



it is finished
PROPHECIES OF EASTER

WRITTEN BY DR. STEVE JONES

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Review the context and big picture every week – The goal of a book study is not just to learn each individual lesson, but to build understanding of the Bible, how it fits together, and how to study it.

Try not to use this guide as a script. The purpose of this material isn't to give you exactly what to say. Rather it is to give you the content you need to structure and develop your own lessons. Teach as much as you feel is important for your class. Feel free to go off topic if your own study leads you to approach the passage in a slightly different direction.

Don't feel like you have to cover everything. There is a lot of material in each lesson. Some classes like to cover a lot of ground. Other classes like to camp on one point and drill deep. Start by teaching the Main Point, then teach the Main Bullet Points. Use the extra detail and discussion questions as you see fit. The goal is to generate discussion, specifically regarding life-application. So don't worry if you don't get all the way through a lesson.

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MARCH 6 | PROTOEVANGELIUM

GENESIS 3:15

Luke 24 tells the story of an encounter on the Road to Emmaus. On the first Easter Sunday, Jesus met some distracted and discouraged followers walking from Jerusalem back to their home in Emmaus. They hadn't heard He had risen, and they didn't recognize Him when He walked up. As they told Him why they were so downcast, He responded in Luke 24:25-26 "25 'You foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to come into His glory?' He then engages in some "Emmaus Road Exegesis." Verse 27 says, "Then beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the Scriptures."

I wonder which passages Jesus used that day to show them that not only was the cross not an error or an accident, it also wasn't the end. The story wasn't over. They weren't expecting it. But they should have been. The Old Testament is full of prophecies foretelling the events of Easter.

That is what we are going to be looking at over the coming weeks: Old Testament Prophecies of Easter. The goal is to see how Easter has always been a chief part of God's plan of redemption and restoration. A central purpose of scripture is to encourage us to put our hope and trust in God and not in the things of this world, like wealth, or health, or power. One of the ways that God shows us that He is where we should be placing our trust is through fulfilling prophecies. Throughout scripture, God tells His people to expect certain things to happen. The reason He does this is so that when it happens, we can have a renewed awareness that God is in control.

But prophecies are more than just improbable occurrences that God predicts. They are windows into the very heart of God. They show us that God is in control and working things out towards the end that He intends. They also remind us of important truths about God and ourselves that we tend to forget.

Do you know where the first Easter prophecy occurs in the Bible. Luke says Jesus began his tour of Old Testament prophecy with Moses, which means the Books of Moses. The Books of Moses are another name for the Pentateuch, or Torah, the first five books of the Bible. That's right, the first Easter prophecy, and maybe the first prophecy in the bible, happens in Genesis 3. Genesis 3 contains the story of the Fall of Man and how sin entered into the world. It is amazing to see that as soon as sin enters into the world, God already has a plan and is doing something about it. It shows us that God doesn't abandon us in our sin but makes a way out of it.

THE FULL STORY (GENESIS 3)

Temptation (1-7)

You could spend a great deal of time just looking at this first section. There is so much here to be learned about how temptation works and how evil sneaks into our lives.

- **A Dishonest Question (v1)** – The serpent starts with a question. “Did God really say?” He is putting a question in the mind of Eve. But its more than a question. It is a dishonest one. God didn’t say “You shall not eat from any tree of the garden.” This isn’t an honest question asked to gain information. This is a dishonest question designed to mislead and sow doubt.
- **An Additional Command (v2-3)** – Eve starts with the right answer: “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree, which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it..’” That is not the last of Eve’s response, though. What comes next is important, “‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” Flip back a page. Look at Genesis 2:16-17, “¹⁶The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for on the day that you eat from it you will certainly die.” The phrase “or touch it” does not appear in God’s command to Adam. Somewhere between God’s command to Adam and Eve’s words with the serpent something got added. Either Adam added it when he told Eve, or Eve added it herself just to underscore how serious the command was. Either way, they added to God’s original command.
- **Questioning the Command (v4-7)** – The serpent then assures them that they won’t die, but that this command was given because God is withholding blessings from them that He wishes to keep for himself. The phrase, “you will be like God, knowing good and evil,” doesn’t mean that they didn’t know what right and wrong were. Rather the lie that the serpent promises them is that they would be able to determine for themselves what right and wrong were. Notice what follows. Eve starts questioning the command of God. She saw that the tree produced fruit that was good for food, that it looked pleasing to the eye, and that it had what she believed to be positive effect. She couldn’t see why God would withhold such things from her. She also couldn’t see the harm of disregarding God’s commands. So, she ate. She then persuaded Adam to eat it as well. Not sure where Adam was this whole time. Some think he was standing next to Eve listening to this exchange. Others think that Eve was alone when approached by the serpent. Either way, they both eat and begin to realize what they have done.

Confrontation (8-13)

After they sin, they immediately try to hide. They hide from each other by sewing fig leaves together. They also hide from God. There is something both profound and profoundly silly about verse 8. They “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden.” They thought they could hide from God. When God asks in verse 9, “where are you?” he isn’t asking because he doesn’t know. He is asking because he is drawing them out and inviting them to confess. Instead of confessing, they blame. Sin has made Adam afraid of God, and ashamed of himself. When Adam tells God what happens,

Adams tries to shift blame from himself. He blames God and the women when he says, “the woman whom you gave me.” When God asks Eve, she blames the serpent.

Judgement (14-24)

After hearing their meager attempts at confession, God pronounces judgement on the serpent, Eve, and Adam. The big picture interpretation of these judgments is simply that sin breaks everything. Sin breaks man’s relationship to nature, man’s relationship to his own family, and man’s relationship to his vocation. The serpent’s relationship to man is severed. The woman will find difficulty in her relationships with her husband and her children. Adam’s work will also become more difficult.

After pronouncing judgement, God does two more things. In verse 21, God makes better clothes for them out of animal skin. Some see this as a one of the first anticipations of animal sacrifice as part of what it takes to cover our sin. Then, in verses 22-24, God banishes man from the Garden of Eden. Though some are tempted to see this as a punishment, it is actually a form of protection. Man is in a state of sin and alienation from God. If he were to live forever, he would be stuck that way forever. God kicking man out of the garden is part of the beginning of the road back to Him. God refuses to allow man to stay in a permanent state of rebellion.

THE FULFILLED PROPHECY (GENESIS 3:15)

Though much more could be said about this event, that is enough of a backdrop to understand the Easter prophecy at the heart of this story. It occurs when God pronounces judgement upon the serpent. After saying that the serpent will be cursed above other animals and eat dust its whole life, in Genesis 3:15 God says to the serpent, “I will make enemies of you and the woman, and of your offspring and her Descendant; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.”

This verse is sometimes referred to as the “protoevangelium” (pronounced: PROH-toh-EE-van-GHEL-ee-um), which means “the first gospel.” It is called this because it offers what many believe to be the first prophecy in the Bible, a prophecy fulfilled by Jesus on the Cross. More importantly, gospel means “good news.” In the midst of sin, God offers good news to us.

- **Seed of Woman:** Notice, the one who will crush the serpent’s head is called the seed of woman. Throughout the bible, descendants are referred to in reference to their father. Not so here, many think this a subtle reference to the virgin birth. This is why Paul in Galatians 4:4 refers to Jesus as “born of a woman.” Jesus is the seed of the woman.
- **Bruise you on the head:** This seed of women would one day triumph over the serpent. A snake’s poison is found in its head. A wound on the head of a snake would be fatal. This is a prophecy of not just a victory, but a final conclusive victory over sin. Sin won’t have the last word. God will triumph completely over Satan.

- **Bruise Him on the Heal:** This final phrase underscores the fact that the victory over evil would come at a cost. The serpent would inflict some harm on the son. This was fulfilled in the cross. When Jesus was crucified, he filled the prophecy of both wounding the serpent on the head and being wounded by the serpent on the heal. Jesus was wounded, was even killed, but death did not have the last word.

THE FURTHER PROMISE

This prophecy not only points forward to the suffering and triumph of Jesus on the cross, it also reminds us about important truths about who God is.

- **God Takes Sin Seriously** – Sometimes we treat forgiveness like God is our rich daddy who agrees to pay off our maxed out spiritual credit card. It should be no big deal for him. But the truth is that God takes sin seriously because it destroys and distorts the world He created. His hatred of sin is a part of His love for what He has made good.
- **God Pays the Price** – Sin destroys. Sin brings death. If God overlooked sin, then He wouldn't be just. Instead, He pays the price of sin. This is so that, as Paul says in Romans 3:26, "He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."
- **God Makes a Way** – It is amazing that the moment sin enters into God's creation, God has a plan. He doesn't wait on the sidelines. He doesn't express his frustration at man's failings. He doesn't abandon man and force man to figure out a solution on his own. He immediately promises deliverance from sin.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think we focus on prophecies around Christmas but less so around Easter? What is the purpose of prophecy?
2. What was the problem of the disciples on the Emmaus Road? How did they miss the resurrection?
3. Where is the first prophecy of Easter found? What does "protoevangelium" mean?
4. In what context does this prophecy occur? How did sin enter the world? How did the serpent tempt Eve and Adam to sin?
5. How was this prophecy fulfilled by Jesus? What does this prophecy teach us about the heart of God?

MARCH 13 | AN UNEXPECTED KING

ZECHARIAH

I remember one time having to pick up a semi-famous person at the airport. Our church was holding a conference and had invited a well-known author to be the keynote speaker. I volunteered for the job because I wanted to meet him and be able to talk with him alone for the thirty-minute drive back from the airport to his hotel. I don't remember, but I probably had delusions that we were going to become best friends. One problem was that I had never actually met the man. I had seen his face on the back of his books and in a few YouTube videos. But beyond that I didn't really know what he looked like. So I took a copy of his most recent book and a piece of paper with his last name on it and headed to the airport. I went to the baggage claim area and began surveying the crowd thinking it shouldn't be that hard to find him. But I looked, and waited, and didn't find anyone that looked like the person I was waiting on. So I stood by an exit with my sign and his book hoping he would find me. As I was standing there, I noticed some random guy start walking towards me. First I thought he was just looking to leave, then I realized he was headed to me not the exit. I was getting frustrated because he was blocking my view of baggage claim. It didn't occur to me that this was the man I was looking for until he identified himself. How did I miss him? Well, the picture I had of him was incomplete. Like most photos from backs of the books, it was just head and shoulders, and had been done in studio conditions. He didn't look like what I was expecting both because he wasn't coming from a studio but from a several hour plane ride, and because I had unintentionally filled in the gaps in what I thought he should look like (height, weight, general shape, etc.) with my own imagination. When I met the real man, I was unprepared because I had a bad picture in my head of who I was waiting for.

I think something like that happened with Jesus and the Jews. It's not that God didn't describe the coming Messiah in the Old Testament, but that the Jews had kind of read between the lines and filled in the gaps with their own expectations so that when Jesus did come, they didn't recognize him because they were looking for someone else. Even his own followers didn't expect him to die and rise again. That is what Jesus was showing those two people on the Emmaus Road.

One place that Jesus no doubt turned in his Emmaus Road Exegesis was the book of Zechariah. Zechariah contains several prophecies about Easter, including one very famous one. Instead of treating each prophecy in separate lessons, we are going to look at all five of these prophecies in one lesson. The reason is because all 5 prophecies point to the fact that God promised to send a messiah, but that it would be someone no one would expect and he would do things that they weren't prepared for.

BACKGROUND TO ZECHARIAH

Before we dive into the prophecies, it is important to provide a little information about the book of Zechariah and about the prophet who wrote it. Zechariah is one of the minor prophets. They are called minor not because they are less important but simply because their books are shorter. He lived at the end of the 500's and the first part of the 400's BC. He was a colleague and contemporary of Haggai. Ezra 5:1 and Ezra 6:14 mention Haggai and Zechariah together. Many people believe that Haggai was an older prophet and the Zechariah was his protégé who continued the work after Haggai retired.

The book was written at a time when the people of Israel had returned from exile in Babylon. They were no longer their own kingdom but rather a province of the Persian Empire. Jerusalem and the Temple were both in ruins. The state of their city reflected the state of their souls too. They felt abandoned, alone, failed. Haggai was written to encourage them to start rebuilding the temple, and to remind them to trust God and look for his blessings. Zechariah continues this message. The book is roughly divided into two sections: Zechariah 1-8, 9-14. The central feature of the first section is a series of "night visions" that the prophet has which promise God's return to Jerusalem, his blessing on the nation, and his renewal of the people by promise of his spirit. The second section of Zechariah focuses on a triumphant coming kingdom.

Throughout both sections, we get hints and prophecies that all point to the coming of an unexpected king who will institute an unexpected kingdom. Looking back, we see that this was fulfilled in Jesus.

PROPHECY 1: A NEW KING PROMISED (ZECHARIAH 3:8-10)

The first Easter prophecy occurs in Zechariah 3, in the context of God reinstating a man named Joshua as High Priest, purifying him (3:3-6) and encouraging Him to seek the Lord (3:6-7). In verse 8, God says through the prophet, "Now listen, Joshua, you high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a sign: for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch."

God promises he will send to Israel a servant that He calls the Branch. This is a messianic term that refers back to Isaiah 11:1 which says, "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit." This idea is that the tree of Israel which had been chopped down in judgment would sprout again and regrow. This new sprout would be a new king in the line of David. Jeremiah 23:5 says something similar: "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.'"

God is promising that he will send to Israel a new King in the line of David. Zechariah 3:9-10 goes on to say that this king will bring forgiveness (will remove the guilt of the land) and restoration (every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine).

By the way, this is where the idea that Messiah would come from Nazareth comes from (Matthew 2:23). The Hebrew word for branch is “nazer.” Nazareth can be loosely translated as “Branch Town.”

PROPHECY 2: A PRIEST AND A NEW TEMPLE (ZECHARIAH 6:9-15)

The prophecy about the Branch continues in Zechariah 6. God tells the prophet in verse 11, “take silver and gold, make an ornate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.” Instead of crowning a king, the prophet is to place the crown on the high priest’s head. This isn’t because Joshua is going to be the new king. It’s a symbol and a prophecy. Verse 14 says, “now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the Lord.” The crown was supposed to be placed in the temple as memorial of this prophecy. Verses 12 and 13 reveal what it represents.

The prophet is supposed to say as He crowns the high priest:

¹²The Lord of armies says this: “Behold, there is a Man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. ¹³Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the majesty and sit and rule on His throne. So He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”

The Branch, the promised messianic King, will build the temple of the Lord, and be a priest as well as a king. The temple they are talking about isn’t the physical temple because the temple had already been reconstructed by Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah during Zechariah’s day. This prophecy highlights what Jesus said in John 2:19-21 about His body being the real temple, the real place where God meets his people,:

¹⁹Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and yet You will raise it up in three days?” ²¹But He was speaking about the temple of His body. ²²So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.”

When it says that they believed the Scripture, no doubt, one of the scriptures they believed was this one from Zechariah.

PROPHECY 3: A HUMBLE KING (ZECHARIAH 9:9)

Perhaps the most famous of Zechariah’s prophecies happens in Zechariah 9:9, which says, “Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is righteous and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Jesus not only fulfilled this prophecy in Matthew 21 during His Triumphal Entry into

Jerusalem, He did so intentionally. Matthew 21:2 recounts Jesus's preparation, He told his disciples "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with it. Untie them and bring them to Me." Some have asked why Jesus has a donkey and a colt. The reason is probably because some people argued over exactly what the Messiah would be riding when he entered Jerusalem. Some argued that it was a donkey, others a colt. Just to make sure no one had any room for doubt, Jesus rode a donkey and led a colt. He wanted his message to be unmistakable.

The Messiah riding a donkey paints a picture of a king not arrogant and powerful in the world's eyes, but humble and lowly. Not who the people were looking for.

PROPHECY 4: A REJECTED SHEPHERD (ZECHARIAH 11:12-13)

Zechariah 11:7-13 tells the parable of a shepherd who is rejected by his sheep. Though the passage isn't explicitly about the Messiah, it contains a specific prophecy that was fulfilled by Judas. Zechariah 11:12-13 says:

¹²And I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. ¹³Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

Jesus is the rejected shepherd. Matthew 26:14-15 says, "¹⁴Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they set out for him thirty ¹⁶pieces of silver. In the same way that the sheep paid thirty shekels of silver to have the shepherd removed, so too the Jewish priests gave Judas thirty pieces of silver to help remove Jesus.

The last part of this prophecy was fulfilled in Matthew 27:3-10, when Judas regretted his decisions and tried to return the money. When the priests wouldn't take the money back (v3-4), Judas threw the money into the house of the Lord (v5). After Judas killed himself, the priests refused to put the money back into the temple treasure and instead used it to buy a place called the "potter's field" as a burial place for strangers (v7).

PROPHECY 5: A MURDERED GOD (ZECHARIAH 12:10-13:7)

A final prophecy of Jesus occurs in Zechariah 12:10. In the midst of describing the victory of God's coming kingdom, God says through the prophet: "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." This prophecy is a little tricky but really amazing. God is lamenting the effects that the sin of his people has on him.

Look what it says:

- **They will look on Me** – first, the focus of the prophecy is God. Though some translations try to make the texts say “he,” the best translation is “me.” The one who is the subject is God.
- **Whom they have pierced** – the sins of the people will lead to God being pierced.
- **They will mourn for Him** – Mourning is something that happens when someone dies. This reference to mourning the one who has been pierced suggests that God himself will be killed because of sin.
- **As one mourns for an only son** – Some people have a hard time with the change in personal pronoun from me to him. But here we see that the mourning is done over “an only son.” The one being wept over is God but also God’s son.

All this seems to point to the fact that this prophecy indicates that God himself will come his people, suffer and die for their sins, as the son of God. I can’t think of a better description of who Jesus is and what He did on the cross than this.

CONCLUSION

These prophecies remind us that God’s plan was always to send His Son to die on the Cross for our sins. They also show us that people have an idea in their head of who they think God is and what they think God should do. This leads them not only to miss God when He shows up, but also fight against God when He doesn’t do what they want in the way they want. These prophecies show us that God knows we will respond this way and comes anyway. He comes to be the king who we weren’t expecting but who is everything we need.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the prophecy of the branch refer to?
2. How did Jesus fulfill the prophecy of a priest who is crowned king and who would rebuild the temple?
3. What does the prophecy about the king coming on a donkey reveal about the nature of the Messiah?
4. What does Zechariah’s prophecy about God being pierced reveal about Jesus?
5. What is your response to all the detailed prophecies contained in Zechariah? Does it give you confidence in God’s word? Amazement at God’s plan?
6. How did Jesus frustrate the people’s expectation of who the Messiah would be? How are we sometimes equally frustrated by the difference between what Jesus is doing and what we want Him to do? How can we avoid making similar mistakes?

MARCH 20 | THE SUFFERING SERVANT

ISAIAH 53

“I meant to do that!” Ever said that or heard it said? Usually, you say it after making an improbable play in sports. But the truth is that many times what we try to claim as our own experience and ability is just blind luck and chance. That’s why there are rules like having to call the pocket when playing pool. You can’t just hit the ball as hard as you can, hope for some random ball to go it, then say that was what you were trying to do. Or in the basketball game of horse, which involves people trying to replicate other people’s shots, one of the more important rules is “You have to call glass,” which means that your shot doesn’t count if it bounces off the backboard unless you say beforehand that is what you are going to do.

Sometimes people treat the story of Christianity in a similar way. They say things like Jesus and his followers thought he was the Messiah, but when he was killed, they scrambled to come up with a new story about how Jesus dying was part of the plan and his resurrection had happened and God was up to something new.

The truth is that the death and resurrection had always been a part of God’s plan. Jesus himself said in John 13:19, “¹⁹From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe that I am He.” Some people even doubt this verse because it was written down after the fact.

That is why studying Old Testament prophecy is so important. It allows us to see what God promised to do before he does it so that we can have confidence in Him and His word. But some of the Old Testament Prophecies are capable of “other interpretations.” People disregard them by saying that Christians are “twisting” the passage to mean what they want, or “squeezing” the passage to make it fit their interpretation, or “squinting” their eyes to see what they want to see.

One could argue that many unbelieving interpreters are doing the same thing trying to find reasons to disbelieve the prophecies. That is why Isaiah 53 is so important. It is one of the clearest and most amazing prophecies of Jesus and the events of Easter. The early Christian writer Jerome, who was responsible for translating the Bible into Latin around AD 400, said that Isaiah “should be called an evangelist rather than a prophet, because he describes all the mysteries of Christ and the church so clearly that one would think he is composing a history of what already happened rather than prophesying what is to come.”

Isaiah’s prophecies are so amazingly clear that the authenticity of the book of Isaiah has been questioned by skeptical scholars for the last couple hundred years. The Dead Sea Scrolls, however, put those questions to rest. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain a complete copy of the book of Isaiah that was copied down around 200-150 BC. So, whatever you

think about Isaiah the prophet and when he wrote, we know for certain that what he wrote was written down at least 200 years before Jesus lived.

Today we are going to look closely at Isaiah 53, the prophecy of a coming “Suffering Servant.” My hope is that we will end our study with a renewed confidence in God’s word, a renewed sense of wonder at God’s plan, and a renewed appreciation for what was accomplished for us on Easter.

At the very heart of Isaiah 53 is the promise that this suffering servant bore our sins and in doing so brought us peace. It is a theological claim which is hard kind of hard to prove. However, it is surrounded by at least 9 specific prophecies about the suffering servant which are historically verifiable. So, we will start there. Seeing how Jesus fulfilled these nine predictions gives us confidence to believe that he did in fact bring us peace with God through bearing our sins on the cross and rising again.

THE HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT

- **A Nobody (v1-2)** – Verse 1 starts off by telling us that the story of the servant would border on unbelievable. The person this song describes is basically a nobody in the world’s eyes. Verse 2 says he has “no stately form” and not having an “appearance that we should be attracted to Him.” This is true of Jesus. He wasn’t born in a palace but in a stable. He wasn’t born to royalty but to a carpenter. He wasn’t born in Jerusalem the capital but in Galilee.
- **Rejected (v3)** – Isaiah predicts the servant will be rejected by those He was sent to deliver. “He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” This was clearly true of Jesus. He was betrayed by Judas. He was denied by Peter. The same people who had cheered Him at the triumphal entry cried out for him to be killed and a murderer named Barabbas to be freed. Truly Jesus fulfilled this prophecy. In the words of John 1:11, “¹¹He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.”
- **Silent before his accusers (v7)** – Isaiah also predicts that the servant will not respond while being oppressed, “He was oppressed and afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth.” This was fulfilled by Jesus in Matthew 27:11-14, which says:

“¹¹Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus said to him, “It is as you say.” ¹²And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. ¹³Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” ¹⁴And He did not answer him with regard to even a single ¹⁴charge, so the governor was quite amazed.”
- **Scourged (v5)** – Verse 5 ends with the phrase, “And by His scourging we are healed.” Some Bible translations use the words “wounds” or “stripes” to translate the Hebrew word. It refers to a bruise or welt caused by a whip. All the gospels state that before Jesus was crucified, he was whipped or scourged by the Romans. This punishment

was designed to weaken the victim and therefore shorten his suffering on the cross. The punishment was so severe that it often resulted in death.

- **Pierced (v5)** – In addition to being whipped, verse 5 says that the servant would be “pierced for our transgressions.” Jesus was pierced in multiple ways. His head was pierced by the crown of thorns (John 19:1), his hands and feet were pierced by the nails (John 20:25), his side was pierced by the centurion’s spear (John 19:34). It was this last event that John 19:37 says is a fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 12:10 that the servant would be pierced: “And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.”
- **Died (v7b-9)** – Isaiah 53 also predicts that the servant will die. In verse 7 he is described as “Like a lamb that is led to slaughter: Verse 8 says “That He was cut off out of the land of the living,” indicating not just death but a violent one. Verse 9 describes him being buried. Clearly the servant wasn’t just beaten severely. Isaiah says that He will die. This is true of Jesus. John 19:33-34 says, “coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.” The water and blood demonstrate that Jesus’ heart had stopped beating. The blood had begun to separate into red hemoglobin and clear, water-like serum – Medical proof that Jesus was dead.
- **Innocent (v9)** – In order for the servant to suffer for our sins, he can’t suffer for his own. He must be innocent. Isaiah 53:9 says, “He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth.” The innocence of Jesus was pointed out by Pilate in Luke 23:4, “I find no guilt in this man.” The men who actually carried out the crucifixion said something similar. Luke 23:47 says, “Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent.’”
- **Buried with a Rich Man (v9)** – Though beaten, humiliated, and killed, Isaiah 53:9 predicts that the servant will be “with a rich man in His death.” That rich man’s name was Joseph of Arimathea. John 19:38 says, “After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So, he came and took away His body: A normal criminal would not have been allowed to be given an honorable burial. Some see Pilate giving the body of Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea as a further acknowledgement of the innocence of Jesus. Matthew 27:57-60 tells us that Joseph was rich and that the tomb he laid Jesus in was his own.
- **Raised again (v10)** – This servant song does not end with suffering. The last verses tell of a startling conclusion to this story. Isaiah 53:10 says, “He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days.” How can someone who has been beaten, killed, and buried also somehow “see his offspring” and “prolong his days?” This is clearly impossible unless the servant returns to life again. These verses, therefore, point to the fact that the servant will rise again from the dead. Isaiah 53:10 prophecies what happens in Matthew 28:5-7, “5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. ⁶He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. ⁷Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead.”

THE HEART OF THE PROPHECY

It's hard to read these nine prophecies, written hundreds of years before Jesus, and not connect them to Jesus. It is harder to believe they don't talk about Jesus. But if the historical foundation of this passage points us to Jesus, the heart of this prophecy shows what exactly he accomplished for us on the cross.

Jesus is the lamb that was slain, the perfect sacrifice. In exchange for our sin, we are offered healing, restoration, and life. Verse 6 says, "The Lord causes the iniquity of us all to fall on him." Verse 10 says the servant "would render himself as a guilt offering." Verse 5 says is best, "the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed."

The promises written down in Isaiah 53 are proof that God's plan has always been to deliver us from our sin and restore us to new life by sending Jesus to die on the cross and rise again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Isaiah 53 give us confidence in God's word and God's plan?
2. What details about his rejection and trial are contained in Isaiah 53?
3. What details about Jesus' death and burial are contained in Isaiah 53?
4. How is the resurrection predicted in Isaiah 53?
5. What is the promise at the heart of Isaiah 53?

MARCH 27 | THE REST OF THE STORY

PSALM 22

Paul Harvey was an American broadcast journalist famous for his Paul Harvey News which played at noon from 1951 until his death in 2009. A new generation was exposed to his unique voice and way of speaking when Dodge Trucks turned a recording of a speech he gave at 1976 FFA convention into the hit commercial of Superbowl 2013, “So God Made a Farmer.” If you don’t remember it, go watch it on YouTube. Paul Harvey was probably most famous for his radio show, “The Rest of the Story,” where he would tell the surprising or inspiring backstories to the important people and events of the day. Always concluding with “and now you know... the rest... of the story.” The purpose of these stories wasn’t to show you the seedy underbelly of things or to pull iconic events or people down off their pedestal or high horse. Rather, the point was to show you that the story you thought you knew was even more amazing, inspiring, or awesome than you realized.

The same is true in our study of Scripture. As we learn more and more about the God revealed in its pages, we find our previously held beliefs and assumptions challenged and stretched. The problem isn’t that we are wrong; we just don’t have the full picture. That is the case with the passage we are going to look at today. It gives the “rest of the story” to some famous words that Jesus uttered while hanging on the cross.

Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 both recount that as Jesus hung on the cross, at about the ninth hour, he cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Much has been made about what was happening to Jesus on the cross on a theological or spiritual level. Based on this passage, some believe that because Jesus was burdened down with the sin of the world that the Father turned his face away from Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul writes, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” In Galatians 3:13, Paul says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us.”

But that is not the whole story. Most people don’t realize that these words of Jesus are actually a quotation from the Old Testament. They are the opening lines to Psalm 22, which is about trusting God in the midst of suffering. Many people believe that Jesus might have even been quoting this Psalm to himself on the cross.

Psalm 22 was written by David. Though some have tried to connect this Psalm to an event in David’s life, the truth is that this passage doesn’t read like a description of persecution or illness. It reads like a man facing execution. In Acts 2:30-31, Peter tells us that in addition to being a king, David was also a prophet and that “he looked ahead to the resurrection

of the Christ.” Psalm 22 is an example of David’s prophetic ministry. He is looking forward to Jesus and predicting his rejection, death, and ultimate victory.

The Psalm is a prophecy of the suffering Messiah. It begins with crying to God with feeling abandonment, but it is ultimately a prayer of dependence on God, crying out for deliverance and trusting God to fulfill his plan.

We are going to look closer at Psalm 22 to learn the rest of the story. As we do, my hope is that we will gain confidence in God’s word as we see how the events of Easter were prophesied, gratitude at the price that was paid to deliver us from sin, and a deepened understanding of what was actually going on while Jesus hung on the cross.

PSALM 22 PROPHECIES THE SUBMISSION OF JESUS (v1-5)

Psalm 22 starts with the abandonment. There is more to even the first verse than just that. It expresses the submission of Jesus to the will of the father. Even when he feels most alone and forsaken, there is dependence on God that is found in the repetition of the adjective “my.” Feeling forsaken, Jesus still cries out in trust. God is still “His.”

When we look at the life of Jesus, we realize that Jesus knew this was part of the plan. In Mark 10:45, Jesus is talking about his mission and says, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” He knew His mission required Him to give His life as a way of delivering people from sin.

We also know that the plan was something that Jesus wrestles with and knew would be difficult. In Mark 14:36, Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.” The cup he is referring to is the cup of God’s judgement, the cup of punishment for sins that He must drink instead of us. He knew it was coming. He knew it was coming from God. Even then, he still called God, “Abba! Father!”

The rest of the verses in the first section of Psalm 22 show us a person who continues to cry out to God and remind himself that God is holy (v3) and can be trusted to deliver (v4-5). The cry of Jesus on the cross is proof he was experiencing the cup of God’s wrath, the separation from God caused by sin. But it also shows that Jesus continued to submit himself to God in the midst of it. Trusting God to deliver him as well.

PSALM 22 PROPHECIES THE REJECTION OF JESUS (v6-8)

Psalm 22 continues by describing the mocking of Jesus. Verses 7-8 say, “All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, ‘Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.’” This was fulfilled in Matthew 27:29-43, which says:

“And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save

Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, ⁴²“He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. ⁴³He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

PSALM 22 PROPHECIES THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS (v11-18)

Initially this section has vague and generalized descriptions of those attacking the Messiah. They are described like strong bulls (v12) and roaring lions (v13).

The prophecies of the crucifixion begin to become clearer with the description in v14 of “all my bones are out of joint.” The Hebrew literally says that the bones are “stretched out,” which suggests the way the body of the condemned was “stretched out” on the cross before being attached to it.

“My heart is like wax; it is melted within me” might be poetic description of suffering. But it is interesting that the death by crucifixion is characterized by heart trauma, as indicated by the effects of Jesus’s side being pierced. John 19:34 says, “But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.” This is either evidence of blood separating into red hemoglobin and clear serum, or it is a sign that fluid had built up in the pericardial sac surrounding the heart caused by the extreme exertion necessary for a condemned man to struggle to breathe during crucifixion. Either way, Jesus’s heart bore signs of that trauma

The connection to crucifixion becomes explicit in v16 which says, “They pierced my hands and feet.” Then finally, part of the psalm that is explicitly quoted as fulfilled by the events of Easter. Verse 18 says, “they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” This was fulfilled in John 19:23-24, which says:

²³Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. ²⁴So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be”; this was to fulfill the Scripture: “They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.”

PSALM 22 PROPHECIES THE VICTORY OF JESUS (v19-31)

Despite its dark beginning, the psalm ends with hope. He prays for God to “be not far off. (v19).” He continues to wait for help, assistance, and deliverance. He looks forward to a time when we will praise God for what He has done (v22). He says unequivocally about God in verse 24, “For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Nor has He hidden His face from him.”

The Psalm ends with a proclamation that through the suffering that he has endured salvation will be extended to the ends of the earth. Verse 27 says, “All the ends of the

earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before you.”

Jesus’s cry in Matthew, far from being a statement of abandonment, is proof of his submission to the Father and his trust in him. This view is supported by what Jesus says as he dies in Luke 23:46. “Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit.” He died not feeling abandoned by the Father but entrusting himself completely to Him. And through that trust, was able to endure the suffering that led to salvation. And now you know the rest of the story.

CONCLUSION

As we think about the events of Easter, we can draw confidence in God’s plan and in God’s word when we consider that the suffering of Jesus was predicted hundreds of years before it happened. Jesus’s cry on the cross is proof that Jesus knew why He came and what it would cost to do what He had been sent to do. It also underscores the confidence that Jesus had in God the father which helped him endure the suffering. May we praise God for the salvation we have through Jesus. May we also draw hope that as we undergo lesser versions of pain and suffering that we like Jesus can rest in God’s plan and hope in God’s deliverance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When does Jesus say “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? What do you think is the connection between Jesus’s words and Psalm 22?
2. What does Psalm 22 prophesy about the rejection of Jesus?
3. What does Psalm 22 prophesy about the crucifixion of Jesus?
4. What does Psalm 22 prophesy about the victory of Jesus?
5. How does reading Psalm 22 help us understand what Jesus said on the cross?

APRIL 3 | RESURRECTION MYSTERY

PSALM 16:10

Mystery novels are incredibly hard to write. If the story is too complex, the reader gets lost. If it is too obvious or easy to solve, then the reader gets bored. Some authors, to keep people from solving the mystery, withhold a final clue until the last minute, when the revelation unravels and reveals the solution to the mystery. But there is another method. Sometimes the author will leave clues to the solution all along the way. Important clues don't always appear as such. The careful reader, like a detective, notices things that don't belong. He doesn't necessarily know what they mean, but he gathers clues wondering what their significance is and waiting to see how it all adds up.

That prophecy we are looking at today is like one of those clues in a mystery story. It is a verse that doesn't make sense and doesn't seem like it belongs. People wondered for a while about what it could mean. It ended up being hidden clue pointing to the promise of the Messiah's resurrection.

Though the prophecy that was fulfilled is found in Psalm 16, we are going to look at it in the context of Peter's Pentecost sermon. In Acts 2:22-26, Peter interprets the prophecy, shows how it applies to Jesus and prophecies the resurrection as proof of His Messiahship. Psalm 16:10 might just be the first passage of scripture from the Old Testament that was ever used as a prophecy to prove the truth claims of Christianity. Peter used it to demonstrate that what happened to Jesus was not an accident, or an impossibility, but an event predicted and predetermined by God.

THE CLAIM (v22-28)

On Pentecost, Peter stood up before the crowd gathered in Jerusalem and delivered the first Christian sermon. A crowd had gathered gawking at the sight of the first followers of Jesus speaking in tongues. Peter started his sermon by explaining that they weren't intoxicated as some had thought, but rather they were fulfilling the prophecy of Joel, in which God promised to pour out his spirit on all mankind. He goes on from there to preach a sermon which focuses on the resurrection as proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

Peter starts his sermon by relating the details of Jesus's life in verse 22 ("attested to you with miracles"). Verse 23 talks about how Jesus was betrayed and killed. Though he blames the Jews (you nailed to a cross), he always says that this was part of God's "predetermined plan and foreknowledge."

In verse 24, Peter says that this predetermined plan didn't conclude with Jesus's death. Rather it came to a climax when "God raised him up again, putting an end to the agony of death." He then claims that the resurrection was not an unexpected twist in the divine

drama but rather an event that was prophesied in the Old Testament.

In verse 25-28, Peter gives an extended passage of Scripture taken from Psalm 16:8-11. But before he does so, he introduces the scripture with the brief phrase, “For David says of Him.” Peter claims the passage he is about to quote is not just a psalm, but a prophecy made by David and fulfilled by Jesus.

THE COMPLICATION (v29)

The problem is that when you look back in your Old Testament at Psalm 16, there doesn't seem to be anything all that prophetic about it. It reads like a psalm expressing dependance and trust in God, even up to death.

The important verse is Psalm 16:10, which says, “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” The first part of the verse by itself is able to be interpreted as meaning something like “God will rescue me from death” or “My relationship with God will not be interrupted by death.”

The second half of Psalm 16:10 is the complication. As Peter points out in Acts 2:29, “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.” If David was talking about himself, then this was patently false. David did die. David's body did undergo decay. You could still visit David's tomb in Peter's Day.

But there are clues in Psalm 16 that David, for this half verse, has stopped talking about himself and is talking about someone else. Go back and look at Psalm 16. Starting in verse 5, David used the possessive “my” multiple times: *my* inheritance and *my* cup (v5), *my* lot (v5), *my* heritage (v6), *my* mind (v7), *my* right hand (v8), *my* heart (v9), *my* flesh (v9), *my* soul (v10). But in the second half of verse 10 everything shifts. No more “my's.” Now David refers to “Your Holy One.” Is David talking about himself here or someone else? As Peter points out, it couldn't apply to David so it must be referring to someone else.

Because of this complication, this verse began to be read as a reference to the Messiah. Many might not have understood it in as promising resurrection for the Messiah. They probably thought it predicted that something would happen more like what happened to Enoch or Elijah, being bodily taken up to heaven.

THE CONNECTION (v30-32)

If Psalm 16:10 doesn't apply to David, who does it apply to? In the next few verses, Peter shows how this verse points to Jesus.

He starts by reminding them in verse 30 that God had promised to put one of David's

descendants on the throne. He quotes Psalm 132:11: “The Lord has sworn to David, A truth from which He will not turn back: ‘Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.’”

He then combines the two and says in verses 30-31, “³⁰And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. Peter says that since David knew God had promised to seat his descendant on his throne, he spoke prophetically and looked at head to the resurrection of Jesus when he wrote the enigmatic line in Psalm 16:10.

THE CONCLUSION (v32-36)

Peter then repeats in verse 32 the claim he made in verse 24,” This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.”

He then quotes an additional Psalm to illustrate that Jesus is more than a descendant of David. He is David’s lord, who was exalted to heaven. He quotes Psalm 110:1-2,”³⁴For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, ³⁵Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet’”

David is talking about someone higher than him, whom he calls “my Lord.” He describes God telling this Lord to sit at God’s right hand. Jesus himself discusses this passage in Matthew 22:41-45 and says that it applies to the Messiah (Christ is the Greek word for Messiah):

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: ⁴² “What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?” They said to Him, “The son of David.” ⁴³ He said to them, “Then how does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying, ⁴⁴ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet’”? ⁴⁵ If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?”

All this leads to Peter declaring in Acts 2:36 the startling conclusion, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

The resurrection of Jesus is proof not only that Jesus is the Messiah, but that He is more than just another king in the line of David. He is the Lord. As Thomas said when he saw the risen Jesus in John 20:28, “My Lord and my God!”

APPLICATION

Peter’s sermon in Acts underscores the fact that God’s predetermined plan has always been to send Jesus to die and rise again. He uses multiple Psalms to illustrate the fact that God promised through David to send one who would be even David’s Lord, and who “would not undergo decay” as a prophecy of Jesus’s resurrection.

Hopefully studying this prophecy instills in us greater confidence in God’s word and God’s

plan as we realized how God had revealed his “predetermined plan and foreknowledge” through the prophet and king David.

But there is more. Peter says in Acts 2:24, “God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death.” That means the agony of death for us. Jesus’s resurrection defeated death.

So, Psalm 16:10, though initially not referring to David, will one day apply to David and the rest of us. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:20, “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is Peter when he first claims that Psalm 16:10 is a prophecy fulfilled by Jesus?
2. What is the complication in interpreting Psalm 16:10 as a prophecy? What is the solution?
3. How does Peter connect Jesus to Psalm 16:10? What other Psalms does Peter use?
4. What else does Peter claim these psalms prove?
5. What does Peter mean about the resurrection of Jesus and “the agony of death?”

PSALM 118:22

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who throw things out the moment they don't need them anymore, and those who keep everything in case they might need it one day. Maybe those aren't two kinds of people, but maybe a spectrum we are all on at some point. A good indication of where you are on this spectrum is to look in your garage. You can tell which end of the spectrum you are on by starting with the question of whether there is a car in your garage or not. If there are two, then you are a throw everything out kind a person. One car means that you are middle of the road. No cars means that you are on the hoarding end of the spectrum.

I say you, but I mean me. I can't park a car in my garage. Why? It's not just because of all the bikes, and toys, and other stuff families accumulate. It's full of all the things I am unwilling to get rid of because I might need. I think every garage must come with an old can full of extra screws. There are things that I don't need, but don't want to get rid of because it still works. I just know, know deep in my bones, that the moment I sell it or take it to Goodwill or give it away, that is precisely when I will need it.

We have all done it. Needed something, went into the garage to find it, and realized you threw it out or got rid of it last week. You didn't realize you had the very thing you needed until you didn't have it anymore.

That is the kind of like the prophecy we are talking about today. It shows us how Jesus was the thing unwanted and cast aside by his people, but who turned out to be what they needed and were looking for. We are working our way through Old Testament Prophecies that were fulfilled on Easter. Today's prophecy is found in Psalm 118:22, which says, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone." Like a stone discarded on a building site, Jesus was rejected by His own. His resurrection, however, proves that he is the cornerstone of the new thing that God is building.

THE FULFILLED PROPHECY: PSALM 118:22

Psalm 118 is one of the most frequently quoted Psalms in the New Testament. The early Christians saw in this psalm multiple prophecies that were all fulfilled in Jesus. The crowds cheering Jesus on in the Triumphal entry is prophesied in Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." Some also saw a hint of Jesus in Psalm 118:17-18, which says ¹⁷I will not die, but live, and tell of the works of the Lord. ¹⁸The Lord has disciplined me severely, But He has not given me over to death." They interpreted it as meaning not that the messiah wouldn't die, but that He wouldn't stay dead. But the most famous verse in is Psalm 118:22, which says, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone."

Jesus applies these verses to Himself in a parable he tells in Mark 12:1-10 about a man who plants a vineyard and the rents it out to vine-growers while he goes away on a journey. The story tells how the vine-growers begin to consider the vineyard their own and refuse to give any of the produce to its true owner. After a series of messengers are abused by the tenants, the owner decides to send his own son. Instead of respecting Him, the tenants hatch a plot to kill the son and claim the son's inheritance as their own. Jesus concludes by asking what they thought the owner would do. It's a rhetorical question, which Jesus answers himself in v9, "He will come and destroy the vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others." Jesus then quotes Psalm 118:22. Mark 12:10-11 says, "Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief corner stone; 'This came about from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

This parable, however, is not the best place to look to fully understand this prophecy. The resurrection hasn't happened yet, so Jesus just applies this passage just to His rejection by the Jewish leader.

PETER AND PSALM 118:32 (ACTS 4:11)

The fullest description of the fulfillment of this prophecy is found in Acts 3-4. Acts 3 tells the story of Peter and John healing a lame man in the temple. It contains the famous verse Acts 3:6, where Peter tells the man, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" After the healing, a crowd gathers and listens to be Peter deliver his second sermon.

Acts 4 starts with the temple officials upset at what Peter and John are teaching. Acts 4:2 says that they were "greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." It's already late in the day, so Peter and John are imprisoned until morning. On the next day, Peter and John are summoned before the Jewish rulers, who ask them in Acts 4:7, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" Peter then proceeds to give his third sermon. This one is as brief as it is powerful. The sermon lasts a mere 4 verses.

He says in Acts 4:9-10, "If we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health."

Peter tells them that Jesus had been crucified and raised from the dead. Important for our discussion, Peter applies Psalm 118:22 directly to Jesus. In Acts 4:11, Peter says, "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone.

Peter declares that Psalm 118 was fulfilled by Jesus, by his treatment at the hands of the Jewish leaders, and by God's vindication of Him by raising Him from the dead. Jesus is the rejected stone. The Builders are the Jewish leaders who had Jesus killed. Though He

doesn't state in explicitly, the logical conclusion is that the resurrection is proof that Jesus has become the chief corner stone.

That is why Peter concludes his sermon by telling them in Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Jesus is the cornerstone of God's plan for salvation.

THE FURTHER PROMISE (EPHESIANS 2:19-22)

As with the other prophecies, this one is more than just the occurrence of an improbably event. It shows us some key things that are important for us to know about God and what He is doing through Jesus.

1. **Cornerstone of what?** – After realizing that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy, the next question we should ask is: "What is Jesus the cornerstone of?" A cornerstone is used in construction. What is being built? The answer is revealed in Ephesians 2:19-22, where Paul says this:

¶So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ¶built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ¶in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ¶in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Jesus is the cornerstone of a new temple of God, the church.

2. **Being Fitted Together** – Paul says we are "being fitted together." This refers to the fact that once the cornerstone was in place, masons would haul giant rough-cut stones onto building sites, then start cutting and chipping and smoothing the stones to make sure they stayed firmly and completely on the foundation and snugly next to the stones around it. To determine if a stone was perfectly shaped, they would often use a "thumbnail" test. They would drag their thumbnail across a joint where two blocks met, if their thumbnail caught or snagged, then the stones needed more polishing and sanding. So, when Paul says that the church is being fitted together, it means that stones whose edges don't quite align are being stacked next to each other and are having their rough edges smoothed so that they become unified into a seamless whole. That means that church is a place where we are refined by God, where we have our lives shaped and changed according to his plans.
3. **Holy Temple** – Paul says that the building Jesus is the cornerstone of is a Holy Temple. The church isn't a country club, or a political group, or a bible college, or a pep rally, or a concert hall. It is a holy temple. Holy, meaning that it is supposed to be set apart and different. It isn't supposed to make sense to the world. Holy doesn't mean that no one is allowed in unless they themselves are holy. But rather, it means that the goal of the church is to make us holy: pure, perfect, the people God

created us to be. And it's a temple, meaning it exists to draw people to God and to be a place where God meets his people. Paul in the next verse uses a phrase "built together into a dwelling place of God in the spirit." The church is the place where we focus on God, learn more about who he is, and in the process discover who we were really meant to be.

CONCLUSION

This prophecy encourages us to not be one of those people who reject God's cornerstone. It also encourages us that God has a way of using the stuff the world doesn't want to accomplish His purposes. 1 Corinthians 1:27-28, Paul says "27but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are." The Bible is full of stories of people the world didn't want, who were useful to God. God is looking for those people to add to the building He is building, whose cornerstone is Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What other easter prophecies are found in Psalm 118?
2. How does Jesus apply Psalm 118? What is the point of the parable he is telling?
3. How does Peter apply Psalm 118? What does Peter say proves Jesus is the cornerstone?
4. How are we being fitted together? What are some bad things that churches are founded upon?
5. What does it mean that the church is supposed to be a "holy temple?"

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— ABOUT THE AUTHOR —

Dr. Steve Jones has been the Teaching & Training Pastor at Kingsland Baptist Church since June 2016. He teaches regularly through the church in a variety of formats and works with the Discipleship Pastor to equip and develop leaders at Kingsland who are empowered to use their gifting to teach the Bible in life-changing ways.

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