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# The Cross: The Fulfillment of Prophecy

*“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, ‘I am thirsty’” (John 19:28).*

The New Testament clearly indicates that what happened at the cross and on it was what the prophets had long before predicted would happen. Details of Jesus’ life and death were written in divine prophecy hundreds of years before He was born in Bethlehem. Throughout the Gospels this amazing truth is emphasized.

As Jesus and His apostles left the upper room for the Garden of Gethsemane, He said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered’” (Mark 14:27). After Judas’ betrayal, Jesus rebuked Peter for drawing his sword and cutting off the ear of Malchus and said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; . . . How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?” (Matthew 26:52–54).

On the cross Jesus waited until He saw that “all things had already been accomplished” before He uttered His only physical request, “I am thirsty” (John 19:28). Later, the spear was thrust into Jesus’ side, and blood and water came out. We read, “For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, ‘Not a bone of Him shall be broken.’ And again another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on Him whom they pierced’” (John 19:36, 37). The angel who was at the tomb on the morning of the resurrection said, “. . . Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:6, 7).

When Jesus met with the apostles and dis-

ciples Sunday evening, the same day He arose from the dead, He said to them,

These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. . . . Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:44–47).

In Jesus’ affirmation to those Sunday night witnesses, He referred to all three divisions of the Hebrew Old Testament—the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms—as He described the prophecies that had been fulfilled in Him. It has been said that if one reads any part of the Bible and does not see Jesus in it, he should go back and reread it, for he has missed something very important!

In Peter’s first gospel sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he declared that Jesus had been delivered into the hands of godless men to be put to death “by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). In his second sermon in Acts, Peter covered in one sweeping sentence the prophecies of the whole Old Testament, saying that Jesus’ sufferings on the cross fulfilled all that had been prophesied: “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled” (Acts 3:18).

In light of this array of affirmations that Jesus’ life and death were foretold in the Old

Testament, it is appropriate for us to investigate this evidence. What conclusions can be drawn from Jesus' fulfillment of prophecy?

*The fact that Jesus' death was described in advance indicates that the cross is the centerpiece of God's eternal plan!* The fact that Jesus fulfilled all these prophecies concerning Himself shows conclusively that His sacrificial death stands at the center of God's great design for our salvation. Peter identified Jesus as the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world. He said,

Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold . . . but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you (1 Peter 1:18-20).

We must think of God as the One who goes before. He never gets in a hurry, but He is never late. Before man ever sinned, He had a plan in place to bring about our salvation. Part of that plan was for us to come to Him in obedient faith.

*The fact that Jesus fulfilled prophecy gives us the highest confirmation of His Sonship!* His fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies attests that Jesus was and is the Son of God. If Jesus is indeed the second member of the Godhead who came to live as one of us so that He might bear our sins upon the cross, then we should expect to find corroborative evidence of this profound truth. What better proof could God give us than the precise fulfillment of divine prophecy?

John wrote that he had mentioned only some of the miracles of Jesus to lead us to believe.

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:30, 31).

Likewise, studying carefully how every part of the crucifixion was in some way a fulfillment of prophetic prediction constrains us to believe that Jesus is the Christ who was sent by God.

*The truth of prophetic fulfillment shows us the control that Jesus had over all things!* His fulfillment of prophecy demonstrates that Jesus was in charge of all that was taking place. We must not think that He was captured by wicked men and placed by force on the cross! Rather, Jesus submitted to cruel and vile hands so that He might fulfill the Father's plan for the salvation of the world. He could have ended the torment before one drop of His blood fell from His body. He told Peter in the garden, "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). His clear teaching always was "No one has taken [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father" (John 10:18).

That the Son of God was born as a man, lived among us, and died for us is a great mystery. The truth of it is beyond our understanding. However, God provided prophecies to alert mankind about what was taking place. Through inspired writers, He has revealed to us the fulfillment of each prophecy. This great process of the Spirit gives us the focus and the confirmation we need. We have been given a central view of the cross, undeniable proof that Jesus is the One sent from God, and confidence in Jesus' authority and power.

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*"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?" (Isaiah 53:7, 8).*

*"The eunuch answered Philip and said, 'Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:34, 35).*