From Suffering to Glory


Key verse: “Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets” (Luke 24:27).

“People often think of the Bible as a series of individual, unconnected stories,” wrote Timothy George. “But if we survey the Scriptures as a whole, we discover that they form one great story of redemption—from the opening scenes of Genesis to the final chapter of Revelation. Weaving through all the diverse strands of the Bible is a divine storyline, the overarching story of what God has been up to in the rescue and restoration of fallen human beings, from the first nanosecond of creation through the final cry of victory at the end of time” (Christianity Today, 10-23-00).

At the center of this great story is Jesus, and the redemption He made possible by His life, death, and resurrection.

Following His resurrection, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus himself made clear His central role in the story of redemption, as set forth in the Old Testament Scriptures: “Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets….Jesus said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled’” (Luke 24:27,44).

Don’t you wish you could have heard that conversation, as Jesus “interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures”? I suspect that a part of that conversation included how His own life, death, and resurrection fulfilled the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

In his book, The Case for Christ, Lee Strobel gives an overview of some of those prophecies and their fulfillment: “Isaiah revealed the manner of the Messiah’s birth (of a virgin); Micah pinpointed the place of his birth (Bethlehem); Genesis and Jeremiah specified his ancestry (a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from the tribe of Judah, the house of David); the Psalms foretold his betrayal, his accusation by false witnesses, his manner of
death (pierced in the hands and feet, although crucifixion hadn’t been invented yet), and his resurrection (he would not decay but would ascend on high).”

Strobel adds: “Someone did the math and figured out that the probability of just eight [of the Old Testament messianic] prophecies being fulfilled is one chance in one hundred million billion. That number is millions of times greater than the total number of people who have ever walked the planet!

“The odds alone say it would be impossible for anyone to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies. Yet Jesus—and only Jesus throughout all history—managed to do it.”

Isaiah 53, written hundreds of years before the time of Jesus, is one of the Old Testament passages that gives a remarkably specific picture of the Messiah who would suffer and die for the sins of Israel and the world. Looking at a small portion of that chapter, Isaiah 53:5-8a, demonstrates how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies:

“He was pierced because of our rebellions and crushed because of our crimes. He bore the punishment that made us whole; by his wounds we are healed” (v. 5). On the cross, Jesus’ hands and feet were “pierced” with nails, and his side was pierced with a spear. On the cross, Jesus bore the sins of the world. His spirit was “crushed” by their weight. But his sacrifice “made us whole”!

“Like sheep we had all wandered away, each going its own way, but the Lord let fall on him all our crimes” (v. 6). Under the Old Testament sacrificial system, the priest would lay his hands on the scapegoat, symbolically placing on it the peoples’ sins. Christ, like the sacrificial goat or lamb, died for our sins. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

“He was oppressed and tormented, but didn’t open his mouth. Like a lamb being brought to slaughter, like a ewe silent before her shearers, he didn’t open his mouth” (v. 7). Jesus fulfilled this prophecy when, before the chief priests, Pilate, and Herod, Jesus remained silent in the face of their accusations (Matthew 27:12-14; Mark 14:60-61; 15:4-5; John 19:8-9 & Luke 23:8-9).

“Due to an unjust ruling he was taken away, and his fate—who will think about it?” (v. 8a). Jesus was given an unfair trial, then “taken away” to the cross of Calvary.

As we walk in the afterglow of this Easter season, not only do we serve a risen Savior but also the One who fulfills the messianic promises of the Old Testament. We can rejoice in the truth of Jesus’ words: “Everything written
about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44).

Thanks be to God!

(Contact Michael at msigler@fumcfwb.com.)