grace, compassion, love, and forgiveness that you have expressed to us across these many years will continue.

And we are encouraged and emboldened in our faith because we have the experience of your watch care, your provision through your word and through your spirit. We have all of these things through your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. We thank you for him.

We thank you for his example. We thank you for the beautiful previews and pictures that we find representing him in the Old Testament. And we pray that as we look at this particular one tonight that your Holy Spirit will bless it to our hearts, help us see its pertinence and its application as we approach the end of our own time on this earth, the end of our age, the return of the Lord to take us to himself in the air and to present us in the heavenly realms.

And we ask that our study tonight will be edifying and upbuilding for each one of us in preparation for that wonderful future day, as well as service and function in the time that remains to us in this life. We pray all these things in Jesus name. Amen.

So you will remember the overall structure of the book and where we are. It begins with the eight visions, which we have seen in scrupulous detail and the message that those carry. Each one of those visions has a practical application for us.

We are reminded in the first vision that God is fully aware of the details of our lives, whether they are blessings or challenges, whether they are uphill or downhill, whether they are internal or external, God is fully aware of our situation and what a wonderful comfort that is to us. He is not taken by surprise as we often are. He's not blindsided by a new development.

His awareness of our individual situation is complete and he has already anticipated and made provision for everything that we will face. And in some cases, a part of his provision is the challenge, the test, even the suffering, the momentary confusion, the blindsided nature of some of our experiences has been woven into the fabric of God's plan for good. And we know that is good because that is the promise to those who love him and who recognize his calling

according to the divine purpose.

And that's how we see ourselves. The word of God keeps us fully aware that we are an essential part of God's plan this hour, this day and in the coming days and hours. So that first vision is a wonderful reminder.

And that's what the book of Zachariah leads off with in terms of its overall structure. That first vision tells us there's nothing that God does not know. The second vision of the horns, God has detailed plans for breaking the power of evil.

As we saw in our study of why do people go into liberal Christianity, into emergent Christianity, into progressive Christianity? Why do they seriously question their faith and begin to doubt and to be diverted, deflected, deceived? The three D's of progressive Christianity, in my view. Why? Because they do not have an answer in their soul to the problem of evil in this world. Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do horrific things happen around the world? And never has there been more sensitivity and more awareness of those things.

Because if there is a plague, if there's an epidemic, if there is a natural disaster, if there is a consequence of evil anywhere in the world, we are instantly made aware through the media. And so good news doesn't sell papers, so to speak. Good news doesn't attract attention the way bad news does.

So we are awash with reporting on every bad thing that happens anywhere in the world. One child can be attacked in this country. Everybody in the country is instantly aware of it.

So understanding the message of the second vision, God is aware of evil. He knows where these horns are gouging and harming, and he's got a plan to deal with them in his time, in his way, for his purposes. Evil is allowed free reign.

And part of the reason evil is allowed is, oddly, you cannot have genuine love without genuine free will. And if God allows genuine free will, it is going to often express itself in evil. If you limit evil, if you step in any time the free will expression gets too bad, that is going to limit love.

And this is something to think about. We may do a little separate biblical study on this at some point. But right now we're in Zechariah, and that's the message of the second vision.

When we see evil seemingly predominant, just know God is allowing it for a purpose. This is why he allowed the Lord Jesus to be crucified. This is why he allowed his prophets to suffer the fates that are indicated in the latter part of Hebrews chapter 11.

Living in caves and holes in the ground, sought into and persecuted and executed. Why would God allow that for a faithful prophet? He has a purpose and he is going to recompense. There is divine justice in the form of perfect judgment, perfect retribution.

And this is a part of our blessed hope is that evil will not prevail or even exist forever. It is given

a space. Satan has been given a space.

Look at the example of Job. He only had a limited time to do his worst to Job. When Job passes that test, God declares him righteous, vindicates him.

Job is blessed in time and in eternity for being faithful and trusting God and doing the time of his momentary affliction. He has earned for himself an eternal weight of glory. God will deal with evil in his time and in his way.

That's the message of the second vision. How pertinent is that for us today? Do we need to be frustrated? Do we need to be full of angst? It's interesting. I heard part of a report today indicating that there is so much anxiety and so stress associated with COVID that they have found salubrious effects by giving people antidepressants and mood enhancers to reduce the severity of COVID because a part of it is the stress.

People have been so oversensitized and so imbued with fear by the media that if they or someone they know get COVID, their stress level goes up and destroys their health. And they have found that many of the effects can be alleviated if they artificially calm people down by drugging them. Well, we have no need of that.

We have the word of God. We have the Holy Spirit. We have the example of the Lord Jesus.

We have wonderful heroes of the faith throughout scripture to tell us that's not necessary, generally speaking, for us. We have a more sure word of prophecy. We have a living hope and an abiding presence and power from God that transcends the circumstances of the world.

And a big part of that hope is knowing that God's got this. He knows about it and he's got a plan to deal with it. It's all going to happen in his time.

Anytime I think about these principles, and I've given you this illustration, I suspect because I must have gone through this as a small child, but you're riding in the back end of the shopping cart. Your legs are through those two little holes. You're a kid.

Your mother is going up to the front to pay for the groceries and go home. And you say, can I have some of that candy right there? And she says, no, you'll spoil your supper. But I'm hungry and I want that right there right now.

Who knows better? The child who's got a legitimate sense of hunger and sees a legitimate answer to the problem right there in front of them, but you can't reach it. What do you do? Do you throw a fit? Now that didn't work out well in my family. I tried to fit one time that I recall.

And the discipline that arrived on the heels of that convinced me that it wasn't worth the effort, but we don't know what God knows. Little children don't know what their parents know. If I give you a Twinkie, that is not going to be good for you.

You're going to get a sugar rush followed by a drop in your blood glucose. I've got a wonderful,

nutritious dinner waiting for you at home. You just have to be patient and trust me.

That's what we have to do with God. We think there's a need that needs immediate satisfaction, trust. That's the message of these visions.

And God is going to both discipline and reward on his own terms and in his own way. And when you get to the third vision with the man that has the measuring line, man thinks, well, let me scope out the city. I can figure out how big it is and how big it needs to be and how many people will fit.

I've got some wonderful formulas for occupancy levels and how many people per square acre and so on. God says, stop that guy. I'll tell you how big the city is going to be in my own time and in my own way, in the same way that I've got a plan to deal with the horns.

And you don't need to know the details. I've got a plan to reward those who are going to live in my eternal city. And I'll do that on my terms as well.

A lot of it, you won't even be able to comprehend at this point, particularly in the Old Testament. And then the fourth vision of Joshua with the dirty robes, having those taken away, Satan at his side, accusing him. And suddenly the accuser is gone and the dirty robes are replaced with clean robes.

What a beautiful picture of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as high priest and having that priestly garment and the priestly hat put on his head. Just a wonderful recognition that the answer to this is in the first four visions going to reside in the priest. It is priesthood that ultimately paves the way for the fulfillment of the promise that you see imbuing and expressed by these first visions.

The answer is going to be God's dealings with a priest and Satan's accusations are going to be set aside. Now, pay attention because one reason I'm reviewing this is this is something I did not say last week. The symmetry in this book is wonderful.

And what is it that Jesus executed primarily? Remember we, in this book, we have Joshua and we have Zerubbabel. One is a priest, one is a ruler. Which function did Jesus perform and fully execute in his first advent, in his incarnation? He offered himself a perfect sacrifice.

It was priesthood. He could have been the priest and the king, but when his own received him not, he did the priesthood anyway. While we were his enemies, Christ died for us.

Priesthood happened regardless of the reception of Israel. What they missed out on were the blessings of his kingship, taking the throne of his father David and implementing all of the blessings from the covenant promises made in the Old Testament. They abdicated being where they could enjoy those blessings.

But the priesthood happened regardless. That's the first four visions. And then you remember

the second four visions.

The fifth vision was the two olive trees. And now you see that having executed the priestly function, now there's two trees instead of one. There used to be just the one olive tree, which is Israel.

Now there's two olive trees. What does this mean? Well, something is coming. It seems as though there's going to be a parallel or a comparable olive tree that is going to be part of the fulfillment of God's plan.

And it is also going to be imbued with this oil, which throughout scripture represents the Holy Spirit, whether it is the anointing oil for a king or any of the other instances where you find it, this anointing. This is where people in more modern times have talked about the anointing of the Holy Spirit, because it's commonly recognized what this symbolism is. And so we saw this irrevocable there and you've got the oil of the Holy Spirit.

And then in the sixth vision, you have the flying scroll. God's word is going to be the standard for faith and obedience. And you get the idea that this scroll now isn't tablets of stone.

It flies. It's airborne. It's got divine power in a way that hasn't been seen previously in Israel.

Then we saw the seventh vision, which was the woman in the basket. And the woman represents evil. She's going to be put in there.

And the lead lid is going to be put on it. And the angels are going to carry it and stick it in Shinar, the plain of Shinar. And you have this future view, which largely focuses on Israel, but you've got this mysterious second tree.

You've got the mystery of the flying scroll instead of these stone tablets representing the word of God. And so there is this mystery element, very opaque, very hard to understand if you're an old Testament saint, but you just say, there's something that God's going to reveal. That's not really very, very clear yet.

Can't quite figure out this second tree. Can't quite figure out why this scroll flies and renders judgment and so on. And then in the eighth vision, you have the chariots and the horses, and this is the ultimate and final judgment.

And so in this second set of four visions, the first one culminates symbolically with the priesthood function and the removal of sin. The second one culminates with judgment and separation based on reaction to the scroll, based on the containing of evil for a time and the notion of these two olive trees. So in a nutshell, you have the first four visions with more of an emphasis on Jesus coming the first time.

The second four visions, you have more of an emphasis on Jesus coming the second time. And so there's much more of a future element in those last four visions. This is what is going to

happen in Israel's future, in Judah's future, where the first four visions focus on the present and what is necessary to solve the problems of the present.

So present involvement in harsh circumstances fueled by hope of what is going to happen in the future, God's people operate in faith. Well, then you remember that after those eight visions, we have the four sermons. And so the first sermon was an answer to the question of fasts.

Of course, this follows that center section, which has the crowning of Yeshua, the crowning of Joshua, the priest. He transitions from being just the priest to being a crowned priest, a ruling priest. We saw this last time.

It's the centerpiece that balances the eight visions with the four sermons. And you have that right in the middle there. And it is very emphatic in that position that the priest is going to become a king.

He's going to have this crown and this crown is going to be laid up in the temple because you have the combination now. You're almost returning to the pre-monarchic time of the theocracy in Israel, but it's combined. There is priesthood, there is kingship, and it is in the temple.

The crown is going to be in the temple, which says this is going to be God's conduit for blessing through the Lord Jesus Christ, ultimately, as we know in hindsight. Then you have the four sermons. The first one is about the fasts.

This is a present time thing. Should we continue to memorialize the failures of the past? And God says no. The second sermon was in verses 8 through 14 of the chapter there.

You have the need to heed and obey, to hear and obey. Failure will lead to judgment. Look at the history.

Look at what happened in times past. Here's where they fell down. Here's where they went astray.

Obedience is better than sacrifice. That was included in that first sermon. And you can go back to 1 Samuel 15, 22, where Samuel is upbraiding Saul because he says, you hastily offered this sacrifice.

You thought there was some sort of empty ritual that you needed to do so you could win the battle. Obedience is what God is looking for. And Zechariah repeats that.

So with these four sermons, having seen the symmetry in the first four and the second four visions, what would you expect in these four sermons? If I divide them two and two, what do you think the first two sermons might focus on and emphasize? Present issues, looking forward, to the coming of the Messiah who is going to resolve them in his first coming. The second two sermons, sermon three and sermon four, are going to look to the future, to his

second coming. So we saw this, the third sermon in chapter eight, verses one through 17 was in seven parts.

And God makes promises and God affirms promises. So number one, his zeal for Zion. Number two, he will return and dwell with his people.

Number three, young and old will dwell. Remember, the old people are going to sit in the streets, leaning on their staff. Young kids are going to play.

When is this going to take place? This is the peaceable kingdom era after Jesus comes back. So first two sermons generally find their emphasis and their fulfillment in the first coming of Messiah. The second two sermons emphasize what's going to take place at his second coming.

So young and old are going to dwell. Disbelief is not going to prevent it, even though there are some who do not believe and chafe under the rule of Messiah. It is not going to prevent the fulfillment of these promises in the same way that when he came into his own and his own received him not, he still fulfilled his priestly role.

In the millennium, when he fulfills his, you better check on that, Patty, please. In the same way, when he comes in his second coming and fulfills his kingly role, disbelief, faithlessness is not going to prevent it. It will be contained.

This goes back to the woman in the basket. Any evil is going to be contained. Right.

So during the rule, any, any pushback is going to be contained. This is why he rules with a rod of iron. This is why there is perfect justice, perfect suppression of sin and evil in that, in that kingdom.

And faithlessness is not going to prevent the fulfillment of these kingdom promises. It will be stuck in the basket with a lead lid to be released in its time. So it's such a beautiful thing.

When you look at the symmetry of Zachariah, you can just step back. Even if I'm going kind of fast and, you know, I went pretty fast last time. I'm going pretty fast tonight.

Just look at the symmetry. God is a God of balance. He is a God of promise.

He is a God of faithfulness. He loves us. He looks out for us.

And in his time and in his way, he vindicates the faithful and he judges those who reject him, those who choose their own way. But there is a beautiful symmetry. The first four visions.

This is giving hope for people in the present as they face challenges that a vindication is coming. God's got this figured out the second four visions. This is how God is going to do it in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in the first two sermons, this is present concerns and God's awareness and his guidance to

his people to persist and to be consistent in the second two sermons. This is how it is going to be in the second coming of the Messiah when he returns and sets up his kingdom. And so these conditions in the third sermon, God's zeal for Zion is going to be expressed.

He is going to return and dwell. This is Emmanuel, God with us in the millennial kingdom. Young and old are going to enjoy it.

Number four, disbelief is not going to prevent the implementation of this kingdom. Disbelief prevented the kingdom the first time Jesus came. It is not going to stop at the second time.

People will pass under the rod and those who qualify will be in the kingdom. They will be people of faith and people of obedience, but there will be a lot of others who chafe and who resist and who bide their time, hoping for some release from the rule of the king. And eventually God is going to supply a means for them to express that.

And this is your Gog Magog rebellion at the end when Satan, why does God keep Satan on ice? Why does he put him in a basket for a thousand years? He's going to be the magnet that draws the iron filings out of the sand from all over the world to surround the camp of the saints. So, but in the meantime, during those thousand years, disbelief will not prevent it. Number five of this third sermon, deliverance from scattering, dwelling in truth and righteousness.

God is going to bring those who value truth, who lay hold of righteousness by faith and to enjoy these blessings in this wonderful bubble of near perfect environment in the kingdom and especially in Zion, in Jerusalem itself. And just as there are those who are last, who will be first, those who are first will be last. Jesus said those who thought they were first, the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, the Sanhedrin types, the holier than now types will be least.

They will be outside. Those who were poor, those who had no standing, those who were scorned and looked down on and controlled by the religious leadership will be in and enjoy the freedom. This is the Lazarus and the rich man parable.

In this life, you had your comforts. Now you are in torments. Abraham says, Lazarus suffered in this life.

Now he has his comforts in the next. Which would you rather have? A momentary light affliction that earns an eternal weight of glory or the reverse, a momentary prosperity that results in eternal loss. We make that decision every day.

Israel made it. And it's, it is as old as the Torah and the Nevi'im, the law and the prophets. God has been making this point ever since the garden over and over again.

This is the value of studying and knowing intimately the lessons of the law, the pictures in Leviticus and in Deuteronomy, the blessings and the cursings on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Reverse those. The cursings are on Mount Ebal.

The blessings are on Mount Gerizim. And this is why the Samaritan woman said, well, we worship here on Mount Gerizim. Of course, it's the mountain of blessing.

And Jesus said the day is coming when it isn't going to matter which mountain you live next to or which one you choose to worship on. Those who worship God will worship him in spirit and in truth, spirit and truth. Well, then the.

The five. Promises and affirmations in this third sermon are followed by two applications, and we saw this very recently, be strong and work motivated by the hope of his promise. Remember, this is all in chapter eight, verses one through 17.

If you watch, you will find these seven parts. Number one, God's zeal for Zion. Number two, God promises to return and dwell with his people.

Number three, young and old are going to enjoy this presence. Number four, disbelief is not going to derail the kingdom as it deferred it at the first coming of the Lord Jesus. Number five, deliverance from scattering.

God's people will dwell in the land in truth and righteousness. And those who are gathered are going to pass under the rod. Those who value truth and value righteousness are going to be in those who don't will be out.

That's why the kingdom is going to survive for 10 centuries where no government in history has gone that long because it wasn't based on the divine standards of truth, faithfulness, and obedience. Therefore, God says, be strong and work. Make your hands strong.

Do the work motivated by this hope. You can deal. You can persevere.

You can accomplish things in this life. Make your hands strong, motivated by this hope, motivated by the truth of these promises and your confidence in the God who is going to bring them to pass. Get busy.

Do something. And finally, the seventh part of this third sermon, God's judgment is balanced by good. So speak rightly.

Think rightly. Let your speech and your thoughts be motivated knowing that God's judgment is present. And in the same way that he judges those who choose wrongly, he blesses those who choose rightly.

So tend to your speech, tend to your thought life. As Paul says in the New Testament, let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only words that are edifying those that express love, forgiveness, truth, righteousness, stop corrupt speech. And we do that by stopping corrupt thinking.

Speech tends to reflect what's going on in our head. So the best way to clean up speech is get our heads right. That's the third sermon.

And this is motivation. This is promise that should result in action on the part of God's people. Then you have the fourth sermon, which comes back to the issue that was addressed in the first sermon, which is what about these fasts? The fasting that was an issue and people to get their heads right for the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you want to be prepared for his second coming, concentrate on these things in the third and fourth sermon. And of course they could equally prepare for his first coming by hearing these things, but especially the emphasis is on what's going to happen in the millennial kingdom. So the fasts that will prevail in God's kingdom, in the kingdom of Yeshua, these fasts will express enthusiasm and gladness.

They're going to be happy expressions of appreciation and worship, not memorializing tragedies of the past, but celebrating the blessings and the presence of God in the present. And of course, because we enter into sort of a mystery form of the kingdom, because the Holy Spirit that is going to energize and bring about the wonders of the peaceable kingdom, he's available to us now. So we enter in spiritual form into many of these blessings as church.

Now we're that other olive tree with that oil flowing, energizing, making God's will and purpose happen. And so these things that are future promises in the physical kingdom for Israel can be claimed by church age believers now, because we have already got the power and the presence. We have the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have Emmanuel when we have his words and keep them. We have the spirit that is going to be poured out on all flesh in the millennial kingdom. We have that now.

So we can represent in the same way that these prophecies are a foreshadowing and a preview and an adumbration of good things to come. We ourselves can be a picture and a preview and an adumbration of those good things to come. We can enter into it now.

And what an exciting potential that is. Who wouldn't raise their hand and say, I'll sign up for that. That's us.

And it's now. So those are the four sermons in the same way that the first half of the visions emphasize. They're not exclusive, but they emphasize hope and preparation for the first coming.

And the second four sermons look forward to the second coming and the fulfillment of God's righteous and just promises. You have the first two sermons that have their emphasis and most of their focus on the first coming. The second two sermons have most of their focus and emphasis on the second coming and on the kingdom that will be the result of that for Israel.

So now we come to chapters nine through 14. You remember from our review last time that we've got eight visions, four sermons, and what finishes out the book of Zechariah? Two burdens, two burdens, eight visions, four sermons, two burdens. Now, just based on what we've seen, reviewing the eight visions and reviewing the four sermons, what do you think

might be the emphasis of the first burden and the emphasis of the second burden? First burden is going to be looking at the first coming as an emphasis, as a focus.

And the second burden unsurprisingly is going to be looking forward to that second coming. What's fascinating about this is we benefit from looking back at the first coming and appreciating all of the things that Jesus has done. And in the church age, we have the unique opportunity to look forward to, and not only have the hope, but the experience in the spiritual realm of the fulfillment of those things that Israel is still waiting to see.

So we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to take a look because we've already worked our way partway into this first burden, but then we're going to break off to some practical application and some fresh warning. This is not progressive Christianity per se, although there is a link, but there's something we need to be aware of, be watchful about that is happening as I speak.

And forewarned is forearmed. These promises and principles and doctrines that we are seeing in Zechariah are so pertinent to the present day. And we'll see that pertinence and we'll see how much traction this portion of God's word has in our daily lives when we come back from the break.