

Lesson 7 | April 16, 2023

Scripture Fulfills Scripture

Study Text: Psalm 22:1–18; 31:1–5; Isaiah 53:4–9; Matthew 26:59–68, 27:45–49; Mark 15:1–5, 12–15; Luke 23:6–12, 44–49; John 19:32–35; 1 Peter 2:19–25

Central Truth: Learning that Old Testament prophecies have dual fulfillment strengthens our confidence in discerning God’s message.

Key Verse: Luke 24:44

These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me (KJV).

“When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled” (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will grasp that Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
- Students will be eager to “search the Scriptures” to see Christ as the fulfillment of God’s promises.
- Students will read the Bible with greater confidence in discerning God’s message.

Introducing the Study

Say: Have you ever heard one end of someone’s phone conversation and tried to figure out who was on the other end or what the conversation was about? How successful were you? Have you ever been mistaken in such a scenario? Do you remember how it felt when you finally learned the identity or topic?

Opening Activity—How Far Away?

Ask. Have you ever had trouble determining the distance between two points on the horizon when you were traveling? Can you give one or more examples? Examples might include mountain ranges in the distance, ships at sea, etc.

Say: While the Old Testament prophets accurately conveyed God’s message, they may not have always realized the “distance” of time between various future events God showed them, let alone their fullest significance. But studying the times their prophecies are fulfilled in the New Testament gives you greater insights into God’s message. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

There are prophetic passages in the Old Testament which have both “near” and “far” fulfillments: events closer to and more distant from the prophet’s own time. As a prophet spoke God’s truth, a nearer event may have been his primary focus though God’s own ultimate message was about Jesus. From our own perspective, the event or circumstances nearer to the prophet are seen as a “type” or foreshadowing of the

greater significance found in Christ. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “All of God’s promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding ‘Yes!’” (NLT).

Part 1—Sacrificed as a Silent Lamb

The Prophecy

Isaiah 53:7–9

Say: Christians are so familiar with Jesus’ wonderful ultimate fulfillment of this passage that it can be challenging to think about what it meant in Isaiah’s time. However, like many Old Testament prophecies, this one may have both a “near” and “far” fulfillment. As you study Scripture with layers of fulfillment, don’t overlook what it meant to the original audience. God’s immediate message for them in their context may be just as meaningful to you as the later fulfillment. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

God’s words through the prophet Isaiah, around 700 years before Christ, carried a powerful message for the people of Israel. Their persistent unfaithfulness to God’s covenant would result in the loss of the Promised Land, and they would be overrun by the powerful Babylonian empire and driven into exile. But this would not be the end of the story. The redeeming God who had formed them in the first place and delivered them from Egypt had a plan for their redemption. And this same redeeming God also had an ultimate plan for the redemption of all humankind. Isaiah’s prophecies foretell both redemptive events.

The later chapters of Isaiah describe the deliverance of God’s people from Babylonian captivity when a righteous suffering servant will suffer for the people’s sin. Since Isaiah often describes the people of Israel collectively as God’s “servant” (41:8–9; 42:19), this suffering servant prophecy may have pointed in its “nearer” context to the suffering of a group of faithful Israelites who experienced oppression and death in the exile along with their fellow (unfaithful) countrymen and who paid the price of captivity for Israel’s sins. Yet this limited “type” or “near” fulfillment takes on limitless significance in the ultimate fulfillment found in Jesus Christ.

Resource Packet Item 1: Prophecies Fulfilled

Distribute the worksheet and divide your class into small groups. Assign Isaiah 53 to half the groups and Psalm 22 to the other half. Ask them to find the prophecies and note their fulfillment. Then ask several groups to share their findings.

Discuss

? How might studying only Jesus’ fulfillment of this prophecy cause you to miss out on what it meant to Isaiah’s original audience?

? What additional details from Jesus’ story fit Isaiah’s description in these verses?

Ultimate Fulfillment in Jesus

Matthew 26:59–68; Mark 15:1–5; Luke 23:6–12

Say: These passages from the Gospels describe the indignities Jesus suffered during His trials before the high priest, Pontius Pilate, and Herod Antipas. His response, as Isaiah foretold, was quiet endurance. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Jesus' fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7–9 as the ultimate sacrificial Lamb for all sin is clear as we look back at it today. Perhaps this was one of the texts the resurrected Christ opened up for the disciples, referenced in this week's key verse. We know Philip clarified it in his discussion with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:32–35).

The early disciples must have considered deeply the words of Isaiah and all they had heard about Jesus' sufferings which we now read about in the Gospels. Like us, they were able to "connect the dots" with Jesus' help and grasp how He fulfilled the Scriptures. Jesus was "oppressed and treated harshly" (Isaiah 53:7, NLT) by utterly false accusations and derisive mockery (not to mention the physical beatings emphasized in Part 2 below). He was interrogated by the high priest in front of the whole Sanhedrin (ruling council) and by both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with no one offering a protest on His behalf (Isaiah 53:8)—except during a private conversation between Pilate and his wife (Matthew 27:19).

Through it all Jesus remained astonishingly silent, although by all rights He could have defended himself against the lying accusations or lashed out in a verbal counterattack. What unbelievable patience, true longsuffering, as the Lion of Judah humbly fulfilled His God-given vocation as the sacrificial Lamb! Jesus' silent acceptance points even further to an unshakable trust in God and acceptance of His will. Not long before, He had agonized over this in the Garden of Gethsemane, concluding with His famous words, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42, KJV). Jesus' trust in His Father will be further explored in Part 3.

Discuss

? How does studying an Old Testament prophecy that was fulfilled in the New Testament build trust in the Bible?

? What insights on God's plan for humanity have you gained so far by looking at "near" and "far" fulfillments?

Part 2—Scourged for Our Healing

The Prophecy

Isaiah 53:4–6

Say: Isaiah 53 provides, as we have seen, a tremendous window into God's redemptive plans for Israel and for us. Both events involve a suffering servant, but there are differences in terms of how atonement is accomplished. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In the “near” fulfillment of this prophecy, the suffering of the Babylonian exile was possibly shared by the faithful and the unfaithful. It may be helpful to recall the accounts of Daniel or his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. Their unflinching faithfulness to God despite Nebuchadnezzar’s threats became legendary. Isaiah may have been pointing toward the testimony of faithful Israelites like these, along with others who also suffered at the hands of the Babylonian invaders. A small group in comparison to the larger nation, their undeserved suffering alongside their fellow Israelites brought a measure of atonement for Israel. By contrast, Christ’s ultimate fulfillment of these verses provided the perfect substitutionary atonement. He took the punishment our sins deserved.

Discuss

? If you were an ancient Israelite in exile, how would you understand these verses?

? How does an understanding of Jesus’ suffering provide hope in the middle of your own suffering?

Ultimate Fulfillment: Jesus

Mark 15:12–15; John 19:32–35; 1 Peter 2:19–25

Say: Once again the ultimate fulfillment embraces, yet goes so much deeper than, the initial event. Salvation through Jesus’ blood provides truly substitutionary atonement. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Unlike the unfaithful in Israel who suffered alongside the faithful “servant,” we do not suffer alongside Jesus for the atonement of our sins. We have only to believe and accept the salvation He provides. The words of Isaiah’s prophecy become true in a profoundly greater sense in their ultimate application. As the hymn says, Jesus really has “paid it all.”

This does not mean, however, that the Christian life excludes suffering. As Peter reminds us, we may indeed suffer as followers of Christ. Jesus said, “The disciple is not above his master” (Matthew 10:24, KJV). If He was persecuted and slandered, we should not be surprised to face similar treatment. To suffer in Jesus’ footsteps is our calling and privilege, but our atonement is through Christ’s suffering alone.

Jesus’ broken body provides the basis for our wholeness and healing. The reference to healing (1 Peter 2:24) points first and foremost to our deepest need: spiritual healing through the forgiveness of our sins and the restoration of relationship with God. This is our ultimate healing and wholeness. Yet we should not overlook what Dr. Daniel Pecota, professor at Northwest University, has emphasized: “All healing is in the atonement, though not in the same way.” In other words, our spiritual healing derives from the atoning work of Christ in a guaranteed way: The ABC’s of salvation (asking/believing/confessing) will assuredly result in spiritual healing at that very moment (Romans 10:9–10).

Physical healing is also included in the Atonement (provided in and through Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection) but not in the same manner. We will certainly experience complete healing on all levels one day, but not all receive physical healing instantly. Some do, and when that happens we receive a glimpse or foretaste of the perfect fulfillment of God's kingdom.

Resource Packet Item 2: God's Healing Power

Distribute the testimony and accompanying questions. Have someone read the testimony aloud and discuss the questions as a class.

Discuss

? Has following Jesus, our ultimate suffering servant, brought suffering into your life in any way? How?

? Have you prayed for healing for yourself or others and not received the healing for which you had hoped? What insights have strengthened your faith in such circumstances? What does Jesus' own path through physical suffering teach us about suffering?

Part 3—Forsaken by the Father, Yet Trusting

The Prophecy

Psalm 22:1–2

Say: Often described as a “messianic psalm,” Psalm 22 is another remarkable passage describing suffering in the life of its author, King David, but pointing to an ultimate fulfillment in the life of his descendant, King Jesus. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In Luke 24, Jesus explained to two of His followers on the road to Emmaus how the Law and the Prophets and all the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to His ministry. As Messianic King, Jesus was the great Son of David, ushering in the eternal righteous reign God had promised. He also fulfilled a davidic pattern of crushing opposition or abandonment followed by exaltation. David's words in Psalm 22 find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.

Though Psalm 22 does not provide enough details to determine a specific historical setting in David's life, it certainly describes a time of deep oppression. In the midst of this, David's intimate relationship with and trust in God remain intact even though his feelings of abandonment are real and painful. Like other “psalms of lament,” Psalm 22 moves through stages of complaint, confessions of trust, and requests for help. In its final verses, it resolves into praise-filled acknowledgments of God's faithful action. “They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this” (Psalm 22:31, KJV). When all looks bleak and hopeless, the faithfulness of God prevails, and David celebrates this assurance. Like David, we may face times

when our circumstances are bleak and seem hopeless. But God is faithful, and we can rejoice in His faithfulness.

Discuss

? Like Jesus' followers on the road to Emmaus, how might understanding the fulfillment of Old Testament Scriptures strengthen your faith?

? What might Jesus' identification with this psalm of David say about our identification with Him?

Ultimate Fulfillment in Jesus

Matthew 27:45–49; Psalm 31:1–5; Luke 23:44–49

Say: Jesus himself clearly draws upon Psalm 31 as He prays during His darkest hour upon the cross. He quotes the poignant opening question David had addressed to God, traditionally known as the “cry of dereliction”: “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Matthew 27:46, NLT). (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In quoting from Psalm 22, Jesus connects with its tension between deep trust and intimacy on the one hand and the pain of apparent abandonment while bearing the sins of the world on the other. Jesus undoubtedly knew the ending of the psalm He was praying and trusted His Father to bring ringing triumph out of His circumstances as well. Perhaps His final words on the cross—“It is finished” (John 19:30)—echo David's triumphant conclusion: “He hath done this” (Psalm 22:31, KJV).

Some who heard Jesus mistook His cry in Aramaic for a call to Elijah. This is because the “Eli” address (meaning “my God”) is incorporated into the longer name “Elijah” which means “Yahweh (is) my God.” A few bystanders used this as an occasion to further mock Jesus. The last words of Jesus that Luke records—“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46, KJV)—tie in with the faith and trust that exude from David's words in another psalm: “Into thine hand I commit my spirit” (31:5, KJV). Despite the mockery of many who were present, one of the closest observers, a Roman officer presiding at His crucifixion, responded with astonishing faith. He praised God and declared Jesus' righteousness.

David experienced oppression but was vindicated by God and elevated as king. In a more complete sense, Jesus fulfills this Davidic pattern. As David's greater Son, He underwent the utmost in suffering by taking on our sins, yet experienced ultimate vindication in His resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand.

Paul sums it up in Philippians 2:8–11: “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (KJV).

Discuss

? Since Jesus knew the ending of Psalm 22, why would He express a “cry of dereliction” (i.e., abandonment)?

? What do you think Hebrews 5:8 means: “Even though Jesus was God’s Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered” (NLT)? How would Jesus learn obedience?

Resource Packet Item 3: Your Psalm of Lament

Distribute the worksheet, give students a few minutes to reflect on what they might write, and make some brief notes so they can complete the assignment at home. Next week, if time permits, ask if anyone is comfortable sharing what they have written.

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Although the prophets may not have fully grasped the deepest significance of what God spoke through them, they trusted Him and faithfully transmitted His truths. Many of those prophecies came to pass when the diverse lines of God’s great story in Scripture converged in the person and ministry of Jesus. The author of Hebrews introduces the book this way: “Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son” (Hebrews 1:1–2, NLT). In speaking “through his Son,” God tied up many prophetic loose ends, clearly revealing His character and intentions. As we study Scriptures fulfilled elsewhere in Scripture, we find that God’s message is connected from beginning to end, that what He says about the future is trustworthy because some has already come to pass, and that His plans and path for redemption are unstoppable.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Ask God to reveal more of himself and His Son to you as you read the Bible this week.
- Begin your Scripture readings by asking what the passage meant to the first biblical audience before seeing it through your own contextual lens.
- Reflect on how God’s dealings with you are consistent with His redemptive patterns throughout Scripture.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

First Promise of the Messiah’s Coming.
Genesis 3:8–15

Tuesday:

The Passover Lamb.
Exodus 12:1–7,21–23; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8

Wednesday:

The Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 16:11–19

Thursday:

Adam's Offense; Christ's Obedience.

Romans 5:18 through 6:6

Friday:

Reverence Holy Practices.

1 Corinthians 10:14–22

Saturday:

Bearing the Marks of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6–14