

PostExilicProphets 22-01-19a

Good evening, fellow members of Grace & Truth Bible Church. This is the 19th day of January, 2022. We're in the book of Zechariah and we're talking to the tower, fixing to come in for a landing.

We're in the final section, which is the second burden. The second burden. This is Zechariah chapter 12 through 14.

To which please turn. This has just been a very fascinating study for me. I've learned so much.

I enjoyed the flyover that we did in our Kings and Prophets study, but to look at it in a bit more depth has been both challenging and rewarding. And I hope it's been the same for you. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our investigation of this portion of his word, cultivate the active presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit to give us understanding and ability to see that this has pertinence for us as we try to invest the capital of time that God has given to us in the days that remain to us in this life.

Shall we pray? Father, it is a humbling thing and yet such a precious privilege to enter your throne room and come before your presence to represent ourselves. Thanks to the high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, his cleansing work on the cross to grant us not only freedom from slavery to sin, cleansing and renewal, the gift of life and the opportunity to lay hold of your righteousness and faith. But we thank you for the privilege we have of being called by your name, of approaching you as not only our creator, but as our heavenly father, representing ourselves, expressing our thankfulness, our appreciation to glorify you and give thanks for your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make appeal on behalf of each other and ourselves that we can adequately represent the Lord Jesus here and that we can grow in grace and knowledge of him so that we can be equipped to accomplish your will in our lives and in the larger warp and woof of the fabric of your plan.

We pray that as we seek to be strengthened and nourished through the truth of your word that your Holy Spirit will superintend and give us understanding and the ability to see spiritual things from a spiritual perspective. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. This is such a tremendous point, that last point I mentioned in talking to our heavenly father that we are a spiritual people and we learn wonderful things by recognizing the symbolism to recognize the spiritual truths that are contained in God's dealing in the earthly and physical realm with his people Israel in the law and in the prophets is so important.

I've recently been made aware of an almost mocking attitude toward the Old Testament and the laws that God imposed on Israel. Once you release yourself from the notion that God inspired the Old Testament scriptures such as these we are looking at tonight and that they were the production of people who were trying to express their own spirituality that it's a production of men, then you can sort of shake your head and smile and condescendingly mock

their silliness and saying there's your clothes ought to be a certain way, your diet should be a certain way and so on. And as Paul says, we are convinced of better things of you brethren, things that accompany salvation.

And it is such a gift and such a privilege to understand that God has a purpose even in these seemingly trivial, mundane or almost nonsensical things. Does it really matter if you eat goats and not pigs? Does it really matter if fish have scales and fins or they don't know when you pull them out of the sea? And people have made sort of weak arguments in favor of this. Well, pigs are not as healthy for you.

The meat doesn't keep as long. So God gave them these regulations for health reasons, perhaps, but that's not the primary reason. And we're going to see whether you're looking at Deuteronomy and the Mosaic law, whether you're looking at the prophets major or minor, the things that God says and the revelation of his dealings with his people in Old Testament days, communicate spiritual truth for us.

So as we move toward the close of our study of Zachariah, remembering the eight visions and the four sermons and these two burdens and the pictures of Joshua in his representation of Jesus' first coming, and then Joshua in his representation of Jesus in his second coming, and the balance that the first four visions emphasize the first coming, the second for the second coming. The two sermons that begin focus on truths that relate to his first coming. The second two sermons focus on truths related to his second coming.

We've looked somewhat in detail at this first burden and how it focuses so much on events and details and expectations for his first coming. Now, as we approach this second burden in chapters 12 through 14 of Zachariah, it is going to anticipate, look forward to, and fill in details about his second coming. We say, well, isn't that great for Israel? First coming, second coming, but I'm church age and looking for the rapture because I'm a good solid dispensationalist.

And so that's great for them, but I don't really find much of value. I'm speaking of people other than us who say, well, looking at these literal prophecies and literal descriptions and yeah, that's great that there was prophecies and Jesus fulfilled them and boy, those Jews should have known he was the one and they didn't and shame on them, but, and then walk away and straightway forget that this is a mirror that reflects and gives us a chance to examine ourselves, to understand that as goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the individual believer in the new. And as Paul says repeatedly, these things were written for our instruction.

It's just so important. I was going, reading through 1 Corinthians again earlier today and just marveling at the way Paul, he's talking to people in Corinth who don't have a real strong Jewish background, but he is invoking the Old Testament time and time again, because it is so valuable for all of us. Having said that, let me just give a quick summary of my understanding, my perspective.

I offer it to you, I share it with you. I think it is what Paul says. In fact, while we're here by way of

introduction for tonight's lesson, flip over to 1 Corinthians chapter nine, 1 Corinthians chapter nine, and we're heading for verse nine.

This is gonna be 1 Corinthians 9.9. But in this chapter, Paul introduces it by saying, I am as much an apostle as any of the others. They are supported by churches that they founded or that they visit and teach. I'm not supported.

They lead about a wife. They have families. I do not.

Barnabas and I, are we any less an apostle because we don't claim those privileges or those quote unquote rights? He says in verse six, is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working, that we should just be full-time Christian ministry and supported by gifts and such? Look at verse seven. Whoever goes to war at his own expense, who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a man or does not the law say the same thing also? Now here's our point of tangent. For it is written in the law of Moses, you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.

Is it oxen God is concerned with? Did he put that in the law because he wants to be sure the oxen get plenty to eat? Or verse 10, does he say it altogether for our sakes? Altogether for our sakes. For our sakes, no doubt this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. There is a spiritual lesson in these physical regulations for Israel.

To discount that, to belittle it, to even make fun of it, even supposedly, you know, with tongue in cheek or whatever. I grieve for fellow believers who miss the importance of these Old Testament scriptures such as those we look at tonight. These things were written for us.

And Paul mentions that several times just in Corinthians alone. So let's think about Zechariah now. Let's think about this prophecy.

First coming, second coming. Okay, I see the structure. I see the symmetry.

I see the emphasis and that those who were asking and seeking and knocking could have, should have, and a few actually did understand that the Messiah would come the first time as the suffering servant and return as the one who would fulfill the original promises God made to Abraham. But in terms of this being written for our instruction, what do we get from it? Well, let's use this final burden as a reminder. We have noted how important it is to heed God's call to repentance and to faith, to be on the right side of God's justice and so on.

The second burden begins here in chapter 12. In this fashion, the burden of the word of the Lord, it says against Israel. I think a better translation here would be upon Israel.

It's a burden upon Israel. It's not necessarily to attack or be oppositional. It's a burden.

We saw on Sunday, the Pharisees binding sticks together into bundles and putting them on shoulders, very heavy to be born. This is the burden of the word of the Lord upon Israel. Are you going to carry this or not? Are you going to take it with you and use it for something? Why would you have a bundle of sticks on your shoulders? Why did the earliest guy we have an account of gather sticks on the Sabbath? He wanted to build a fire, right? You can use these sticks for things.

You can set snares and trap birds and have supper. You can keep your domesticated animals caged in. You can use them for support.

If they're larger sticks, they can be walking sticks. There's all kinds of productive uses for sticks. But binding so many sticks into a bundle and then putting them on someone else's shoulders and not even lifting a finger to move them was the condemnation on the Pharisees.

But Jesus didn't say, come to me and you will have no burden. Come to me and you will have no yoke. What did he say? My yoke is easy and my burden is bearable.

My burden is light, but there are burdens that need to be carried. Paul talks about bear one another's burdens. And then two verses later, he says each one must carry his own load.

And so we are given challenges and it's good for us. It's good for us to be challenged. It's good for us to push against resistance.

It is good for us to have testing. It's good for us to have to figure out how to get something accomplished that is not easy. So the burden of the word of the Lord upon Israel.

Thus says the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth and forms the spirit of man within it. He is the, isn't this a beautiful triad of divine virtues? He's the creator of heaven. He's the creator of earth and he puts man's spirit within him.

And you get the idea when you go back to Genesis 1.1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth because at the end of the creation story, he is going to breathe into Adam's nostrils, the neshama. Everything in the middle is preparation for this ultimate accomplishment. Created the heavens and the earth, get them all ready, prepare them, take some time, go through phases.

And when it's all set, here it is. So Genesis 1 and 2 are summed up in one beautiful sentence. And it is introductory because the one who did all of that, the creator God, the author God, the giver of life God is about to speak.

Thus says the Lord, if you need a reason for why you should listen, here you go. Verse two, behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. It shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples.

All who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. I also did an investigation this week on preterism. If you've ever taken Spanish or done anything very deep by way of grammar, you know that the preterite form is a fancy way of saying past tense.

The preterite is a past tense form. And this that we have covered in the first four visions and in the first two sermons and in the first burden, these have been fulfilled in Christ at his first coming. The second four visions, the second two sermons and this burden are to our mind, future.

Preterism, P-R-E-T-E-R-I-S-M says, no, no, all of it has been fulfilled. All biblical prophecy has been fulfilled. You say, wait a minute, tribulation period, seals, trumpets, thunders, bowls, come on.

Yes, this is what they believe. There are two basic varieties of preterism. Like most viewpoints, you know, people are gonna have little tendrils and branches and I believe this, but not that.

But it's kind of like preterism is hyper-Calvinism, double predestination. And they say every single prophecy in scripture has been fulfilled. And believe it or not, this is the kingdom.

Jesus is on the throne. We have been resurrected. This is as good as it gets.

The list of exclamations and expletives that runs through my mind before I can find a suitable one is too long to find one. So just fill in a blank here. Oh my goodness, seriously.

Listen to Paul talk. If in this life only, 1 Corinthians 15, if in this life only we're hoping in Christ, we are of all men, most miserable. And preterism is just horrifyingly shallow.

And that's about the nicest thing I can say about it. But I bring that up because you have to spiritualize so much, including this. Has there ever been a historical time when the city of Jerusalem has been surrounded by multiple nations? Not to say Jerusalem hasn't been overrun by the Babylonians, by the Medes, by the Muslims, by the Romans, by, you know, pick your area in history and when has Israel not been overrun, captured, decimated? There's been a lot.

But go back all the way to the days when David first took that city, has there been a multinational force surrounding the city to attack it? Okay, well, but weren't there some Greek mercenaries? I almost said missionaries. Greek mercenaries in the Medo-Persian army that came. There were some Greeks.

Back at that time, Greece wasn't a force. Alexander had not come. And so Greeks were kind of warlike.

You'd think Spartans. And so some of them would go say, you know, rebel without a cause, you know, what are you rebelling against? Well, what have you got? And it's like, we're warriors. Well, what are you fighting? Well, what have you got? Show me a war, we'll go join.

And so there were Greek mercenaries. And this explains, for example, some of the references to the sons of Javan or Javan in your later prophets. The sons of Javan are warlike mercenary guys.

They are Greeks, but it doesn't presuppose, as some argue that, well, these were written extremely late and they're talking about Greece and Alexander and they were written after the fact. Sorry, no, they were Javanese, not from Java, but from Greece way back. But there has never been a historical time, not even 70 AD, the Roman legions under Titus, Vespasian's son, coming in and wiping out Jerusalem was not a multinational force.

And God did not use Jerusalem as a cup of drunkenness to judge these multiple nations. It says, peoples, I will make Jerusalem, verse two, a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples. Well, has this ever happened? No, it has not.

So in order to be a preterist, you have to say, well, in the spiritual realm, and I haven't actually looked up to try to figure out how they explain this. My guess would be they will say, well, Jerusalem is where Jesus was crucified. And so the crucifixion has now made an issue out of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

And so all the people, if they don't submit to the Jerusalem gospel of the work of Christ, they're in a bad way, something like that. They just have to find a way to put it all in the ethereal, mythical, unbiblical realm because they don't want to believe that there's any unfulfilled prophecy. And why that is, you have to go read.

If you want an overview sometime when you're of a mind, there are some articles. I'm sure you can find some articles on preterism. Wikipedia has probably got an article.

I haven't read it, but I'm sure there's one. But there are some defenses of preterism. And they will say, don't you see that this actually happened? Don't you see that these things were already fulfilled? They want to believe that everything, the terminus ad quem for all prophecy is 70 AD.

And this is very convenient because you can dispense with the rapture. You can dispense with the second coming. You can dispense with the tribulation.

You can dispense with the entire book of Revelation is just one great long allegory for, well, you kind of need to get right with God because you're going to have spiritual plagues and such until you get your head right. I can't even enter into it. And I'm not going to waste too much time on it, except to tell you, we value these prophecies, not only because they tell us what is going to happen in the future, the real literal on earth future.

Remember, Israel are the people of God. If you are going to spiritualize away their future, you are going to spiritualize away their past. And you don't have to believe Genesis.

You don't have to believe Exodus. You don't have to believe Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel and Kings. You don't have to believe any of it is literal.

It's all, you know, and they'll quote Paul. All these things were written for our instruction. It's just, they're fables, they're parables, they're little story problems so that we can, you know, think about Jesus and be better people.

Well, go be warmed, be fed. If that's your, you know, good luck at the judgment. I can't follow you down that particular fork in the road because it's insane.

It is insane. Let me say this. If the center of history and the center of scriptural revelation is the cross and the work of Jesus Christ on it.

If you're going to spiritualize what came before it and you're going to spiritualize what came after it, guess what you're going to do right in the middle. You're going to spiritualize away the Lord Jesus and he's going to be a concept or a philosophy or a hermeneutic or a fine Aesop fable example. He's not going to be the literal Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you're just going to kind of go along to get along in this life and make everything a social construct and a philosophy of love and goodwill, if in this life only you have hope in Christ, you are not only going to be miserable, but you are going to make everyone else miserable because you are an enemy of the cross. You have been cut off from Christ. You have fallen from grace.

Read Galatians. The fall into legalism is little different than the fall into philosophical abstraction. And spiritualizing and allegorizing everything.

Or just outright kicking it out of the Bible because the spirit in me tells me, well, that can't be God. Christ is God. I don't see Christ ever marching on the Canaanites.

So war is right out, et cetera, et cetera. But here's the thing. If you read the scriptures, just read them.

Set aside, stop listening to the chatter and the clatter and the talking heads and the blogs and so on. Just turn off the sound, turn down the lights, get your Bible and read. I read a detailed defense of preterism and they went to Matthew 24 and started trying to explain how all the things in Matthew 24 have already taken place.

Try it. See if you can fit 70 AD and the legions of Titus into Matthew 24. Did the stars fall from heaven where the sun and moon darkened? You just start have to spiritualizing and allegorizing everything.

Look at these details in our passage. I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples. All who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces.

Even if you try to spiritualize this, seriously? You're trying to heave the gospel away but you'll be cut in pieces. Why did the wicked prosper? There's happy atheists all over the planet who lived their entire lives in swampy luxury and they haven't been cut in pieces. This says all peoples.

They're not just gonna hear about Jerusalem. They're not just gonna be visited by somebody

from Jerusalem. They're gonna surround Jerusalem.

They're gonna try to attack it. And it's gonna be a cup of drunkenness and a heavy stone. And when they try to move that stone, it's gonna shred them.

Reminds me of clearing thorn bushes. If you've ever been in a pasture full of thorn bushes and you say, well, but I've got my jeans and my heavy long sleeves and my gloves. Trust me, it's like mustard.

If you open a container of mustard, you're gonna find some mustard on you somewhere. Mustard has a mind of its own. It'll get on you.

You look down two hours later and there's mustard in your fingernail. You say, how did that get there? Mustard has magical power. Thorns have magical power.

Spaghetti sauce has magical. Did you ever try to eat spaghetti sauce and not get some on you somewhere? You can, I promise you, it's like not eating one potato chip. You cannot eat.

You will find a spot on your best clothes sometime later if you're wearing them when you eat spaghetti. Well, listen, Jerusalem, because God is going to use it as like he did the Lord Jesus, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. And it is because of the Lord Jesus.

And it is because of the role that Jerusalem plays literally as well as symbolically. But if everything's symbolism, if you don't have a literal truth behind symbolism, you have allegory, you have fantasy. All God's uses of types and anti-types and symbols are grounded in reality because reality helps you understand the symbol and the type.

There has to be a real Joseph. There can't be a fantasy Joseph that informs you about fantasy Jesus. There can't be a fantasy law that informs you about fantasy spiritual life.

These things are literal for a reason. And they're just as literal when they're future as they are when they're past. This is why we love to study the book of Revelation.

Yes, it's the last week of the age of Israel and it's future instead of past, but it's just as much written for our instruction as the other. I am pleading with you. All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable.

One yod, one corner of a letter will not pass away from the Old Testament until it's all fulfilled. Listen to what God says about his own word. God has magnified his word above his name.

Jesus said, man shall not live by earthly bread, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And he's quoting the Old Testament when he says it. Every time he encountered Satan and those temptations, he quoted Old Testament scripture, the gentle Jesus who brought love and an image of God into the world, the fullness of deity and bodily form, lived his life guided by, empowered by, enabled by and quoting from beginning to end, whether he's in his early scenes at the Jordan or on the cross, he's quoting the Old Testament scriptures.

They are powerful. And anybody, if you hear anyone diminishing the Old Testament scriptures, beware. That is a bad, bad road.

I tell you even weeping. So I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone. Look at verse four.

In that day, I will strike every horse with confusion and its rider with madness. This is so interesting because we know that this is literal truth that has prophetic significance in the spiritual realm for you and me, but it is grounded in a literal reality. Now think about this.

Suppose the year is, let's pick something tasty. Suppose the year is 2026 and the armies of the nations have surrounded Israel and have as their target, Jerusalem. And they've got Confederates on the inside because the folks who control the Temple Mount are just as anxious as anybody else to get rid of this Israelite presence once and for all.

So you've got the European Union nations. You've got all of these United Arab Emirates surrounding. Everybody is ready to pounce on the prize.

What kind of horses are they riding? Are they all gonna show up with old fashioned cavalry and straps and swords and the jingling of stirrups and harness and such? What are the horses? This is military vehicles that have all got GPS and electronics and inter-vehicle communications and identification friend or foe and weaponry and all the rest of it, right? There's not a sword and a scabbard slapping the side of this horse. It's gonna have armaments. It's gonna have defenses.

How are you gonna describe modern warfare if not in terms that are analogous or as Tommy's mother said, ganalogous. It's ganalogous. So what's gonna happen when every horse is struck with confusion and the riders with madness? If you're trying to drive and you're in an armored vehicle, if you've ever tried this, I've driven a tank.

Several others of you have as well. And you're looking through a little thick bulletproof glass window. You don't have windows like you have in a nice SUV or my old travel.

I love that car because the vistas open up before you. The whole upper half of that car was glass. You're looking through a little tiny slit.

It's like being in a suit of armor with the helmet down and you've got very limited visibility. Well, so how are you driving? Well, I've got my tactical radar here. I've got my readout, I've got my GPS map and my heads up display and all the rest of it.

I've got all this fancy electronic stuff. When something happens along the lines of an electromagnetic pulse or some other severe disruption of all of that technology, the horse is now struck with confusion and the rider is going insane because he doesn't know where he is or what he's doing. Remember when Gideon and his 300 guys smashed the pitchers and the lights and the... Remember that? The camp largely killed themselves.

Those 300 guys created confusion and insanity in a vastly superior numeric foe. That's what's

going to happen. This is literal, it's real.

I think we will be able to observe it from our heavenly vantage point. And where is your seat going to be? Is it going to be in the front section right next to the stage or is it going to be in the nosebleed section and you're using the most powerful binoculars you can carry? We're determining that now. But it is going to happen.

It is going to be literal. It is the real Middle Eastern Israeli Jerusalem. These are real countries with real armies.

The only metaphor here is horses represent transportation and riders represent guidance and those humans who are using these things for an attack purpose. And they are going to be confused and they're going to be crazy. I will open my eyes on the house of Judah and I will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.

Everybody thinks we're going to save ourselves with technology. You remember the transhumanism we talked about a week or two back? Eternal life of my own making. Woe unto you if you don't factor God into your future plans.

We'll build a tower in the plain of Shinar and it will reach to heaven and we'll know everything. We'll get into astrology and read the stars and touch the spirits and you know, but God dot, dot, dot, that's what's going to happen. But it's exciting because here's the personal application nation in the Old Testament, whether it is historical or prophetic.

What do you think the people in Jerusalem are going to think when the entire population of major nations supports armies who come and surround them and they're vastly outnumbered. They are surrounded. There is no place of escape.

And it looks like this is over. But God, we can look at our situation and we think, I there, I see no options here. I don't have the strength.

I don't have the opportunity. I don't have the help. I don't have the means of escape.

I thought God said with every temptation or every testing, there would come a way of escape. Well, I don't see it. I think I'm about to be crushed.

I'm about to be annihilated. It's over here. Think Jerusalem, think the nation surrounding with confidence in their horses, and then think God.

This example is so heartening and so encouraging and so optimistic because if you think the Old Testament nation of Israel belong to God, if you think the future inhabitants of Jerusalem belong to God, what about us? We are in Christ. We are inextricably linked with God's son. We're his body.

We're imbued with his spirit. We have his word. If you don't think God was interested in the wellbeing of the Old Testament saints, read these passages.

God is very concerned both with their training, with their discipline, in cases where it's needed, their judgment, but when it is needed, their deliverance, their salvation, their preservation, their blessing, their opportunity, their prosperity. This is the means, gather all the enemies. Just when it looks most hopeless, wipe them all out.

Now my people can live in peace for a thousand years. A wonderful tactic in warfare is if the enemy is all scattered out, get them to concentrate and knock them out with one great blow. And Jerusalem says, so you're using us as bait? God says, you're going to be okay.

I'm just assembling these so I can wipe them all out. And you're going to see the expression of my glory and my love for you in assembling these and then just wiping them out, striking them with blindness and confusion and craziness. And you're going to have a ringside seat because you can advance in any direction and see it.

That's us. That's now. This is our place in the spiritual conflict and our opportunity to see God work up close and personal when trials are near and opposition is at hand and seemingly overwhelming.

Look up, your redemption, your deliverance draws nigh. Wait for it, enjoy it, celebrate it, thank God for it. Share that truth with your friends.

What a privilege to be who we are, where we are in Christ. If God before us, who's going to be against us? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. We are in him and he is in us.

Why should I fear what man can do to me? Why should I fear what circumstance can do to me? This momentary light affliction, eternal weight of glory. Think about all these wonderful promises. Well, that's why we're looking so intently and with such great interest at these burdens.

The first one, looking back at how people missed that opportunity. That's the negative example. Do not fall in the wilderness, the author of Hebrews says.

Like those people did, they missed the opportunity to enter into his rest. That rest, by the way, was preceded by combat. Joshua doesn't lead them across the Jordan and says, okay, everybody unrolled your bed rolls and let's all lay down and rest in the land.

Let's wait for the milk and honey to flow into our mouths and our ears. What did they have to do to enter into rest? Conquer, fight. It's a principle, Old Testament and new.

But this warfare is not for long. So let's make the most of it. Let's exploit it, knowing that God is on our side.

That's what these burdens are about. And this last one is a corker and we're gonna see more of it when we come back from our break.