

Pro Pastor

VOL. 3, NO. 1 | SPRING 2024

A JOURNAL OF GRACE BIBLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



Pro Pastor

A JOURNAL OF GRACE BIBLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Preaching the Whole Counsel of God

VOL. 3, NO. 1 | SPRING 2024

Pro Pastor

A JOURNAL OF GRACE BIBLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Pro Pastor: A Journal of Grace Bible Theological Seminary is published biannually by Grace Bible Theological Seminary, Conway, AR, 72032. Information about the journal is available at the seminary website: www.gbtseminary.org.

Address all editorial correspondence to:
Editor, Grace Bible Theological Seminary,
1076 Harkrider St., Conway, AR, 72032.

All submissions should follow the *SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd edition in order to be considered for publication.

The views expressed in the following articles and reviews are not necessarily those of the faculty, the administration, or the trustees of Grace Bible Theological Seminary.

© Copyright 2024
All rights reserved by Grace Bible Theological Seminary

EDITOR

Jeff Moore

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Ryan Bush

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Jason Muir

Pro Pastor

VOL. 3, NO. 1 | SPRING 2024

A JOURNAL OF GRACE BIBLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Preaching the Whole Counsel of God

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION by Jeff Moore	28	PREACHING THE PROPHETS: ZEPHANIAH AS A CASE STUDY FOR CHRISTIAN PROCLAMATION by Jason S. DeRouchie
2	PREACHING THE PENTATEUCH by Brian Borgman	38	PREACHING THE NEW TESTAMENT NARRATIVE BOOKS by Maya Kuthyola & Jeff Moore
11	PREACHING THE OLD TESTAMENT HISTORICAL BOOKS by James B. Law	48	PREACHING THE LETTERS by Josh Buice
20	PREACHING THE POETS by Grant Castleberry	57	PREACHING THE APOCALYPSE: THE NECESSITY OF GOOD AND PROPER HERMENEUTICS by Sam Waldron
		68	SUMMARY CHART: PREACHING CHALLENGES FOR EACH GENRE OF SCRIPTURE

Preaching the Prophets: Zephaniah as a Case Study for Christian Proclamation

by Jason S. DeRouchie

INTRODUCTION

Peter stressed that “*all the prophets*” foretold Christ’s tribulation and proclaimed the days of the church (Acts 3:18, 24).¹ Indeed, these mouthpieces of the heavenly court “searched and inquired carefully” concerning the gracious salvation you and I enjoy (1 Pet 1:10). Their object of inquiry was not restricted to dreams and visions, for Zephaniah was reading Isaiah’s writings, and Jeremiah was interpreting Deuteronomy. And as the Holy Spirit of Christ guided the prophet’s interpretations (2 Pet 1:20–21; cf. 1 Cor 2:13–14) and “predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories,” they proclaimed truths of Christ’s person and the time of his coming (1 Pet 1:11). Thus, Paul could faithfully declare that “the gospel of God ... concerning his Son” was “promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures” (Rom 1:1–3). And as they proclaimed, they knew that they were writing principally *not* for their own age but for future generations, for “it was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you” (1 Pet 1:12; cf. Deut 30:8; Isa 29:18; 30:8; Jer 30:2–3, 24; Dan 12:9–10).²

The Old Testament (OT) Prophets are Christian Scripture, yet Christians often struggle to understand them. How should one interpret the OT Prophets for Christian proclamation? This article addresses this question; however, it assumes that the interpreter is already born again, having the eyes of his heart enlightened and having turned from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18; Eph 1:18). Only spiritual people can rightly read a spiritual book (1 Cor 2:13–14), and only those with eternal life can hear and believe (John 5:24). We can only hear and understand the Prophets rightly when we read them *through Christ*.

God is the author of all Scripture (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21), “declaring the end from the beginning” (Isa 46:10). As such, faithful interpretation of the OT Prophets requires that the expositor consider three overlapping contexts:³

1. *The Close Context*: Assess your passage’s immediate historical and literary setting within the biblical book. *What, how, and why* does

¹ All Scripture quotations in this article are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

² For more on these thoughts and the reality that the Old Testament is (and has always been) *Christian* Scripture, see Jason S. DeRouchie, *Delighting in the Old Testament: Through Christ and for Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2024), 15–70.

³ The titles come from Trent Hunter and Stephen J. Wellum, *Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 42–69.

the text communicate? Carefully consider the passage's words, thought flow, and theology.

2. *The Continuing Context:* Account for informing theology from earlier known Scripture and the place of the passage within God's story of salvation. How does your passage draw on earlier texts and contribute to God's unfolding drama, whether by progressing the covenants or developing a biblical theme or typological pattern that culminates in Christ?
3. *The Complete Context:* Determine how your passage fits within the whole biblical canon. How does later Scripture utilize or fulfill your passage or clarify or develop the meaning of your passage? Finalize your reflections on how your passage contributes to the progress of revelation and points to or clarifies Christ's person and work?

The interpreter's task is incomplete until he has assessed all three biblical contexts.⁴ This essay will use the book of Zephaniah to overview and illustrate the interpretive task.⁵ Evaluating the *close context*, we will consider (1) the book's historical context, (2) the boundaries and nature of a given prophetic speech act, and (3) the function of this speech act within the book's literary flow. Reflecting on the *continuing contexts*, we will study (4) how our passage contributes to God's covenantal progress and purposes and (5) the prophet's use of Scripture. Finally, weighing the *complete context*, we will reflect on (6) the significance of the book's location within the

canon, (7) Scripture's use of the prophetic book, and (8) how the prophet spoke of Christ.

THE CLOSE CONTEXT: THE PASSAGE'S IMMEDIATE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY SETTING

1. Know That the Prophets Operated within History

The Bible portrays the OT prophets as ambassadors of the heavenly court (2 Kgs 17:13; Jer 23:21–22), whom God commissioned to preach for him to the people and to pray for the people to him. Every OT prophet was a man of his time, engaging distinct problems, perspectives, powers, and practices. Keeping in mind the major historical moments prior to and during the time of the prophets will aid interpretation.

All fifteen OT classical prophets preached during a monumental 340-year period (770–433 BC) during which Israel and Judah were reduced from independent nations to a single, pitiful, remnant state (Judah), one tiny district in the huge Persian empire. This era was one of dramatic change. God's prophets clarified for Israel and the world why history was playing out the way it was and how this history fit within God's overall kingdom-building plan culminating in Christ.

Were God's ancient promises of Israel's greatness void? Was there any hope for the promised future kingdom? Would the era of curse be supplanted by restoration blessing? Prophetic preaching is significantly about historical developments, and no

⁴ For a more thorough overview of the process of biblical interpretation in general, see Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017).

⁵ For a more developed discussion of Zephaniah's message, see Jason S. DeRouchie, "Zephaniah," in *Daniel–Malachi*, vol. 7 of *ESV Expository Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 561–604; Jason S. DeRouchie, "Zephaniah," *TGC Bible Commentary* (2021), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/zephaniah/>; cf. Jason S. DeRouchie, *Zephaniah*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament 32 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

interpretation of its message that ignores historical context can be accurate. The figure below overviews the main world powers and the three main periods during which the classical prophets preached.

POWER & PROPHETIC PERIOD	ISRAEL	JUDAH	HEBREW CANON ORDER
Assyria (870–626 BC) <i>8th–early 7th century</i>	Jonah (ca. 770) Amos (ca. 760) Hosea (ca. 760–730)	Isaiah (ca. 740–700) Micah (ca. 737–690) Nahum (ca. 650)	Jeremiah Ezekiel Isaiah The Twelve Hosea Joel
Babylon (626–539 BC) <i>Late 7th–early 6th century</i>		Habakkuk (ca. 630) Jeremiah (ca. 627–580) Zephaniah (ca. 622) Joel (ca. 600?) Obadiah (ca. 586?) Ezekiel (ca. 593–570) <i>[in Babylon]</i>	Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah
Persia (539–323 BC) <i>Late 6th–5th century</i>		Haggai (ca. 520) Zechariah (ca. 520–518) Malachi (ca. 433)	Haggai Zechariah Malachi

FIGURE 1. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE CLASSICAL WRITING PROPHETS⁶

Concerning Zephaniah’s message, the book bearing his name informs us that he prophesied during the days of King Josiah (Zeph 1:1). This reference encourages the reader to interpret Zephaniah against the backdrop of the Assyrian crisis, the rising Babylonian crisis, and those portions of Scripture about Josiah’s reign and reforms (640–609 BC; i.e., 2 Kgs 22:1–23:30). Because Zephaniah seems very aware of Deuteronomy yet still has to confront so much sin, he likely ministered in late 622 BC, after “the book of the Law” was found but before Josiah’s reforms had significant impact on Jerusalem (cf. Deut 31:9–11, 26–27; 2 Kgs 22:8, 11; 23:2–3).⁷

2. Know the Boundaries and Nature of the Prophetic Speech

When choosing a passage to exegete, think in terms of oracles. Nearly all prophetic teaching is in the form of oracles, self-contained verbal revelations from God, often beginning, “Thus says the LORD.” The prophets appear to have spoken or sung the oracles publicly to call people to loyalty or to explain what God was doing in history and why. We also must carefully identify the beginning and end of an oracle and understand its characteristic terminology, structure, and speech types. Figure 2 overviews the four most common prophetic speech types.

⁶ The Hebrew arrangement comes from *Baba Bathra* 14b, which appears in the Jewish Talmud but dates back to the time of Christ. Most of the dates for the prophets come from John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 52.

⁷ Cf. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 254–55.

INDICTMENT	Statement of the offense, noting the specific covenant stipulations violated
INSTRUCTION	Clarification of the expected response, calling listeners to heed the covenant stipulations
WARNING/PUNISHMENT	Declaration of the punishment to be carried out in relation to the covenant curses
RESTORATION/SALVATION	Affirmation of future hope or deliverance in relation to the covenant restoration blessings

FIGURE 2. THE FOUR MOST COMMON TYPES OF PROPHETIC SPEECH

The book of Zephaniah is framed by “the word of the LORD” (Zeph 1:1) and “the LORD has said” (author’s translation) and is dotted with the phrase the “utterance of the LORD” (= “declares the LORD,” ESV, 1:2, 3, 10; 2:9; 3:8). Thus, the whole bears divine authority, with God as the source of it all. Although the book portrays Yahweh in both first person (“I,” “my,” “me”) and third person (“Yahweh/LORD,” “he,” “his,” “him”), there are no introductory speech frames (e.g., “Thus says the LORD”), so the whole comes to us as a single oracle from the great King (3:15), regardless of whether we are reading Yahweh’s voice or his prophet’s.

Recalling similar masculine plural imperatives in 2:1, 3 (“Gather!” ... “Seek!”), 3:8–20 begins with a command for God’s faithful people to “wait” for him to bring justice (3:8a). Then two statements each beginning with “for” provide reasons why God’s faithful people should wait for him to act: (1) Yahweh will judge the earth’s people groups (“nations”) and political powers (“kingdoms”) on the day of the Lord (3:8b), and (2) God will raise up a transformed international humanity who calls on his name and who is represented by Cushites, ancient black Africa and part of Zephaniah’s ancestry (3:9–10; cf. Zeph 1:1).⁸ Zephaniah then clarifies this coming day of Yahweh with two subsections that each begin with “on that day” (Zeph 3:11–13, 16–20). Between these two clarifications

are discursive commands for the new multiethnic and faithful Jerusalem to rejoice (3:14–15). Faith in God’s future work (3:8–10, 11–13, 16–20) should produce praise in the present (3:14–15).

Zephaniah 3:8–20 is a prophetic charge to the remnant that uses promises of restoration/salvation to motivate action. Supporting this interpretation are Yahweh coming to “save” his people (3:17, 19) and his people rejoicing (3:14–15).

3. Know the Function of the Prophetic Speech within the Flow of the Book

Each book consists of sentences, paragraphs, sections, and larger units that work together to communicate a message. Thus, interpreting a passage or oracle within its close context requires not only understanding the passage’s meaning within the constraints of the surrounding texts but also within the flow and overarching message of the book. The interpreter must routinely go back and forth between considering each speech act’s specific details and how the messages of various parts or greater thought units relate together. The question to ask is, “What would this book’s message be lacking if my passage was missing?” If an interpreter does not understand how a given passage among the Prophets (or any genre or

⁸ For more on Zephaniah’s bi-racial heritage, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “The Addressees in Zephaniah 2:1, 3: Who Should Seek YHWH Together?,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 30.2 (2020): 203–05.

canonical division) contributes to the book's overarching message, he has not understood that oracle's literary function and intended message as deeply as he ought.

Growing out of the imperatives in 2:1, 3 and 3:8 and the motivations that surround them, the main idea of Zephaniah is: *Seek the Lord together to avoid punishment, and wait for the Lord to enjoy salvation.* Figure 3 shows my message-driven outline for the book.

- I. The Preamble to the Savior's Invitation to Satisfaction (1:1)
- II. The Setting of the Savior's Invitation to Satisfaction: A Call to Revere God in View of His Coming Day (1:2–18)
 - A. The Context for the Call to Revere God: Coming Punishment (1:2–6)
 - B. The Content of the Call to Revere God (1:7–18)
- III. The Substance of the Savior's Invitation to Satisfaction (2:1–3:20)
 - A. Stage 1: The Appeal to Seek the Lord Together to Avoid Punishment (2:1–3:7)
 - B. Stage 2: The Appeal to Wait for the Lord to Enjoy Salvation (3:8–20b)
- IV. The Closing of the Savior's Invitation to Satisfaction (3:20c)

FIGURE 3. A MESSAGE-DRIVEN OUTLINE OF ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah 3:8–20b is the book's final speech unit. The section begins with "therefore," signaling that it builds on the preceding material. Specifically, *because* of God's coming judgments of "woe" against the nations (2:5–15) and Jerusalem (3:1–7), God's people should "wait" for Yahweh to act (3:8). Such reasoning only makes sense if, in Zephaniah's reckoning, God's historical judgments against various sinful kingdoms function as proof that God will eventually judge every evil kingdom. Though Zephaniah is known for his declarations of judgment, he understood his material to be ultimately about salvation. He writes mostly for the remnant in Judah and surrounding lands, urging them to pursue God with patience. He motivates them to do this by graphically depicting dreadful judgment and satisfying salvation. Yahweh's faithful followers must seek God together and wait for him so they can ultimately delight in their deliverance and Deliverer.

THE CONTINUING CONTEXTS: THE PASSAGE'S INFORMING THEOLOGY AND PLACE IN SALVATION HISTORY

4. Know That the Prophets Thought Covenantally and Redemptive-Historically

As the OT prophets operated within history, they did so as covenant enforcers. God established and promised covenants with humanity that shape the prophets' worldview and understanding of what God is doing in space and time. A covenant is a formal (as opposed to biological) relationship between two parties that is based on mutual promises, usually with God as witness. We must consider the biblical covenants if we are to situate the prophets' declarations of judgment and hope within God's overarching

purposes. These five main historical covenants make up Scripture's storyline:⁹

- Adamic-Noahic (Isa 24:4–6; Jer 33:20–21, 25; Hos 6:7);
- Abrahamic (Isa 41:8–10; 51:2; 54:1–3; Jer 33:25–26; Mic 7:20);
- Mosaic (Isa 5:24; 42:24; Jer 2:8; 6:19; 8:8; 9:12–14; Ezek 7:26; 22:26; Hos 4:6; 8:1; Amos 2:4; Hab 1:3–4; Zeph 3:4; Zech 7:12; Mal 4:4[3:22]);
- Davidic (Isa 9:7; 16:5; 22:22; 55:3; Jer 23:5; 30:9; 33:15, 17, 20–22, 25–26; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 12:10; 13:1);
- New/everlasting (Isa 55:3; 54:10; 55:3; Jer 31:31, 33; 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60, 62; 34:25; 37:26; Hos 2:18; Zech 9:11; Mal 3:1; cf. Dan 9:27).

The Mosaic covenant (Exod 19–Deut 33) bore the greatest influence on the preaching of the classical prophets. It guided their indictments and instructions toward Israel and supplied a framework for the blessings, curses, and restoration blessings they pronounced (see Lev 26; Deut 4, 27–32).¹⁰ As a result of covenant-breaking, Yahweh divided the monarchy and brought the curse of foreign oppression and exile, first against the northern kingdom of Israel in 723 BC and then against the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 BC.

The prophets spoke often of these judgments against Israel and Judah, but they knew that Yahweh's final word was not a curse, for his mercy would triumph (Deut 4:30–31). The era of

restoration blessing is the new creational age of the new covenant inaugurated in Christ's first coming. During this time, Yahweh would fulfill his vow to give an eternal kingdom and throne to David's son (2 Sam 7:12–16; cf. Deut 17:18–20). This son would keep the Mosaic covenant's requirements, usher in the time of restoration, and be the promised seed of the woman and of Abraham through whom all the world would be blessed (Gen 3:15; 22:17b–18; Deut 17:18–20). The prophets regularly build on these promises, fusing the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants' hopes into one (e.g., Isa 9:7; 55:3; Jer 23:5; 30:9; Ezek 34:23; 37:24–25; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 13:1).

Being an enforcer of the Mosaic covenant, Zephaniah routinely rebukes Jerusalem for its sins. These sins are numerous and include worshiping false gods and the stars (Zeph 1:4–5; cf. Exod 20:3; Deut 4:19) and various forms of covenant disloyalty (Zeph 1:6, 9, 12; 2:2–4). For such sins, God fulfills his covenantal promise of judgment by sending Babylon to destroy Judah in 586 BC (Zeph 1:4–6, 12–13; 3:1–7). Yet this immediate punishment only foreshadowed a greater “day of the LORD” coming on the whole world “because they have sinned against the LORD” (1:17). Standing as Lord of all creation through the Adamic-Noahic covenant (cf. Gen 9:9–11; Isa 24:4–6), Yahweh would punish all rebels of humanity (Zeph 1:2–3, 14–18; 3:8), including those in Judah.¹¹ However, his ingathering for judgment would be matched by his salvation of an international remnant of worshipers (3:9–10; cf. 2:7, 9), as the blessing of God would reach the nations, fulfilling his covenant promises to Abraham (cf. Gen 12:3; 22:18; 26:4).¹²

⁹ See Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018); Jason S. DeRouchie, “An Arc of the Covenants: Tracing How the Bible's Storyline Climaxes in Christ,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 26.1 (2022): 10–45.

¹⁰ For a full list of these blessings, curses, and restoration blessings, see DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament*, 48–49.

¹¹ For a synthesis of the prophet's portrayal of the day of the Lord as cataclysm, conquest, and sacrifice, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “Revering God: Punishment on the Day of the Lord (Zeph 1:2–18),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 181.1 (2024): forthcoming.

¹² For a synthesis of the prophet's portrayal of the day of the Lord as renewal, with additional focus on satisfying salvation as the motivation for endurance, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “Seeking God and Waiting: Hope on the Day of the Lord (Zeph 2:1–4; 3:8–10),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 181.2 (2024): forthcoming; Jason S. DeRouchie, “Rejoicing Then and Now: Pleasures on the Day of the Lord (Zeph 3:11–20),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 181.3 (2024): forthcoming.

5. Know How the Prophet Uses Scripture

The prophets often referred to prior Scriptures within their oracles, unpacking their Spirit-led interpretations (1 Pet 1:10–11; 2 Pet 1:20–21). Rightly noting the function of these citations will dramatically deepen your understanding of prophetic speech. Often, the prophets only make subtle allusions, and a prophet rarely explicitly states when he is citing a text. In such instances, the interpreter must account not only for the text cited but also for its context, for the biblical author was aware of both. For this reason, one must seek to understand how cited text functions within its book so that the purpose of the citation becomes clearer.

Zephaniah 3:9–10 reads: “For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.” As noted, 3:9–10 reveals one reason why the remnant from Judah and beyond should “wait” for Yahweh and not give up (3:8a). They must patiently trust God *for* he is committed to create on the day of the Lord a transformed, international worshipping community of “peoples” (3:9–10).

Zephaniah appears to be intentionally portraying the reversal of the Tower of Babel punishment when Yahweh scattered seventy nations (Gen 11:1–9; cf. 10:32), for there are at least eight common terms between the passages: “people(s),” “language/speech,” “call,” “all,” “name,” “Yahweh,” “one,” and “disperse.” Furthermore, only these OT texts conjoin “language/speech” (Gen 11:1, 7, 9; Zeph 3:9) and “dispersed” (Gen 11:9; Zeph 3:10). With this, Cush was ancient black Africa, which derived its name from Noah’s grandson “Cush,” who fathered Nimrod, the builder of Babel(on)

(Gen 10:6, 10). Thus, Zephaniah 3:9–10 envisions descendants of the very instigators of the Babel rebellion as representing the restoration and reconciliation with God at the end of the age, thus fulfilling God’s promises to Abraham (Gen 12:3; 22:18; cf. 18:18; 26:4; 28:14). Zephaniah probably chose “Cush” as the sole example of Yahweh’s international transformation because he himself bore Cushite heritage (Zeph 1:1).

THE COMPLETE CONTEXT: THE PASSAGE’S PLACE AND FUNCTION WITHIN THE WHOLE OF SCRIPTURE

6. Know the Function of Your Prophetic Book Within the Canon

The Major and Minor Prophets constitute the Latter Prophets in the ancient Jewish canon.¹³ These Latter Prophets follow Joshua–Kings, which the ancient Jews called the Former Prophets. This structure allows Joshua–Kings to tell us *what* happened in covenant history and prophets like Isaiah, Habakkuk, and Malachi to describe *why* it happened. This is yet another evidence supporting the claim that Yahweh’s prophets are (Mosaic) covenant enforcers.

We must also consider why the arrangement of the Latter Prophets in Scripture appears substantially driven by theological rather than chronological purposes. For example, even though Jonah is likely the earliest of the first millennial writing prophets (ca. 770 BC), he is placed fifth in the Minor Prophets, which the ancient Jews regarded as a unified book and called the Book of the Twelve. For this reason, someone like Stephen can quote Amos 5:25 and say this citation comes from “the book of the prophets” (Acts 7:42). We should ask, therefore, whether Obadiah’s preceding Jonah is to influence our reading of Jonah.¹⁴

¹³ The distinction between *major* and *minor* relates to book size, not significance.

¹⁴ For a commentary that accounts for the theological interrelationship of the Minor Prophets, see Michael B. Shepherd, *A Commentary on the Book of the Twelve: The Minor Prophets*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018).

Zephaniah is the ninth volume in the Book of the Twelve. The individual books of the prophets generally move from sin to punishment to restoration, and the Book of the Twelve as a whole also follows this pattern, focusing on Israel's sin (Hosea–Micah), punishment (Nahum–Zephaniah), and restoration (Haggai–Malachi). In this understanding, Zephaniah supplies the all-important bridge between the punishment and restoration sections, with Zephaniah 1:2–3:7 focusing on punishment and Zephaniah 3:8–20 focusing on restoration. Thus, Zephaniah provides “a bridge between the sin, punishment, and restoration sections of the Twelve.... It embodies both the climax and the falling action of the Twelve’s story line. Put another way, it completes the bottom of the U-shape and begins the journey upwards” into hope.¹⁵

7. Know How Scripture Uses the Prophetic Book

When discussing the continuing context, we noted how Zephaniah 3:9–10 recalls the tragedy of the Tower of Babel and portrays God’s eschatological new creation as a reversal of that judgment. Luke saw Pentecost as marking this reversal of the Babel punishment, and he appears to have drawn on Zephaniah 3:8–13 when shaping his narrative of the early church’s rise. I’ll highlight only the most important connections with 3:9–10.

1. Peter cites Joel 2:28–32 in Acts 2:17–21, but the key term “language/speech/tongue” (Acts 2:3–4, 11, 26, always plural) is lacking in Joel. However, it is present in the Greek text of both Genesis 11:7 and Zephaniah 3:9. Furthermore, Luke’s citation in Acts 2:21 of Joel 2:32 that “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” closely resembles God’s promise in Zephaniah 3:9 that he would purify the remnant’s speech “that all of them may call upon the name of

the LORD,” which reverses the self-exalting quest of those in Babel (Gen 11:4).

2. Zephaniah’s depiction of the international community serving the Lord in unity (Zeph 3:9) may have moved Luke to highlight the early saints’ common surrender and worship (Acts 2:42).
3. Luke stresses how devout Jews and Gentile proselytes “from every nation under heaven” were gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 2:5), but strikingly absent from the list of peoples and nations in Acts 2:9–11 is the designation “Ethiopians,” the Greek title for the OT “Cushites.” Most likely, the absence here was to highlight the direct fulfillment of Zephaniah 3:10 in the story of God’s saving the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40), the first known Gentile convert to Christianity.

Hence, Luke viewed Christ’s death and resurrection to be initiating the day of the Lord as both punishment and renewal. Pentecost and the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles, beginning with the salvation of the Ethiopian politician, marked the initial fulfillment of Zephaniah’s vision of new creation on the day of the Lord.¹⁶

8. Know That the Prophet Spoke of Christ

The previous section opened the door for seeing how Zephaniah, as an OT prophet, indeed promises the gospel (Rom 1:1–3) and anticipates the coming of Christ and the age of the church (Luke 24:45–47; Acts 3:18, 24). Jesus climaxes all redemptive history (Mark 1:15), provides the focus of many OT prophecies (Matt 11:13 with Luke 16:16; Acts 3:18, 24), stands as the end/goal of the old covenant law (Rom 10:4), and makes possible all OT promises (2 Cor 1:20). Through his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus underwent the day of the Lord

¹⁵ Paul R. House, *The Unity of the Twelve*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 97 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 151.

¹⁶ For more on Zephaniah’s use of Scripture and Scripture’s use of Zephaniah, see Jason S. DeRouchie, “Zephaniah, Book Of,” *Dictionary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 886–90.

judgment on behalf of all the elect (see Zeph 1:7). He died “not for the [Jewish] nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:52). As we engage Yahweh’s prophets, we must always assess how they spoke of Christ and how their declarations relate to his work. Only then can we say with Paul, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). Every conclusion requires textual warrant.

The way Jesus fulfills the OT is not uniform (Matt 5:17–18; Luke 24:44), so considering how to magnify him in the OT requires querying the text from a multi-faceted perspective. Figure 4 notes seven ways we can see and celebrate Christ in the OT.¹⁷

1. Consider the OT’s salvation-historical trajectories.
2. See the OT’s direct messianic predictions.
3. Recognize similarities and contrasts within salvation history.
4. Identify OT types.
5. Revel in Yahweh’s identity and activity.
6. Note the OT’s ethical ideals.
7. Use the OT to instruct others.

FIGURE 4. SEVEN WAYS TO SEE AND CELEBRATE CHRIST IN THE OT

In addition, G. K. Beale has identified five principles that are rooted in the OT’s own story of salvation history and that guided the New Testament (NT) authors’ OT interpretive conclusions.¹⁸

1. The NT authors always assume *corporate solidarity*, in which one can represent the many (e.g., Rom 5:18–19).
2. Christ *represents the true (remnant) Israel of the old covenant and the true (consummate) Israel, the church*, of the new covenant (Isa 49:3, 6 with Luke 2:32 and Acts 26:23; Gal 3:16, 29).
3. God’s wise and sovereign plan *unites salvation history* in such a way that earlier parts correspond to later parts (Isa 46:9–10; Acts 20:27; 1 Cor 10:11; Eph 1:11; Col 2:17; Rev 22:13).
4. Christ has initiated (though not consummated) *the age of end-times fulfillment* (Mark 1:15; Luke 16:16; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 10:11; Gal 4:4; Heb 1:2; 9:26; 1 John 2:18).
5. Christ and his glory stand as the end-time center and goal of history such that his life, death, and resurrection provide *the key to interpreting earlier portions of the OT and its promises* (Rom 16:25–26; 1 Cor 2:2; 2 Cor 3:14).

¹⁷ For an overview of these seven ways the OT testifies to Jesus, see DeRouchie, *Delighting in the Old Testament*, 75–107.

¹⁸ G. K. Beale, “Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?,” *Themelios* 14.3 (1989): 90; G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 52–53, 95–102. I have added all scriptural references.

All these conclusions derive from reading the OT within its complete context.

We will now consider Zephaniah 3:14–15, which verses mark the rhetorical motivational high-point of the book. “Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil” (3:14–15). The prophet calls the remnant people to rejoice as if their deliverance has already begun (3:14), and they are to do so because God has removed the curse of enemy oppression. Sovereign Yahweh is with them, so they need not fear (3:15).

Significantly, John saw here anticipations of Christ’s coming. In John 12:13–16 the apostle narrates Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The crowds cry out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” And then John notes how Jesus is fulfilling what is written, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” Most study Bibles rightly note that the throng quotes Psalm 118:25–26 and that John cites Zechariah 9:9. However, the passage in the Psalms doesn’t mention “the King of Israel,” and Zechariah 9:9 actually opens, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion.” The only place in the OT that brings together “the King of Israel,” “daughter of Zion,” and “fear not” is Zephaniah 3:14–15, and this suggests that John is also alluding to this text and sees Jesus fulfilling the end-time reign of God that Zephaniah anticipates would be realized at the day of the Lord.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Faithful OT preaching requires careful, Spirit-dependent OT interpretation that examines a passage’s close, continuing, and complete contexts. The OT was Jesus’s only Bible, and it is Christian

Scripture that was written for our instruction (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11). It contains the earliest promises of the gospel of God concerning his Son (Rom 1:1–3), for in it the prophets interpret earlier revelation to discern the person of Christ and the time of his coming (1 Pet 1:10–11; 2 Pet 1:20–21). These very Scriptures bear witness to Jesus (John 1:45; 5:39), foretelling his sufferings and the days of the church (Acts 3:18, 24). Christian leaders must preach and teach from the Major and Minor Prophets for the good of the saints (2 Tim 3:16–17; 4:2), for their own welfare (Acts 20:26–27), and for the sake of Christ’s name among all the nations (Rom 1:5). I urge every preacher of the Word: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). •

JASON S. DEROUCHIE IS RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AT MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AND CONTENT DEVELOPER AND GLOBAL TRAINER WITH HANDS TO THE PLOW MINISTRIES.

¹⁹ For a development of this case, see Christopher S. Tachick, “King of Israel” and “Do Not Fear, Daughter of Zion”: *The Use of Zephaniah 3 in John 12*, Reformed Academic Dissertations 11 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018).