

Principles for Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy

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[0:00] Well, in the junior high and high school class in recent months, we've been learning how! to study the Bible. And a large part of that study has been walking through different genres of Scripture and learning how to read and how to interpret each genre. Learning how to read and learning how to grasp the meaning of the text in each genre. Because every genre of God's Word is different, and it needs to be carefully approached. There are different categories of writing, you could say. And they communicate truth in different ways. Some genres, they are easier to understand. Others are more challenging. So we've been learning in the junior high and high school class about these different principles to remember as we study different genres of Scripture. So I thought that, as I have opportunity to be with you all this morning, that I would take one of those lessons that we've covered together in our class and share it with you and expand upon it some with you.

Now, I will admit, we have a lot of ground to cover. We could probably spend a Sunday school class looking at just one or two of these principles at a time. So we won't be diving in as deeply as we probably could on any of these particular principles. But I hope that what we cover proves beneficial to us. I hope that what we cover this morning helps us to better read and interpret God's Word. So this morning, we're looking at specific principles that relate to one specific genre of Scripture. And you have a handout that tells you what that genre is. Old Testament prophecy. Now, I picked this one because I think most of us would agree that Old Testament books of prophecy are some of the hardest to understand. How many of us have been tripped up in our Bible reading plans when we've come to a large book of prophecy? So here's seven principles this morning that we're going to look at together to help us better read and understand Old Testament prophecy. And you do have this handout that lays out that lays out each of these principles. Now, I made this fill in the blank for the youth.

I gave all of you the answers. So don't tell my class. They'll accuse me of going easy on you and hard on them. But if you start nodding off, well, then the next time that we perhaps have opportunity for this together, I'm going to make them fill in the blank to keep your attention. So let's look at these seven principles together. The first one that you have before you. There is a basic pattern to the prophetic books. Sin, judgment, restoration. Now, you will find all three of these elements in just about every prophetic book. God calls out the sin of his people, or he calls out the sin of his enemies. And when it's the sin of his people, God is often saying something to the effect of, here is how you've transgressed my laws. Here's how you've broken my commandments and broken the relationship between us. So the sin of God's people is so often one of the very first things spoken of in Old Testament books of prophecy. Very often, it is what warranted the writing of the prophecy. The prophet has come. He's come to deliver a message to God's people on God's behalf because the people have sinned against God. So God is now calling them out for their sin, and he's calling them to turn from that sin in repentance. So that's the first element that we should have our eyes peeled for when we are in an Old Testament prophetic book. Look for sin. And then secondly, look for judgment.

Sin and judgment, they go hand in hand. Where sin is exposed and unrepented of, judgment is sure to follow. So you will find not just God calling out the people for their sin, but God indeed calling them to repentance, to turn from their sin, or else his judgment will fall. And for Old Testament prophetic books, they were written in a very specific period of time. So that judgment came in the form of exile.

[4:25] We saw this in Habakkuk when we preached through Habakkuk in the morning not too long ago. Judgment was promised for the sins of Judah, and that judgment came in the form of exile. Who was it that took the people of God into exile? Can we recall together? Babylon. Yes,

Babylon. They came. They carried off the nation of Judah into exile. So where you find sin spoken of, you should be looking to see the judgment that will follow. Because God is holy. God is just. He does not let sin go unpunished.

Sin, judgment, but also the third element, restoration. For those whom God loves, there is restoration. And that's the third element that we must look for in Old Testament prophecy. Restoration promised. A confident hope of future blessing. And specifically, that blessing comes in the form of restoration to the land. This future day that's promised when God will bring his people back into the land. And he will rule them in perfect righteousness. So that's the pattern that you find in Old Testament prophecy. Now, some books, they will emphasize one or two of those elements to a greater degree than the others. And it really depends on when that book was written. The prophetic books that we have were written before Israel and Judah went into exile. Those books often emphasize, well, what do you think?

Sin and judgment. More than restoration. Because the people are sinning without remorse. They are in the middle of disobeying God without a hint of turning from that sin. So the sin is being called out, basically in real time. And they are being warned of the judgment that will follow. Now, you'll find restoration in those books, but it's not emphasized as strongly as sin and judgment. Now, other Old Testament prophetic books that were written after the people went into exile, or even after they had been brought back into the land. What do you think those books will emphasize more?

The restoration itself. The sin and judgment have already happened, and now the people are either waiting for that restoration in exile, or they're experiencing it in a measure as the book is written.

[6:58] So restoration, it's a more prominent theme in those books than the other elements. But in all of prophecy, we should be looking to see sin, judgment, restoration. So let me give you a quick example of this pattern in the prophets. Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Amos. We're going to be finding lots of Old Testament books, prophetic books, some minor prophets this morning together. So the book of Amos, it's not far into the Old Testament minor prophets. If you find Daniel, get past Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos. Let's see this pattern here in the book of Amos.

Now the emphasis in Amos is indeed on sin and judgment. In fact, almost all of the book is about sin and judgment. Now what's interesting is that Amos doesn't begin with the sin of Israel or Judah. Amos begins with the sin of the surrounding nations and the judgment that will follow for their sin. You can see it here in verse 3. We read, thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Damascus and for four, I will not revoke the punishment. And then he uses that phrase repeatedly with other nations as well. And when he says for three transgressions, he means three transgressions of Damascus. That would suffice for the judgment that follows. But look, they've committed four. It's like their cup is overflowing with their sin. And so surely this judgment is to follow. So we see God is speaking to Damascus. We see if you drop down to verse 6, that God is speaking to Gaza. Verse 9, Tyre. Verse 11, Edom. Verse 13, the Ammonites. Imagine being an Israelite.

You're hearing Amos laying into all of these surrounding nations. And you're thinking, yes, God, get them. They're terrible. They've done so much hurt to us. They've caused such suffering.

[9:06] Bring your judgment down on them. But this is a strategic move on Amos's part because he's about to turn the tables. You see, he's going to surprise us because what does he do beginning in chapter 2, verse 4? Well, now he says, for three transgressions of Judah and for four. And then the very next one, verse 6, for three transgressions of Israel and for four. So Amos then brings it home to God's very people. And he spends the next seven plus chapters laying out the sins of God's own people and the sure judgment that is to come if their sin is not repented of. So if you read Amos, you cannot help but be sobered by the reality of sin and judgment. For so much of the book, there is very little to be glad about. We see sin and judgment, sin and judgment, until we get to chapter 9. And it's not even all of chapter 9. We have to come to the very last five verses. And there we find restoration. There we find the future hope for God's people. And I'll read those verses, the last five verses, beginning in verse 11.

In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name, declares the Lord who does this. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes, him who sows the seed. The mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them. They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant

them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them, says the Lord your God. So the book of Amos, it ends not on a note of judgment or of sin, but on a note of hope. So in every prophetic book of the Old Testament, even a book like Amos, where you can read it for a long time and say, where's the hope in this? You will find this pattern. So here's something that I would perhaps encourage you to do. Maybe do it this week. Take three different colored highlighters. Print off a text from a prophetic book, maybe a short book. You could print the whole thing. Now you have some examples that I put on your handout. If you'd like to kind of put these principles into practice in your

Bible reading, here's some texts that you could go to. Perhaps print those out, and then take those highlighters and look for and identify each of these elements in this pattern of prophecy. Sin, judgment, restoration. Use a different highlighter to highlight as you go along. Now here's some clues to help you to discern what you're reading as you read through Old Testament prophetic books.

Whenever you come upon the word therefore, you can often expect, often, not always, but often expect that judgment is likely coming next. The prophet, he's transitioning. He's gone from describing the sin that the end warning of the judgment to follow. It's because of this sin that the prophet says, therefore, therefore judgment is coming. So we should look for therefore and say, okay, I should kind of have my radar up. This is probably going to now say something of judgment. Also, often, when you come upon the words, in that day, you can expect, most of the time, restoration to follow.

Not always, not a guarantee, but so often phrases like, in that day, or behold, the days are coming. I mean, we just saw that in Amos chapter 9 verse 11. In that day, I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen. So as you read Old Testament prophecy, look for some of these key words. One of my favorite verses in the Old Testament, Jeremiah 23, we read, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. There's that promised restoration. Behold, the days are coming. All right, that is the first principle that we should be keeping in mind as we read the Old Testament prophets. Now, principle number two, read prophecy alongside history. [14:07] Whatever prophecy that we're reading, it was not delivered in a vacuum. Like New Testament letters, New Testament letters, they were written to a specific individual or a specific church. Well, so too, prophecy had these intended recipients in mind. The recipients who needed to hear this message.

They were living at a particular time. They were living in a particular situation. And so for many of these books of Old Testament prophecy, the situation that they were written in the midst of, well, guess where you can find that situation? In Old Testament historical books. Something that we've emphasized in our class together with the junior high and high schoolers is so much of Old Testament poetry and prophecy is inspired commentary relating to the history that you read in the Old Testament. So you can almost have like a kind of a parallel visual in your mind. I'm reading Old Testament, reading Old Testament history. And as I'm reading those books in the Old Testament that are historical, I can be reading almost in parallel fashion the books of poetry and prophecy. So read prophecy alongside history.

Take Amos for example again. Amos tells us when he prophesied at the very beginning of the book. Don't skip over the first few verses that kind of give us those introductory details in an Old Testament prophetic book. Now look at how Amos begins. Chapter 1, verse 1.

During the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. Now that's some very important, helpful information that does kind of orient us to when this prophecy was being delivered, even before we read a word of the prophecy.

And for Amos in particular, this is very helpful to us because we know nothing of Amos outside of the book of Amos in the Old Testament. He's mentioned nowhere else. He's something of kind of a mysterious prophet in that sense. So the information given here, it sheds light for us on this prophetic book, and it tells us, hey, you can go read about it in Old Testament history. So if you were to go to 2 Chronicles 26, guess whose reign we read of there? Uzziah. We learn about Uzziah. We learn about what was going on in that period of time, and it gives us context for what Amos is saying in his prophecy.

[16:45] We learn that there was great wealth and prosperity that the nation was enjoying, and it was a blessing from God. It was given by God to them. But then what happened to the people? Well, it led to this sense of smug superiority, this arrogance, this self-reliance. Remember how Amos started with the judgment for the other nations? He was kind of playing into how the people felt about themselves.

Yeah, terrible nation. Yeah, they're going to deserve judgment. They need to be cursed, but we need to be blessed. God has showered us with blessing, so the judgment is for them. Well, then Amos does turn the tables on them, and you can see something of kind of the buildup to that if you go back to 2 Chronicles 26.

Or if you're reading another Old Testament prophet, Zechariah. He gave his prophecy during the reign of Darius. So immediately you should have your radar up. This is a post-exilic prophet. This is a prophet writing after the people have returned to the land. And so what do you do? Go back into the Old Testament, read about Darius and what was going on during the time that he was the king of Persia. So read Old Testament prophecy alongside history. Number three, remember that prophecy is filled with poetry. Now why is that important for us to remember? Because poetry isn't always super easy to understand. How many of us remember sitting in perhaps an English class and we had to dissect a poem? We didn't just quickly read through it and say, we're done, good, read that poem, let's move on. Maybe we wanted to, but we didn't get to. We needed to sit with it. We needed to mull it over. We needed to meditate on it. Or we needed to slow down when we read it, and we needed to read it over and over again. Now with perhaps narrative, it's still good to read maybe multiple times. You might miss some details in the narrative, but often you read a narrative once, you can get the big picture idea. You read a poem once, you might miss the meaning entirely. What just got said? I zoned out for two verses, and I already don't know what we're talking about here. So with poetry, slow down and meditate. Well, Old Testament prophecy is filled with poetry. Turn over to Isaiah 28. This is one of those example texts. We're going to just look at a selection of verses in Isaiah 28. This is a very clear example to us of how you will find very powerful poetry in prophecy. So Isaiah 28, God is condemning the sins of the leaders of Israel.

And he's condemning primarily their refusal to listen to his word. They will not heed his word. Instead, they mock it. They scoff at it. They're critical of it. And so God first describes to us this heart posture of the leaders of Israel. And he describes them not just as being obstinate, not just as saying we won't listen. He describes them to us like they are drunkards, like they are stumbling around making a fool of themselves. So we begin in verse 7.

[20:18] These also reel with wine and stagger with strong drink. The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink. They are swallowed by wine. They stagger with strong drink. They reel in vision. They stumble in giving judgment. For all tables are full of filthy vomit with no space left. So Isaiah could have just said, they won't listen. They're being difficult. They're being foolish. And when they speak, well, their words are no good. They don't say anything profitable. But instead, God describes the leaders with this strong poetic language. It's meant to leave a lasting impact on us. They are stumbling around like drunkards. And when they open their mouths to speak, what comes out? Not clear words, not profitable words, vomit. All that comes out of their mouths is as good and profitable and helpful as vomit. And what is it that they're exactly saying? Well, look at verses 9 and 10.

They say, they say, to whom will he teach knowledge? And to whom will he explain the message? Those who are weaned from the milk? Those taken from the breast? For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little. You see how they mock the message of God?

In very simple terms, they are saying, no one understands your message, Isaiah. Supposedly, you speak on behalf of God, but nobody understands what you're saying. When they say things like precept upon precept, hear that as blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. That's what they're saying. They're saying blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's unintelligible. We might as well not listen. That's what the leaders say about God's prophetic word to them about their own sin. Sounds like a drunkard making a fool of himself. So what is God's response? Beginning in verse 11. For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue, the Lord will speak to this people, to whom he has said, this is rest, give rest to the weary. And this is repose. Yet they would not hear. And the word of the Lord will be to them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, that they may go and fall backward and be broken and snared and taken. God is saying, in other words, you wouldn't listen when I spoke to you with intelligible words in your own

language.

Well, if you won't listen, then I'll speak to you, not in words that you'll understand, but I'll speak to you with actions that you will. I'll bring enemy nations who will not speak your language and you will understand the message of judgment loud and clear, precept upon precept, line upon line. It is almost like you're hearing the marching army approaching as God speaks. He is making sure that every word of the message is driven home. If they are stopping up their ears and saying, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, he's saying, one day your mouths will be stopped and you will be held accountable. So God is now sending this army. They won't speak the language of his people, but the message will be clear. Exile. You see how there's power in poetry? It doesn't just aim for our heads.

It aims for our hearts as well. The image of poetry, it captures us. I won't be slow to forget, precept upon precept, line upon line. First with the leaders of Israel, they're saying it like drunkards who mock, but then God uses the same exact words, but he doesn't sound like a drunkard. He sounds like a judge who is issuing his verdict and he's reading every word of it with such clear authority. [24 : 36] So that hits hard. It should sober us up quickly. So don't read prophecy quickly and miss the weightiness of God's words because so much of prophecy, it comes to us as poetry. All right, principle number four.

Know that prophecy is both foretelling and forth telling. This is very simple, but it's also a very important distinction. Foretelling. Probably what we most naturally think when we hear prophecy, predicting the events of the future. That's foretelling.

Foretelling is telling the truth about the present or perhaps saying prediction versus proclamation, exhortation, a clear call, a clear command. Here's an example of forth telling from Amos. Amos chapter 5, verse 4. Seek me and live. That is not predicting the future in a general sense, I suppose it is. He's saying, if you seek me, you will live. But what he's doing primarily there is he's giving them a clear exhortation. He is speaking forth the truth. Seek me and live. Now, we also read of foretelling.

Chapter 5. Verse, no, I'm sorry, one more example of forth telling. Chapter 5, verse 15. Hate evil and love good and establish justice in the gate. You hear those commands that are being given. That's in prophecy, but it is a proclamation, an exhortation to the people. Now, there's plenty of foretelling as well. God is telling Israel and Judah what the future will hold. He's not just instructing them. He's also predicting. Like Amos 7, beginning in verse 9. The high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste. And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. You hear that clear, very specific prophecy given in this prophetic book. God says, I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. And then 2 Chronicles 13 tells us of that prophecy being fulfilled as he is struck down in battle. So, future events, predicted in prophecy, yet also instructions that we must heed as well. Maybe not on the same piece of paper, but take two highlighters again, print off another piece, maybe the same text that you just worked through and saw the pattern of sin, judgment, restoration. Now look for these two differences. Look for where do I see exhortation? Where do I see forth telling?

And where do I see prediction? Where do I see foretelling? Use two colors to mark those each to see them brought out more clearly. All right, number five. And I'll admit this was perhaps more given to young people, but maybe you've struggled with this as well. Don't be overwhelmed by names and places. There are lots of names and places in Old Testament prophecy. Sometimes that's confusing.

[27 : 56] Who's this person? Who's this nation? Where's this place? Is this God's people? Are these God's enemies? We can give up reading Old Testament prophecy, perhaps simply because we're confused by the names and places that are foreign to us. So, let's begin, and I want to hear your answers. Let's begin by asking, who are God's people often called in the Old Testament? By what names would we hear God's people spoken of? Particularly Old Testament prophetic books? Jacob or Israel? Yes. Got two of them there.

I heard it. Judah. That's a good name. Ephraim. Yes. Now we're getting into the 12 tribes of Israel. That's a common one representative of the Northern Kingdom because it was a large part of the Northern Kingdom. So, it got kind of called by that name. Any others? Now we're getting into harder ones. Pastor John took two of the three easiest, just saying.

There you go. Bad. Any others that come to mind? Perhaps not even, it might be more a place, but it's representative of the people. I heard it. Who said it? Somebody whispered it? Jim, did you say

it? Say it again. Zion. Yes.

Zion, which was the mountain upon which Jerusalem sat. Oftentimes, when you read Jerusalem, we're speaking about the people who live in the city. So, yes, those both work. Daughters of Zion is another common one. Any others? Now we're getting much more obscure, but it's still common enough that I think it should be said. My people. Yes. Good.

Good. So, we have Ephraim. Manasseh is perhaps a more common one as well.

[30 : 12] Some of the tribes get a little bit of airtime. Others of them that get less. But we have all of these different names that describe the people of God. Benjamin is another one. So, this is not to be a blanket statement. But if we come upon a name or a place that isn't one of those, it's likely, though not certain, we're not talking about the people of God here. Now, look it up. Take the time to do that. We have so much technology at our disposal today. We can look and see. Don't just assume. But also, don't get overwhelmed as you read. Consider even just the names that we know God's people go by. Start with those. As we encounter them, we know God is speaking to His people.

All right. Number six. Principle number six. See how prophecy escalates from the Old Testament into the New Testament. So, by that, I mean see how it grows. See how it increases in intensity. How it increases in size and scope. Whatever judgment is promised in Old Testament prophecy, you should perhaps expect it to increase in size and scope and intensity in the New Testament. The same goes for blessing as well. Promised in Old Testament prophecy. See how it escalates into the New Testament. Let's consider just one example together. Turn over to the book of Joel. So, if you're in Amos, you are not far away from Joel. Just turn back a couple pages. The previous book. And we're going to begin reading in Joel chapter 1, verse 1.

[32 : 05] The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. Hear this, you elders. Give ear, all inhabitants of the land. Has such a thing happened in your days or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children of it and let your children tell their children and their children to another generation. What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten.

What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten. And what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten. Awake, you drunkards, and weep and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number. Its teeth are lion's teeth and has the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree. It has stripped off their bark and thrown it down. Their branches are made white. So, Joel's using poetic language for us here. He's describing this invasion of locusts, these insects that are devastating the land. And even in this very first pronouncement of judgment, we see some escalation, actually. Verse 4, what the cutting locust left, the swarming locust ate.

What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust. It's getting worse and worse, even in just this specific judgment of agricultural effect. The promised judgment comes for the sin of Israel. It was limited to a certain people in a certain place, God's people in Israel. And it involved this agricultural destruction at the hands of physical locusts. Then the book of Joel gives us some escalation. Because we come to chapter 2, and it describes for us not an invasion of locusts, but an invasion of a physical human army of men. Now, that was hinted to us in chapter 1, because even the locusts are described as an army. But the reality of the human army is all the more apparent in chapter 2. So we read, beginning in verse 1, blow a trumpet in Zion. So we're talking about God's people. Blow a trumpet in Zion. Sound an alarm on my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble. For the day of the Lord is coming. It is near. A day of darkness and gloom. A day of clouds and thick darkness. Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains. A great and powerful people. Their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of

[34 : 57] Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like war horses they run. As with the rumbling of chariots, they leap on the tops of the mountains. Like the crackling of a flame of fire, devouring the stubble, like a powerful army drawn up for battle. So that's all in the Old Testament book of Joel. Describing a future, coming judgment for God's people. Now we turn to the New Testament, and particularly to the New Testament book of Revelation. The book in the New Testament that has much prophetic language found in it. And we turn to Revelation chapter 9. And

here we find clear further further escalation. Revelation 9, and we will read verses 1 to 11.

And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke, like the smoke of a great furnace. And the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power, like the power of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green plant, or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them. And their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings someone. And in those days, people will seek death and will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them. In appearance, the locusts were like horses prepared for battle.

On their heads were what looked like crowns of gold. Their faces were like human faces, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lion's teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. They have tails and stings like scorpions, and their power to hurt people for five months is in their tails. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon. So we see the escalation. Now this day of the Lord, this judgment is not limited to a certain people in a certain place, but to all people who do not have the seal of God on their forehead. So yes, it's still limited, but it's far greater in scope. All unbelievers. And these locusts are not ordinary locusts, nor are they a physical army, though those characteristics kind of blend together here in Revelation 9. But these locusts are like these demonic creatures.

[38:01] What is it that we're learning here? Well, we're seeing that these are representatives of Satan and his spiritual forces of evil. And what are they doing? According to God's sovereign purposes, they inflict great pain upon people. A pain that goes beyond the physical. People are tormented. They want to die, but they can't. It's this unimaginable suffering. Now what's the point of everything that John is showing us here? It is to show us that Satan's work in the hearts of men, the spiritual affliction of those still living under the power of the evil one, that is far worse than any physical famine or agricultural devastation that was suffered by Israel or Judah in the Old Testament. The prophecy of Joel is now monumentally worse as it's described to us in Revelation chapter 9. And so we see the escalation. We should never read Old Testament prophecy in isolation from New Testament prophecy. The pictures, the visions, the symbolism, it all ties together. We can't understand the meaning of the

New Testament prophetic books without the Old Testament prophecy. And if we read only the Old Testament prophecy without the New Testament prophetic passages, well, we'll miss out on what those Old Testament prophecies were ultimately pointing toward. And that brings us to our final principle to remember when interpreting Old Testament prophecy. Understand that prophecy often has a dual fulfillment and it finds its ultimate end in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Now we are often told, or at least maybe I was in school, to look for Jesus in the Old Testament. How many of us have heard that maybe on a podcast or in a teaching somewhere that says, look for Jesus in the Old Testament? Just a show of hands.

It's always dangerous to ask by a show of hands. Everybody's like, never heard it. New to me. Have your eyes peeled for Jesus. But then we're asking, how do I do that? How do I see Jesus rightly? I don't want to do this wrong. And I know there's like, there's a safer way than just trying to find him anywhere.

And we've all heard of the examples of things like the tent pegs used in constructing the tabernacle. Those are like the nails of the cross that were nailed into Christ's hands. And we're thinking, that just doesn't sound totally like a good way of interpreting the Bible to just kind of see something and just draw a connection that it reminds us of. That's not a good way to see Christ in the Old Testament. So let me give you two grounded ways we can see Christ in Old Testament prophecy. We look for his person and we look for his works. We look for glimpses of his person and we look for the effects of his works. Let me give you an illustration. Turn back to Amos. We are in Revelation.

[41:11] Turn back to Amos. Go back to Amos chapter nine. So for glimpses of his person, we are looking for any mention of a future coming one. Any mention of a person who is yet to come that will bring about restoration. That's a glimpse of the person of Christ. We could also be looking at the

individuals in the text before us. By their good positive example, they remind us of the perfect example in Jesus. By their negative example, by their sin, they remind us of the need for the sinless one in Jesus. So we look at the people in the passage.

How do they point us to Christ? Is it speaking explicitly of the coming one or is it just giving us examples of people that point us to him? Then thinking of his works, we read often in restoration in the Old Testament, we read of the effects of his works. We read of these wonderful blessings that will one day flow. They are only found because Jesus died, rose again, ascended into heaven, and is going to return. So we look for those future blessings to be reminded it's because of Jesus that those blessings await us. So unhindered access to God, restored relationship to God, cleansing from sin, forgiveness of sins, a new heavens and a new earth, an eternity of peace and perfect righteousness, unending joy, delight, satisfaction found forever. All of those are effects of Christ's work prophesied in the Old Testament. So let's look at Amos chapter 9. And let me ask, where do we see glimpses of the person of Jesus in Amos 9 verses 11 to 15?

There's one good glimpse, really. So always a little scary. There's one answer I'm looking for. Yes, the booth of David. The booth of David that has fallen. What is going to happen? Well, it's going to be raised up again. That's another way of speaking of the dynasty of David that has fallen into a state of disrepair. The kings have failed as we read Old Testament history.

But one day, a future coming king will be raised up. This booth of David, the dynasty of David. And who is that? That is Jesus. Okay, now this one, there's several things we could mention here.

Where do we see the effects of the work of Christ? Yes, all of the abundance that is described for us. Any time that we read of the abundance of this future restored existence in the land, that abundance is only brought about because of Christ. So there will be the plowman overtaking the reaper, meaning that they will have such an abundance of harvest, they will still be harvesting as the season has come about to plant again.

[44:30] The picture is that he's on the heels saying, get out of the way, I'm planting. And you're still having to pick all of the abundance of the crops. And he's saying, yeah, there's so many, I can't get them all. So the abundance there. What else do we see? Are there other pictures of abundance?

Abundance. Yes, rebuilding ruined cities. And then the second one of enjoying the fruit of their vineyards. And that all ties into being never again uprooted. So there's a picture of abundance, but also of security. Where's that security found? Who brings about that sure, righteous existence that we'll enjoy one day where there will be no wrong, no sin, no suffering. Again, that's only brought about through Jesus Christ. And then one more I'll make mention of as we need to wrap up.

You see there in verse 12, all of the nations who are called by God's name. Any mention of the blessing for the nations. That too brought about through Jesus. Read Galatians chapter 3. We see that in Christ, all of the families of the earth will be blessed. So when we read of the families of the earth being brought to God, belonging to God, flowing into Jerusalem. Isaiah speaks of a day when the nations will flow into Jerusalem to worship God. When we hear the nations worshiping God, that's not what was happening when that prophecy was given. The nations were opposed to God. Who could bring about such a change where the nations will one day flow into Jerusalem to worship? Only Jesus.

So we look for his person. We look for his works. Glimpses of his person. The effects of his work. Now remember, in closing here, the pattern of Old Testament prophecy. Sin, judgment, restoration. We should see Jesus really in all three of those. The sins of all God's people were laid on him. The judgment that all God's people deserved fell on him. And that future restoration of all things will only come about when Christ, who rose from the dead and lives, comes again. So when we read Old Testament prophecy, we must have the death, the burial, the resurrection, and the return of Christ on our minds. We must read it through that lens. So whenever you read an Old Testament prophetic book, look for Christ, he saw himself in all of scripture. He said in John 5, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me. So the Old Testament prophets, they bear witness about Christ. Look for him. Look for glimpses of his person.

[47:19] Look for the effects of his work. These books of the Bible can seem on the surface to be obscure and difficult to understand. But if we read them well, we will find ourselves, we'll find our need for a Savior, and even more than that, we'll find the Savior himself. So that's all that we have time for this morning. If you want to talk more about Old Testament prophecy, find me and we can

talk even better. Find a junior higher or a high schooler. We've been talking about this together. I've been talking at them some together, but see what they've learned and encourage them in these things. You've learned about it now. Seek to encourage them as well. And with that, we're dismissed.