

To Fulfill the Scriptures

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[0 : 00] Our Father, thank you for Christmas. Thank you for your son coming into the world.! We lighted the candle of joy.

That is what we need in this world. So please speak to each one of us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Kristen, why don't you come and read? Today's scripture reading is from Luke 1, verse 67 to 79. Please follow along in your Bible or your own Bible or the church Bible or on the screen. In the church Bible, our passage can be found on page 804.

Luke 1, verse 67. Here we read about Zechariah's prophecy after the birth of his son, John the Baptist. Starting in verse 67, we read, And his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant.

The oath that he swore to our father Abraham to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

[2 : 10] And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

This is the word of God. Great.

I'll do keep that passage open, though. Actually, the first passage we will look at is on page 757. The reason is, normally, if you've been at Watermark, you know we preach through books of the Bible, right?

You take a book of the Bible and we go, like, section by section through it. It's called expository preaching. That's what we do. But Christmas is a bit different. Christmas is more like a theme. And so we're, you know, we're looking at Christmas, at Jesus coming from different angles, and we'll just be riffing on that, which is actually a nice change.

And I hope it gives some encouragement, because I think we need encouragement, right? You know, I don't know what December feels like for you. It often feels like the end of the race, right?

[3 : 33] Like, there's a race and there's the finish line. If I just get through this, then I'm there. And maybe it's the last exam weeks or the last, yeah, the last time at work and then the holiday.

Except, of course, we know this is not the end, right? It's not like 1st of January 2026. Everything's going to change. That all the working culture at your office is suddenly different in 2026.

Or that your marriage problems will disappear or that you're no longer single. Or maybe you have health issues and the day will clear up on 1st of January. No, life isn't what we want it to be.

Many of us are still grieving about things that have happened. And we need encouragement. And I think Christmas, well, is always about hope and joy for people who are struggling.

And so today preparing has helped me. I've been encouraged. I hope I can bring some of that encouragement to you. Now, what are we looking at today? We're looking at how Jesus came to fulfill the scriptures.

[4 : 37] We're looking at different reasons. Why was Jesus born? What did he come to do? Well, to fulfill the scriptures. That is something we see a lot throughout the New Testament.

Here, of course, in this song that we read, if you don't know who John the Baptist is, he was the herald who came to announce Jesus.

So this is all part of the coming of Jesus. And yeah, that's why we have this song. But yeah, in the New Testament, there's a lot of fulfilling the scriptures. The scriptures here is not the Bible. When it says to fulfill the scriptures, it means like the Old Testament. The part of the Bible that came before Jesus. The scriptures of the people of Israel. Jesus came to fulfill that. Now, what does that mean? And that's what we're going to talk about. And I think the first thing that most of us usually think about then is, okay, this is about prophecies, right? Jesus came to fulfill the scripture.

[5 : 32] He came to fulfill God's prophecies. What is that like? Specific predictions in the Old Testament. And that is often emphasized. So if you are on page, on Matthew chapter one, for example, Matthew makes a big thing of that, right?

So that's page 757 in the church Bibles. If you've, you know, if you're in Christmas and you go to a carol service like we had on Friday, right? It was such a wonderful service.

And we had, we had so many scripture readings. And so much, you will hear, well, this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet. So most famous, Matthew one, verse 22. After Jesus is born of a virgin, all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken to the prophet.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel, right? This is to fulfill the prophet. In chapter two, how did the wise men know they need to go to Bethlehem?

Well, two, verse five. They told him in Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet, et cetera. And then it goes on in chapter two, and this was two, verse 15.

[6 : 40] This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. 2.17, then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, right? All through, it's kind of, okay, Jesus fulfills all these prophecies.

Now, this is absolutely true. It's not just Jesus' birth, Jesus' death on the cross. You know, there's like these really detailed predictions from like a thousand years before Jesus actually died.

That's pretty amazing. Now, why is that? Partly, it's helpful to recognize Jesus, right? That they were waiting for Jesus, they were waiting for the Messiah. Well, this is what he looks like.

Maybe you've used carousel when you're going to meet someone at an MTR station. I always say, okay, look for the guelo in shorts with a beard. And that's helpful, right? Then they know who to look for.

And they knew, okay, someone from the family of David, born in Bethlehem, during the Roman Empire, while the temple was still standing, etc. Right? They could look for him. It also actually shows Jesus is quite special.

[7 : 44] Again, the Old Testament is 39 different books, written over about a thousand years by loads of different people. And so many predictions about Jesus.

And then they all come true in one person. I mean, what are the odds of that happening? I know if you've never looked into that, maybe you're here as a visitor. You wouldn't call yourself a Christian. You know, if you've never looked at it, if you read about it, I mean, ask the person you came with to show you more.

But, you know, some religions, you know, their holy book is written by one person. No wonder it hangs together. But for 39 books, written over a thousand years, to hang together and all come together in one person, that's pretty amazing.

Right? It should make you sit up. But I don't think prophecies is part of it. I don't think that's like the big thing when we talk about Jesus fulfilling the scriptures.

It's not just about specific verses here and there. I mean, one problem is it makes the Old Testament not very interesting. The Old Testament is basically, it becomes, you know, about Easter eggs.

[8 : 51] I don't know if you know what I mean with Easter eggs. If you watch a Marvel movie, especially the later ones, basically the movie is not very interesting. But, ooh, I know this character from the TV show.

Right? You know what it's like? And that's like the Old Testament. Like, okay, here's 50 pages of Jeremiah. It's not very, ooh, there's a verse about Jesus. Right? And then 10 chapters later, ooh, another verse.

No. Right? That's actually not, the Old Testament is such a big book. That's not really the big thing. I mean, Matthew knows that's not the big thing. Right?

The Old Testament is much more than that. Because back in chapter 1, how does Matthew start? It doesn't just start with prophecies. No. Verse 1, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Two of the biggest figures in the Old Testament. And then we get this long genealogy. This is not just prophecy. This is about history. The Old Testament is a book of history. And Jesus, well, he came at the end of that history.

[9 : 58] And, yeah, it's not just any history. It is God's plan. Right? That's the big thing. Fulfilling the scriptures means he came to fulfill God's plan.

And so if we go back to that passage in Luke, on page 804. Luke chapter 1, that prophecy by Zechariah, that song.

You can hear all the Old Testament. Right? Of course, you heard about, as he spoke, verse 70, by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. But all those names that we've heard before.

I mean, he is praising, verse 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. Right? Israel, God's people.

The people who had, they've belonged to God for 1,500 years.

And God has been working. God has been speaking. That is the God who he is praising. And then verse 69. And he raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.

[11 : 01] Right? Jesus, the son of David. Now, David was a king, the first great king of Israel. And God made a special promise to him. The screen is not working.

But if we can have it up here. Right? To Samuel 7. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body.

And I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. And there was going to be this king from the family of David, whose kingdom will last forever.

And that's a wonderful thing. And this is a thousand years before Jesus. A thousand years before Jesus, there was this great promise of a king. And all through the rest of the Old Testament, while they're waiting for this king.

And so many prophecies is about a coming king. Right? We heard Friday night, if you were here, well, Isaiah. To us a child is born. To us a son is given. And the government will be upon his shoulders.

[12 : 00] Right? The king. But not just David. Right? Because Zechariah goes on. Verse 72. To show the mercy promised to our fathers.

And to remember his holy covenant. The oath that he swore to our father Abraham. To grant us. Abraham. If you don't know who Abraham was, now we're talking 2000 BC.

Right? 4000 years before us. Abraham was a man. And God promised to him that, yeah, he would become a great nation. The people of Israel. And through him the world would be blessed.

So Genesis 22. Good representative. As if, I will surely bless you. And I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven. And as the sand that is on the seashore.

And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. And the whole world would be blessed. Would have God's favor through Abraham's offspring.

[13 : 01] And then, you know, this is Genesis 12. This is the 12th chapter of the Bible. I don't know if you've ever read through the whole Bible. 12 chapters. That's only a very small way in. Right? And God promised.

You know, he made this promise, this covenant with Abraham. That he was going to bless the whole world. And that is, then, yeah, again that leads to Jesus. And you can go back even further. I don't know if in those two passages. Whether you heard the word offspring. Offspring, descendants. That goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. If you were here last week, we looked at that verse.

We'll look at it again next week. The Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve had sinned. Right? They had turned away from God. And God made a promise. Genesis 3.15.

I'll put enmity between you and the woman. Between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head. You shall bruise his heel. Already in chapter 3.

[13 : 59] In the Garden of Eden. Right? God promised to make things right. And so this is thousands of years before Abraham even. Right? Because ultimately this is what it's about.

The Bible starts with a perfect world. But everything went wrong. Because, well, humanity. We sinned. Adam and Eve sinned. Then they broke fellowship with God. They were sent out. And now they live in a world of pain. Of suffering. Brokenness. Oppression. That is the world we live in. But already back then. God promised. I'm going to make it right. And, yeah. All these things that, you know. Back in Luke. In Zechariah. That he praises God for. It's basically a return to Eden. Right? He says the Lord has visited and redeemed his people.

Verse 68. Verse 71. That we should be saved from our enemies. And from the hand of all who hate us. That we should serve him without fear. Verse 77.

[15 : 02] To give knowledge of salvation to his people. And the forgiveness of their sins. Lie to those who sit in darkness. Right? You hear what Jesus came to do.

Here's a world of darkness. And sin. And oppression. And fear. And Jesus. Yeah. Came to deliver. It's basically. It's back. To the Garden of Eden. That is ultimately. The story of the Bible. How God is going to do that. And that is. Yeah. That is how we should see the scriptures. The Old Testament. It's not a book of rules. Of course there's some rules there. But that's not the main point. It's not a crazy book with hidden messages. No. It's a story. The story of God's promise. The story of God's rescue plan. The story of bringing us back to the Garden of Eden. God's plan for over thousands of years. In 39 books.

[15 : 57] And with the New Testament 66. 40 different authors. Incredible. All coming together in Jesus. That is what it means. Jesus came as the climax of God's plan.

Since the beginning of the world. It's not like. You know. Jesus was bored. And he had an idea. Why don't I go and hang out on earth for a few decades. You know. That might be fun. No. It's not a surprise visit. This is something that has been planned. And promised. And developed. Over thousands of years. A plan that has never changed. Right. Don't know. It may not always look like it. But. The plan was always Jesus. And thousands of years later. Thousands of years after Abraham. Thousands of years after. A thousand years after David. Jesus came to fulfill that plan. God's plan is the creation of the world. Now what do we do with that?

[16 : 53] That's. Okay. That's an interesting angle on Christmas. How does that speak to us. Right now in. In 2025. Well the first thing that. I thought of.

Actually it gives us a little bit of God's perspective. God's perspective. Because Christmas is the center of history. It's the climax of. God's plan over thousands of years. That puts our life within perspective. Right. You know. God's perspective is very different from ours. We. We. We lack perspective. Right. We live in a world. Where everything is immediate. And everything is now. Especially with your 5G smartphone. Right. Everything is now. And. God's time scales are a bit different. I mean about a year ago. I nearly tore a shoulder muscle. Right. I think it was about 80% torn. Thankfully not 100%. But I needed physio. And I said. We'll take six to nine months. Six to nine months of not working out. Man.

[17 : 51] Right. I thought that this is so long. How can I cope? Actually. Well what is six to nine months? And maybe you have a young baby. And you're in the nappies.

And the sleepless nights. And you kind of wonder. How long does that take? I think it's about nine months. That a child hopefully will sleep for about 12 hours. Okay. Just so you know. And things get a bit less intense.

When your youngest child turns five. I think that's the general rule. So just so you know. You know. Especially if you want more kids. You'll be. You'll be in there for a while. But. But it's nothing. Right. I mean. Maybe you're in through hardship. Through medical treatment. You've got a long road ahead. But God's plan is. Is thousands of years. Right. You know. Between the Old and New Testament. 400 years of silence. 400 years of waiting. David was a thousand years. Abraham. More than 2,000 years. I don't know if you knew this.

[18 : 46] You. You. You think the birth of Jesus was a long time ago. Did you know that the gap from Abraham to the birth of Jesus. Is more than from Jesus to us. Is more.

We're actually not even as far from Jesus as Abraham was. Right. Christmas shows us waiting for. Waiting hundreds of years is normal. God doesn't work in months or years.

He works in millennia. And so. You know. The things going on in our lives. They're actually. You know. What we're facing is really not that long. On the timescales of God's plan.

Right. Or even. You know. How bad things are. 2025 is a tough year. I know many of you. You've had very. Very tough year. Very serious.

Things going on. And worldwide. Right. I mean. The world economy is not doing well. So often. I go. I've been here nine and a half years. In Hong Kong. And I want to go to this shop.

[19 : 40] Where I bought something. And the shop is gone. Because so many. You know. Shops go out of business. Because of the economy. And there was the fire in Taipo. And of course. Worldwide. We have the war in Ukraine.

That doesn't seem to end. I don't think it's going to end soon. Still big tensions. And people have fears about AI. And climate change. And sometimes you talk to people.

And they think. Well this must be the end of the world. Why things are getting bad. Well. How bad are they are. Look at it from the perspective. Of all of history. I remember COVID.

You may remember COVID. Right. No. Already. No. But in 2020. Right. Everyone was stuck at home. With online learning. And that was tough. And so many. Oh this is the worst year ever.

And in the South China Morning Post. They had this article. Well. Were you around in 1937? I don't know if you know 1937. It was the great typhoon.

[20 : 36] We don't know how great. The typhoon was. Because measurement instruments. Didn't go that far yet. But Hong Kong was already. Quite a difficult place. It was full of refugees.

Because there had been an earthquake. In the Philippines. And of course. The invasion in mainland China. So. It was full of refugees. And then came this big typhoon. That wrecked the city.

And after that. We had a cholera outbreak. And typhoid. And a bit of plague. And 11,000 people died. Okay. 1% of the population of Hong Kong.

So. In today's terms. That would be a typhoon. That kills 75,000 people. I mean. That's a bad year.

Right. Actually. 2020 wasn't that bad.

And even then. I mean. Go back a few centuries. In Europe. The Black Death. 30 to 60% of the European population died.

[21 : 31] Because of the plague back then. Right. God's. But the thing is. You know. The history is full of these big wars. Big disasters.

And yet God's plan is. It's far bigger than that. Right. It's far longer. These are thousands of years. And it's not even mentioned in the Bible. Right.

In terms of. Okay. Well. What's. You know. What is important. What is God doing. These things are just footnotes. I think. God could have helped us. God could have told us. He could have. You know.

This is how you make a COVID vaccine. I don't know. Or this is how you prevent this war. When there's this guy in Germany. Watch out for him. I don't know. Right. Hey Paul. Can you write this down please. This will be useful later.

God didn't do that. Right. He gave us a book. About a much bigger plan. About Jesus. And. And. And many things. In the world. Many things in our lives.

[22 : 28] Comparably. They're very small. Right. God wants to. You know. If you see what Jesus came to do. If you see his place in history. You know. It should put things in perspective.

And I'm not denying that this is a tough year. And that some of you have had a really tough year. It has been. And yet. God's plan is far. Bigger than that.

And. I don't know. I used to. When we lived in the UK. We used to go to France. To go. Drive to Holland. So we went by car. And we would take a car ferry. And that's a huge ship.

Right. Because you would put hundreds of trucks and cars on that ship. And that ferry was huge. Except that when we were in the harbor. We saw that ferry. And it was huge. And yet. Behind it was this oil tanker.

That was just passing by. And this ferry looked so small. I think that's what we need to do with our lives sometimes. Right. The things going on in our lives. Actually it's not the end of the world.

[23 : 27] If you look at it. If you look at God's plan. It's actually not that big. Now. God's plan. Despite all the wars. And all the things going on in the world.

All the time it has been going. You know. Thousands of years of history. Thousands of things happening. And yet God's plan has been going. And therefore God's plan will be completed.

Because the thing is. We often think. Yeah. When will this end? And then. You know. Even God's plan. When will this actually happen? I think the other thing that I really see. When I look at. Jesus fulfilling God's plan. I see God's persistence. God's persistence. Persistence with. With his people.

With the human race. I mean. The coming of Jesus is wonderful news. Right. Because Zechariah. He is praising God. And you know. You read through. Those chapters in the Bible.

[24 : 20] About the birth of Jesus. And Mary is praising God. And the angels are praising God. And Simeon is praising God. Everything. Everyone is praising God. Because this is. So. Wonderful. And they.

Well. Because. God has been. So faithful. So again. In. What does Zechariah say? To remember his holy covenant. The oath that he swore to our father Abraham.

Right. God is being. Faithful to his promise. For thousands of years. God had made his promise. And he has stuck with that promise. I. I. I make promises.

But then I forget. Or. You know. I promise something that I can't keep. Christmas was promised. At the beginning of the world. Thousands of years ago. And he came to.

And Jesus came. To fulfill that. God has been faithful. Faithful to his. His covenant. And I don't. If you know. What a covenant is. It's more than a promise. Right. It's a. It's a relationship. Yesterday.

[25 : 16] We had a beautiful wedding here. And Sikon and Soma. But that is. Marriage is. It's a covenant. Right. It's two people promising to be faithful to each other. For as long as they will live.

And. And God promised that to us. He would be. Faithful to us. Yes. But that's not easy. I mean. Marriages. You know.

Recently. I was with some other Christians. And we were sharing kind of. Our background. And I was amazed. How many people come from divorced families. Marriage is hard. Maybe because you have to live with another sinner.

That's really difficult. Well. Think about it from God's perspective. Right. Adam and Eve had sinned. And God. Promised. Okay. I'm going to make it right.

That was just after one sin. How about after Cain and Abel. And when Cain murdered his brother. That didn't stop God's promise. And.

[26 : 12] There were more people. And more sin. And you know. The flood. Yet judgment had to come. But he. Continued with the human race. And he chose Israel. Now I don't know what you. If you've read the Old Testament.

Yeah. You see God. But you also see the people of Israel. And you see. A thousand years of idolatry. And sin. And these people are terrible. And yet God. Promised them.

And he make his promise bigger. And bigger. And the rest of the world was even worse. Right. I mean. Look at the world right now. Imagine. I mean. I don't know what you think of the world.

But God knows everyone's thoughts. And words. And deeds. Right. So if you're God. You can see all the sinful thoughts. Of eight billion people. And yet.

God. Loves the world. And he is faithful to it. And he keeps going with it. And he sent his son to this world. And he's going to. Send his son again. Isn't that incredible.

[27 : 12] Faithfulness. Right. Isn't that incredible. Incredible. That God would do that. Isn't it. Mercy. Isn't that what Zechariah says. Right. In remembrance of his mercy.

Verse 78. The tender mercy of our God. The fact that God. You know. Keeps going with his plan for humanity. That's. That's incredible. That's mercy. And so.

Yes. Christmas was just part one. Jesus came. Because he had to die. Most of what. We are promised. Will still come another time. When Jesus comes back. But we know that.

Right. Because. It took him so long. For the first. Coming. Right. For Jesus first coming. And now. It's only been 2000 years. That's nothing. Right. Jesus will certainly come.

He's not overdue. He's not delayed. It's all coming. Exactly. As planned. We even don't know. Why. There's a. That plan. Right. Jesus.

[28 : 07] Jesus giving us a chance. To come back to him. He is. Yeah. Wanting people to turn. And. Find forgiveness. Right. Before he. Transforms everything.

If we want to be part of that. We need to come back to him. So if you're. If you're here. If you're visiting. If you wouldn't call yourself a Christian. Actually. That's one reason. Why we. Love to talk about Christmas. Because.

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