



Gutenberg College Summer Institute 2015
REUNION: Tanakh and the Gospel of Matthew

Talk 25: Reunion of Zechariah 11:12-13 and Matthew 27:9-10

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I. Zechariah 11:12-13

A. Essential prediction

1. When the Messiah comes, though he will come to serve God's people Israel, he will not be understood and valued as he should be. As a consequence, the people of God will be judged by God. They will be overtaken by a powerful people and will turn against one another. Many will be slaughtered.

B. Interpretation of the details of the prophetic prediction

1. Zech 11:4 > God will send his Messiah to serve his people Israel (to "pasture his flock"). But Israel is a people destined for judgment.
 - a) This was fulfilled by Jesus when he came to minister to an Israel that was destined to be judged during the events surrounding 70 A.D.
2. Zech 11:5–6 > When Messiah comes, the condition of God's people will be such that their own leaders will exploit them for sordid personal gain. God predicts the judgment that will befall this people.
 - a) This was fulfilled by the leadership of Israel when Jesus came on the scene and by the destruction of Jerusalem and Israel in 70 A.D.
3. Zech 11:7 > The role of the Messiah will be to guide them into divine favor (by persuading them to honor and obey God) and into unity with one another (as the people of God) through that same heart of obedience.
 - a) This was fulfilled by the content of Jesus' teaching.
4. Zech 11:8 > During the course of his ministry, as he seeks to teach the people of Israel, the Messiah will discredit and undermine the authority and power of the three groups of leaders that govern God's people: the elders, the priests, and the teachers.
 - a) This was fulfilled by Jesus' teaching during the years of his teaching ministry.
5. Zech 11:9 > The leadership (elders, priests, and teachers) will be greatly disturbed by the Messiah—as will the Messiah by them. The Messiah will assess the attitude and response of the people of Israel and will judge that they are not deserving of his ministry. Rather, he will judge them to be deserving of judgment.
 - a) This was fulfilled during Jesus' teaching ministry. He decided at one point that Jerusalem was destined for destruction.

6. Zech 11:10–11 > The Messiah will begin to pronounce God's judgment on his own people Israel. Many in Israel will recognize that the Messiah speaks for God in his pronouncement of judgment.
 - a) This was fulfilled by the response of many in Israel to Jesus' warning.
7. Zech 11:12 > Though many will acknowledge that the Messiah speaks for God, yet, on the whole, Israel will not duly value and appreciate him.
 - a) This was fulfilled by the response of the people of Israel to Jesus, to his teaching, and to his warning. Most notably, it was fulfilled by the fact that, rather than enthrone him as King, they executed him.
8. Zech 11:13 > God will instruct his Messiah not to concern himself with the gratitude and love of the people of Israel and not to attempt to gain their love and gratitude. Rather, he must understand that he is to offer his service as an offering to God. He is to do what he does in order to honor God, and not for any other reason.
 - a) This was fulfilled by the mindset and attitude that Jesus manifested during his entire ministry and, especially, in the face of his rejection by Israel.
9. Zech 11:14 > As a consequence of their rejection of the Messiah, the union of the people of God will be "broken" by God. As part of their judgment for rejecting his Messiah, God will bring about disunity and a lack of harmony between the fellow Israelites.
 - a) This was fulfilled in the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Most of the devastation that happened was due to a civil war that broke out while the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem.

II. Matthew 27:3-10

- A. It seems highly unlikely that Matthew did not know that his allusion was to a prophecy of Zechariah and not to a prophecy of Jeremiah. (Neither is it likely that subsequent scribes were ignorant of this fact.) And yet, it seems not to have been a problem to Matthew (nor to most of the subsequent scribes) to attribute it to Jeremiah. It seems highly probable, therefore, that there existed some sort of convention (with which we are unfamiliar) that would explain why it makes sense to include this prophecy of Zechariah as something out of "Jeremiah."
 1. Some suggest that Matthew's reference here is a combined reference—not only to Zechariah 11 but also to Jeremiah's prophecies with respect to "the potter's house." I find all such suggestions unconvincing. None of Jeremiah's prophecies pertain to the point Matthew is making. Only Zechariah 11 is even remotely related to the point Matthew is making.
 2. Some have argued that at certain points in the history of the Scriptures, Jeremiah was positioned first in a book of several prophets. Arguably, a way to refer to the book containing these prophets was as the book of Jeremiah. In such a case, to refer to "Jeremiah" would simply be to refer to any portion of that book of scriptural writings. If Zechariah was included in that book of scriptural writings,

then the prophetic passage is in the book of Jeremiah even though it is a prophecy spoken by Zechariah.

- a) In Luke 4:17, where Jesus was invited to give the Scripture reading in the synagogue, it says, "the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him (Jesus)." This certainly seems to suggest that the Hebrew Scriptures were divided into several different "books" (scrolls?). Could one of those "books" be the book of Jeremiah? And could the book of Jeremiah have included the prophecies of Zechariah?
 - b) I don't know if this holds up to historical fact. But something along these lines would certainly serve to explain why Matthew attributes to "Jeremiah" a portion of prophesy that was prophesied by Zechariah.
- B. Judas did not "throw" the silver pieces on the floor of the temple; rather, I think, he put them in the temple treasury. (Note Matthew 27:6.) He made a votive gift to the temple.
- C. I think our English translations have it wrong. They render Matthew 27:9a in a way that suggests that Matthew is citing some portion of Zechariah's prophecy. But he most certainly is not. Rather, what follows after Matthew 27:9a is another description of the same event that Matthew had just recounted in the preceding passage. Namely, Matthew describes what the priests did with the blood money that was returned to the temple by Judas, an event that he had already recounted in Matthew 27:5-8. What follows Matt 27:9a is not the citation of any prophetic passage, for no prophecy of any prophet ever offers this description of this event.
1. Granted, in his recapitulation of this event, Matthew does allude to phrases and elements of Zechariah's prophecy in Zechariah 11, but he is not citing any text of Zechariah's prophecy, nor is he paraphrasing Zechariah's prophecy in any way.
- D. It is more likely that 27:9a is intended to be a complete, stand-alone sentence. The fulfillment of "Jeremiah" that Matthew means to indicate are the events described in 27:3-8 in the light of 26:15. Matthew is not saying that the purchase of the potter's field fulfilled the prophecy in "Jeremiah" (i.e., Zechariah). Rather, he is saying that the events surrounding the betrayal and arrest of Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah (Jeremiah). It is what the priests' actions represent that fulfills Zechariah's prediction—namely, Jesus was not recognized and enthroned as King, he was allowed to be executed.
1. How exactly does Matthew understand this event? Jesus was so misunderstood and unappreciated by Judas that Judas was willing to hand him over to the authorities for thirty pieces of silver. When he regretted what he had done because he realized that he had betrayed a righteous man, he came to the priests to beg them to set Jesus free. The priests so misunderstood and lacked appreciation for Jesus that the protestations of Judas did not move them. They turned him away. Every aspect of the events surrounding Judas' betrayal reflect the fact that the Messiah Jesus was completely dishonored and disrespected by the rulers of Israel. (And, for that matter, he was not held in much better esteem by the people in general.)

- E. How ought we to analyze the syntax of Matthew 27:9-10?
1. Should we analyze it in the manner that all of our English translations do?
 - a) Then it was fulfilled—namely, what was stated through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "... ."
 - b) The particular Greek phrasing here (which occurs frequently in Matthew) is always analyzed and translated by our English translations in essentially this same way.
 - (1) Every other occurrence (but here) then goes on to cite the text that is being referenced by Matthew.
 - (2) Here, however, it makes no sense to construe what follows to be a text that Matthew is citing.
 2. Or, should we analyze it something more like what follows?
 - a) Then it was fulfilled—namely, that which was asserted by Jeremiah, the prophet who spoke it.
 - (1) This is syntactically possible. The only potential problem is that it, at first blush, breaks the pattern of how this same phrasing appears to be used everywhere else that Matthew uses it.
 - (2) However, it is possible that this same phrasing elsewhere in Matthew should be analyzed in exactly this same way. (It is possible that our English translations have misinterpreted it, making the same mistake everywhere it is used.)
 - (a) In that case, the Greek word "saying" (λεγῶν), is not used by Matthew the way we use it in English. That is, Matthew does not use it as a flag to introduce a quotation of a text. True, Matthew almost always does follow this word with the citation of a text. However, the word "saying" (λεγῶν) is not an inviolable signal that that is what he is going to do. (As we can see from this verse.)
 - (b) In the English rendering—"Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying..."—we EXPECT what follows to be a citation of what the prophet said. The point here is this: while that is the expectation set up by "saying" in our English idiom, it is likely false that this is the expectation set up by λεγῶν in the Greek idiom of Matthew.
 3. Or, should we perhaps analyze it something more like this?
 - a) Then it was fulfilled—namely, that which was asserted in Jeremiah by the prophet who spoke it.
 - (1) This is syntactically possible. And, it has the advantage that Jeremiah and "the prophet who spoke it" would not, necessarily, have to be one and the same person. This is precisely what seems to be the case here in Matthew 27. It is entirely possible that the citation is situated in the book

of "Jeremiah" (in some sense) but that the prophet who spoke it was Zechariah.

- (2) The biggest problem with analyzing it this way is that it takes the genitive phrase—"the prophet who spoke it"—to be a genitive of source (or perhaps a kind of subjective genitive following "assertion") rather than a genitive in apposition to Jeremiah. This is syntactically possible, certainly, but it would appear to break the pattern of all the other usages where "the prophet speaking" seems to be in apposition to the prophet named as the source. However, maybe the pattern that it "breaks" is not an actual pattern. It is entirely possible that ALL of the instances of this kind of phrasing should be analyzed in just the same way as I have analyzed it here. Namely, they should all be analyzed something like this: "what was spoken by (from) the prophet who spoke and can be found in 'X' (where X = Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.)." Or, alternatively, "the assertion of the prophet who spoke that can be found in 'X'." The fact is, however, that "the prophet who spoke" is, in every other instance in Matthew, the very same person as the prophet under whose name the citation can be found (that is, = 'X'). This creates the impression that "the prophet who spoke" is in apposition to the name of the prophet where the text is found. But perhaps that is a false impression, an illusion. Perhaps Matthew never, in any instance, intended this construction to be taken as apposition. Perhaps he always did have in mind a genitive of source (or a sort of subjective genitive). Perhaps his basic point, in every instance, is this: "that which was asserted by the prophet who said it, as known to us through 'X,' has been fulfilled."
4. All-in-all, while not unproblematic, the following translation of Matthew 27:9a seems likely: "Then it was fulfilled—the thing found in Jeremiah that was asserted by the prophet who prophesied."
 - a) This translation assumes that "Jeremiah" denotes a portion of the Scriptures, not the man who is the Hebrew prophet. Also, it assumes that "Jeremiah" is a portion of Scripture rather than the particular prophet who spoke the prophetic prediction in question.
 - (1) The fact that the prediction in view is a prophecy by Zechariah (and not by Jeremiah) is not problematic under this reading of Matthew's statement.
 - b) This translation construes this to be a complete statement that stands alone. Furthermore, it assumes that it refers back to what has just preceded it, and not forward to what follows.
 - (1) On the one hand, it construes it as standing alone as a complete thought. On the other hand, while it pronounces that a prophetic prediction has been fulfilled, it offers no clue, as yet, with regard to which prophetic prediction is being referenced.

- (2) What follows this statement is a description of the very same events that he narrated in the passage immediately preceding this statement (27:9a). To be specific, he describes the purchase of the potter's field by the priests with the money returned to the temple by Judas. In the course of describing this event, Matthew makes allusion to the passage in Zechariah that these events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion "fulfill." It is through these allusions that Matthew signals to us (his readers) what prophetic passage he has in mind. Apart from these allusions, we would have no other way of knowing that the Zechariah 11 passage is the passage that Matthew thinks is being fulfilled by these events.
- F. Zechariah does not predict the betrayal of the Messiah by some Judas-like individual; Zechariah predicts the rejection of the Messiah by the people in general. How exactly is it that the betrayal of Jesus by Judas is a concrete instance of the rejection of the Messiah by Israel in general?
1. Matthew presumably understands rightly the degree of specificity in Zechariah's prediction—namely, that Zechariah does not make his prediction with a particularly high level of specificity. Any set of specific events wherein Jesus was not accepted as King and given reign over Israel would have fulfilled Zechariah's prediction. Accordingly, any set of specific events wherein Jesus was killed rather than enthroned would have fulfilled Zechariah's prediction. So, when Matthew rightly sees the events he is describing as a "fulfillment" of Zechariah 11, he does not mean that it is the specific details of those events that fulfilled Zechariah's prediction. He simply means that they fulfill the very general prediction made by Zechariah.
 - a) It does no good, therefore, to inquire whether it is Judas' betrayal of Jesus, or the priests' callous response to Judas' remorse, or any other specific detail that Matthew has in view when he says that Zechariah 11 is fulfilled by these events, for he does not have any particular details in view.
 - (1) The thirty pieces of silver in Zechariah is coincidentally the same amount as the thirty pieces of silver received by Judas for betraying Jesus. This coincidence may explain, in part, why Matthew decided to make a connection between Zechariah 11, in particular, and these events. But Judas' thirty pieces of silver were not specifically what fulfilled the prediction in Zechariah 11. Zechariah does not predict that the Messiah will be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.
- G. There is a final issue that needs to be answered: if Matthew's point is that Zechariah's prediction that the Messiah, when he came, would not be accepted by Israel finds its fulfillment in the events surrounding Jesus, then why would he choose to connect the particular statement of that prediction found in Zechariah 11:12-13 to the particular set of events involving Judas's betrayal of Jesus?
1. There are several prophetic statements that predict the failure of God's people to acknowledge and appreciate God's Messiah. And there are several events in Jesus' life that could be pointed to as examples or instances of just such a rejection of the Messiah by God's people. So, why does Matthew pick this

particular prophetic statement (i.e., Zechariah 11) to connect with just this particular set of events (the events surrounding the betrayal of Jesus by Judas)? Logically, he could have connected a different version of the prediction with a different set of events that embody the same spirit of rejection.

- a) By combining Zechariah's prediction with just these events, Matthew has highlighted a very important point: Jesus' betrayal and execution were not unexpected; they were part of the purposes of God. God's prophets had outlined those purposes and predicted in advance how the Messiah would be received. So, Jesus' death was not some sort of disruption in God's purposes, it was an integral part of those purposes.
 - (1) Jesus' death is not the sort of event you would expect to happen to God's Messiah. By informing his readers how perfectly consonant with what the prophets predicted were his betrayal and death, Matthew is reassuring his readers that the facts of his betrayal and death are not incompatible with his claim to be the Messiah.
- b) By describing these events as a fulfillment of Zechariah's prediction, Matthew is drawing the reader's attention to the fact that Jesus' death was intimately connected with the fact that he was "not received" by his own people, Israel. [Cf. John 1:11.] Jesus could have suffered and died in a number of different ways. Jesus, as it happened, was rejected by his own people; and it was their rejection of him that ultimately played itself out, resulting in his execution.
 - (1) The nature of Zechariah's prediction in Zechariah 11 is such that it is quite clear and explicit about Israel's negative, dismissive attitude toward the Messiah. It does not specifically and explicitly predict the lethal consequences of that attitude at all. That is, it does not clearly and explicitly predict Jesus' betrayal, suffering, or death.
 - (a) So, by connecting the two—that is, by declaring that Jesus' death was the fulfillment of Zechariah's prediction that Israel would reject the Messiah—Matthew is thereby connecting the attitude of rejection with the outcome. That is, Matthew is making clear to the reader that Israel's rejection of their Messiah (something integral to God's purposes and to the story he was creating) led to the death of their Messiah. Therefore, Jesus' death was not some sort of counter-evidence to Jesus' Messiahship. His death, as well as the obdurate rebellion of Israel that led to his death, were part of the plan of God as outlined by the prophets.
 - (2) There are other prophetic predictions that predict Jesus' suffering and death more clearly and explicitly. What Zechariah's prediction allows Matthew to do (that those other prophetic predictions do not facilitate so well) is to make clear the connection between the Messiah's suffering and death and the rebellious, hardened unbelief of the people of Israel in his time.

- c) It makes no sense here to see the merely verbal coincidence of thirty pieces of silver and the mention of a "potter" as playing any role in Matthew's connecting the events surrounding Jesus' betrayal and arrest and Zechariah's prophecy. The coincidences are merely verbal and create no real, substantive connection between the events and the prediction.
 - (1) It is possible that the merely verbal coincidences played some sort of creative role in bringing Zechariah's prophecy to mind for Matthew and led him to see the connection that he intends his readers to see. But such a heuristic function is the only legitimate role that these coincidences could have possibly played.
 - (a) There is no rational connection between the thirty pieces of silver in Zechariah and the thirty pieces of silver paid to Judas for his betrayal of Jesus. Hence, there is no valid inference that could be made from the thirty pieces of silver in Zechariah that sheds any light on the thirty pieces of silver paid to Judas. The same could be said about the "potter" in Zechariah vis-à-vis the purchase of the potter's field.

III. Relationship of Matthew to Zechariah

- A. What are the logically possible relationships that could exist between a prophecy in Zechariah and an event described by Matthew? (See separate notes on this subject: "The New Testament Use of Hebrew Scripture: Three Issues.")
 - 1. Prediction > Event Predicted
 - a) This is most definitely not what Matthew is saying in Matthew 27:3-10. The events being described are not in any way predicted by the prophet Zechariah except for one thing: these events are part of an overall rejection of God's Messiah that Zechariah predicted. It is the rejection of God's Messiah (and that alone) that is being predicted by Zechariah.
 - 2. Prediction > Necessary concomitant of event predicted
 - a) This is most definitely not what Matthew is doing in Matthew 27:3-10. The events being described are not in any way necessary concomitant events to what Zechariah predicted. They are perfectly consistent with what Zechariah predicted, but they are not necessarily entailed by it, nor do they entail what Zechariah predicted.

3. Truth > Ordinary instantiation of this Truth
 - a) Arguably, this is what Matthew is suggesting in Matthew 27:3-10. The betrayal, arrest, and execution of Jesus (the eventual king of the Kingdom of God) is a concrete expression of the very truth that Zechariah was announcing (predicting)—namely, God's Messiah (when he came) would be unappreciated and rejected by God's own people. Since the events surrounding Jesus' death are concrete manifestations of that rejection, it can be said that they "fulfill" what was asserted by the prophet Zechariah.
 - (1) The fulfillment of Zechariah's prediction, then, are not the details concerning the thirty pieces of silver and the purchase of a potter's field, etc. Rather, the fulfillment of Zechariah's prediction is constituted by the meaning and significance of those events that involve thirty pieces of silver and a potter's field—namely, the fact that the Messiah came to shepherd his very own people and they rejected him.
4. Truth > Special or unique instantiation of this Truth
 - a) This is not the best understanding of what Matthew is saying in Matthew 27:3-10. The truth that is articulated by Zechariah—namely, that God's Messiah will be rejected—is in and of itself a dramatic and significant truth. So, this is not an instance of a general truth being more fully, more perfectly, and more dramatically fulfilled in Jesus. Rather, this is a truth about Jesus being instantiated in concrete historical events. However, it is not a case of those concrete historical events themselves having been predicted.

IV. What is at stake in how we come to understand Matthew's reading of Zechariah here? Ultimately, the credibility of Matthew, the Scriptures, and the gospel is at stake.

- A. See separate notes on this issue: "The New Testament Use of Hebrew Scripture: Three Issues."



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**The New Testament Use of Hebrew Scripture: Three Issues
Jack Crabtree**

I. Relationship of a Hebrew Scriptural Text to Its New Testament Citation: The "Fulfillment" Relation

A. What are the logically possible relationships that could exist between a text of the Hebrew Scriptures and some event or truth described by a New Testament author?

1. Prediction > Event Predicted

a) The Hebrew text could predict a specific future event X; the New Testament text could narrate that very event X.

(1) In this case, the event narrated by the New Testament text can be said to "fulfill" the Hebrew text.

b) Hypothetical example: If a prophet predicted that Jesus of Nazareth would first ride a donkey at his third birthday party (A), and a New Testament author narrates an account of Jesus' third birthday party where he rides a donkey for the first time (B), then B fulfills A in the sense that A is the prediction of B.

2. Prediction > Necessary Concomitant of Event Predicted

a) The Hebrew text could predict a specific future event X; the New Testament text could narrate an event which constitutes a necessary concomitant of X—that is, an event that, in some way, requires that X will occur (or that X has occurred).

(1) The event described by the New Testament text (=Y) could be a sufficient condition or necessary consequence of X, such that if Y has occurred, then X must necessarily occur or must necessarily have already occurred.

(2) In this case, the event narrated by the New Testament text can be said to "fulfill" the Hebrew text.

b) Hypothetical examples:

(1) If a prophet predicted that God would appoint a Son to reign over Israel in the coming kingdom of God (A), and a New Testament author narrates the birth of the one whom God has created to be that Son (B), then B fulfills A in the sense that, since B is true, it must necessarily follow that A will be true.

(2) If a prophet predicted that God would assign his Son to suffer and die (A), and a New Testament author narrates the story of the Son's resurrection from the dead (B), then B fulfills A in the sense that, since B is true (that is, B has occurred), it must necessarily follow that A is true (that is, that A has already occurred).

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3. Truth > Ordinary Instantiation of This Truth
 - a) The Hebrew text could contain a specific Truth; the New Testament text could contain that very same Truth.
 - (1) The truth in view could be any element of the truth about God, mankind, history, God's purposes, God's promises, or any other aspect of reality.
 - (2) In this case, what is asserted by the New Testament text can be said to "fulfill" the Hebrew text.
 - b) Hypothetical example: If a Hebrew text reflects the truth that God is merciful (A), and a New Testament text also—in an entirely different set of circumstances—reflects the truth that God is merciful (B), then B fulfills A in the sense that B embodies exactly the same truth earlier embodied in A.
4. Truth > More Significant Instantiation of This Truth
 - a) The Hebrew text could contain a specific Truth; the New Testament text could contain that very same Truth, but contain it in such a way that it more fully, more perfectly, more dramatically, and/or more significantly reflects that Truth than does the Hebrew text.
 - (1) Again, the truth in view could be any element of the truth about God, mankind, history, God's purposes, God's promises, or any other aspect of reality.
 - (2) In this case, what is asserted by the New Testament text can be said to "fulfill" the Hebrew text.
 - b) Hypothetical example: If a Hebrew text reflects the truth that God is merciful (A), and a New Testament text—in an entirely different set of circumstances—reflects, in an even fuller, more significant, and more dramatic way, the truth that God is merciful (B), then B fulfills A in the sense that B embodies even more fully or more perfectly the same truth that was earlier embodied in A.
5. Event > Less Significant Foreshadowed Event
 - a) The Hebrew text could narrate a very significant historical event that the divine author of reality planned to recapitulate in some less significant future event; the New Testament narrates the particular future event that the divine author planned as a recapitulation of the earlier event. In this case, the event narrated by the New Testament Scriptures is significantly less important than the event narrated by the Hebrew scriptures.
 - (1) In such a case, the event narrated by the New Testament derives its meaning and significance from the fact that it recapitulates the event narrated by the Hebrew text.
 - (2) In this case, the event described by the New Testament text can be said to "fulfill" the event described by the Hebrew text.

b) TWO QUESTIONS:

- (1) Does this relationship allow a person to anticipate the event narrated by the New Testament on the basis of the event narrated by the Hebrew Scripture? Or, can it be observed only retrospectively?
- (2) How do I know whether I have discovered the creativity of the divine author rather than having exercised my own creativity as an intelligent observer?

c) Hypothetical example: If a Hebrew text narrates the event of God liberating his people from slavery in Egypt (A), and a New Testament text—in an entirely different set of circumstances—narrates an event about an individual being delivered from his bondage to a demon (B), then B perhaps fulfills A in the sense that B recapitulates the more important event A.

6. Event > More Significant Foreshadowed Event

a) The Hebrew text could narrate a historical event that the divine author of reality planned to recapitulate in some more significant future event; the New Testament narrates the particular future event that the divine author planned as a recapitulation of the earlier event. In this case, the event narrated by the New Testament Scriptures is significantly more important than the event narrated by the Hebrew Scriptures.

- (1) In such a case, the event narrated by the Hebrew text derives its meaning and significance from the fact that it foreshadows the event narrated by the New Testament text.
- (2) In this case, the event described by the New Testament text can be said to "fulfill" the event described by the Hebrew text.

b) TWO QUESTIONS:

- (1) Does this relationship allow a person to anticipate the event narrated by the New Testament on the basis of the event narrated by the Hebrew Scripture? Or, can it be observed only retrospectively?
- (2) How do I know whether I have discovered the creativity of the divine author rather than having exercised my own creativity as an intelligent observer?

c) Hypothetical example: If a Hebrew text narrates the event of God rescuing individuals from the bite of a serpent sent to judge them for their unbelief by some means of deliverance that God has provided for them (A), and a New Testament text narrates an event wherein God provides a means of deliverance whereby an individual can be rescued from eternal condemnation (B), then B fulfills A in the sense that A foreshadows and is recapitulated by the more important event B.

II. The Stakes

- A. What is at stake with respect to how we understand the relation of a Hebrew text to its use by a New Testament author?
 - 1. What is at stake is the credibility of the New Testament author, the credibility of the Scriptures, and the credibility of the gospel itself.
- B. A New Testament author is making some claim about the meaning and significance of a text of the Hebrew Scriptures.
 - 1. Upon what is the New Testament author's claim based? It would appear that the New Testament author is appealing to the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures. Is his claim based on a rational and valid reading of those Scriptures? Or is it based on a contrived, artificial, and fallacious reading of those Scriptures?
 - a) If the former, then my acceptance of the New Testament author's claim is supported, reinforced, and encouraged by the fact that he is making a claim that is congruent with what the Scriptures themselves actually claim or teach.
 - b) If the latter, then my acceptance of the New Testament author's claim is completely and utterly dependent upon the New Testament author's personal credibility and authority.
 - (1) But, then, I must grant the personal credibility and authority to the New Testament author in the face of empirical evidence of his lack of credibility.
 - (a) Why would I accept any claim he might make when the New Testament author has demonstrated his willingness to advance a contrived, artificial, and fallacious interpretation of the Scriptures? How does that encourage me to find him credible with respect to anything else he might say? If he is willing to be tendentious in his reading of the Scriptures, why would I trust him not to be tendentious in any other fact claims or in any interpretation of facts that he might offer?
- C. Any interpretation of what a New Testament author is doing that involves him in a contrived, artificial, and/or fallacious reading of the text of the Hebrew Scripture undermines and destroys that New Testament author's integrity and the integrity of his whole account regarding Jesus and/or the gospel.
 - 1. Some are tempted to maintain that, while his interpretive method is contrived, artificial, and fallacious, it is alright because the New Testament author is simply engaging in exegesis that is culturally accepted by his contemporaries.

- a) This does not solve the problem. Being a method widely accepted by his culture does not make what the New Testament author is doing acceptable. If it is fallacious, it is fallacious. It does not matter that his whole culture trades in fallacious arguments. Wide acceptance does not make it valid. For the New Testament author to have any credibility with you and me, he must not advance fallacious arguments based on fallacious interpretations.
 - b) This suggestion will have currency with people who view the Bible as just a human artifact. But for anyone who grants divine authority to the Bible and believes it to be inspired and inerrant, such a claim makes no sense. *Ad hominem* argument is something we might expect in the context of fallible human discourse; but it is unacceptable in the context of inspired, authoritative Scripture.
 - (1) In other words, we can expect biblical authors to have used fallacious arguments that were accepted by their contemporaries if the Bible is nothing other than a fallible human artifact. But, if the Bible is a divinely-inspired, authoritative revelation from God, then it would be completely incongruous to maintain that its authors employed inherently fallacious arguments.
2. Some are tempted to maintain that, while his interpretive method is contrived, artificial, and fallacious, it is nonetheless not problematic because the New Testament author is divinely inspired. Due to its origin, what he is saying can be known to be true even though he grounds it in fallacious reasoning and interpretation. His arguments may be nonsense, but they are inspired, and therefore, authoritative nonsense.
- a) This is an absurd position. The very notion of "inspired nonsense" is absurd—and perhaps blasphemous. Not only does this suggestion misunderstand the workings of God, but it also ignores the epistemological needs of mankind.
 - (1) God never asks us to believe truly irrational, absurd things simply because he is telling us to believe it.
 - (2) Contrary to popular conception, to believe totally irrational and absurd things because God, allegedly, tells us to believe them does not constitute what the Bible calls "faith." Rather, to do so would constitute intellectually irresponsible (and, therefore, evil) gullibility.

III. Methodological Priority

- A. Which is more sacrosanct: our understanding of the Greek language or our grasp of the rhetorical structure and meaning of a passage?
 - 1. Do we take our English translation as a given and assume that the English idiom used in that translation rightly captures the relation between the content of the Hebrew text and the content of the New Testament text?
 - a) That is, are we to accept the validity of our English translation (and its understanding of the Greek language) and then construct an understanding of the relation between the New Testament text and the Hebrew text in such a way that the validity of our English translation is preserved? Is this so

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important that, if necessary, we ought to violate commonsense rationality in order to do so?

2. Or, should we trust our ability to discern the connection that the New Testament author intends us to see between the Hebrew text and some New Testament event and then, as necessary, we modify our analysis of the Greek syntax, our understanding of New Testament Greek idiom, and our translation into English accordingly?
 - a) That is, are we to accept the validity of commonsense rationality (and what it requires with regard to how to understand the structure and meaning of a New Testament passage and its relation to the Hebrew Scriptures) and then derive an understanding of the language of the New Testament in such a way that the validity of our understanding of the structure and meaning of the New Testament passage and its relation to the Hebrew Scriptures is preserved? Is this so important that, if necessary, we ought to violate a traditional understanding of the Greek language (as reflected in grammars, lexicons, etc.) in order to do so?