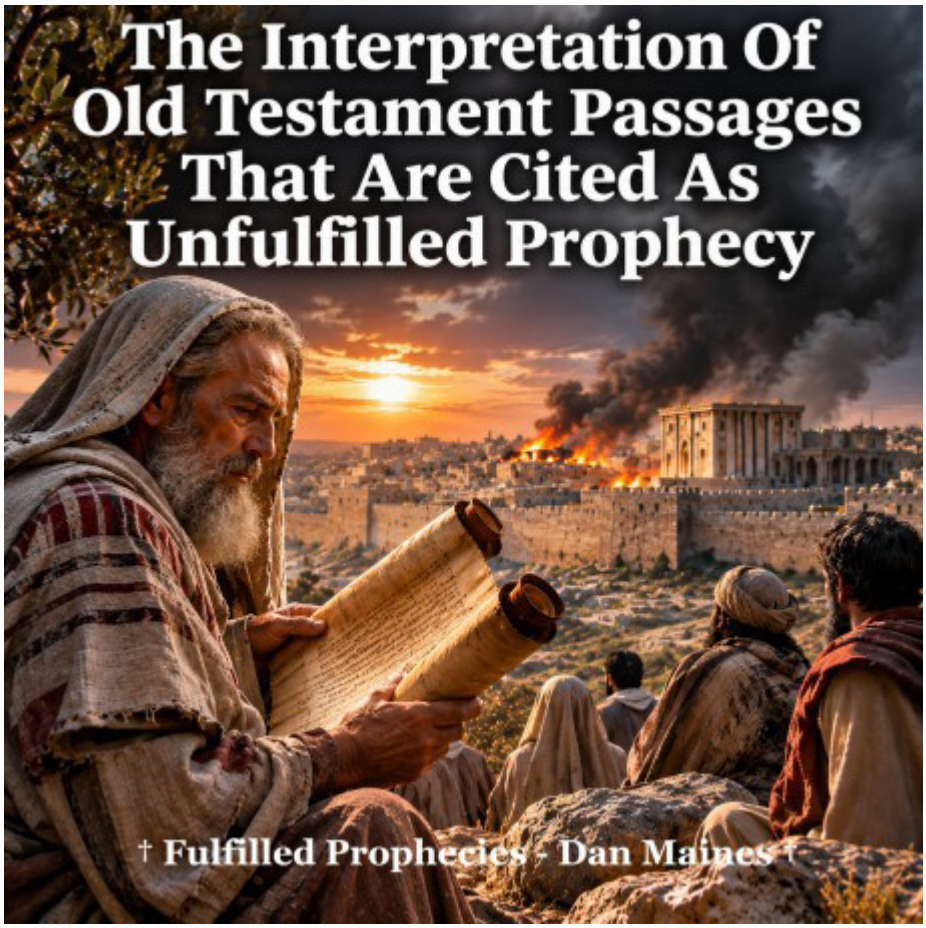
Fulfilled Prophecies

The Interpretation Of Old Testament Passages That Are Cited As Unfulfilled Prophecy



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Many Christians believe the Old Testament contains prophecies that remain unfulfilled. They point to promises concerning Israel, the restoration of Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the temple, the resurrection of the dead, the reign of the Messiah, and the creation of new heavens and a new earth.

† But here's the problem. Many of these interpretations overlook how Jesus and His apostles explained the Old

Testament. They take prophecies that the New Testament identifies with Christ and His first-century kingdom and move them thousands of years into our future (Luke 24:44; Acts 3:24).
† We must remember that the Old Testament prophets frequently used symbolic language to describe covenant changes, national judgments, and spiritual restoration. Mountains represented kingdoms, heavenly disturbances represented the downfall of nations, and Jerusalem represented God's covenant people (Isaiah 13:10; Daniel 2:44; Galatians 4:26).
† The fulfilled perspective doesn't deny the promises of the Old Testament. It recognizes their fulfillment through Jesus Christ, the establishment of the New Covenant, and the completion of the Old Covenant age in AD 70 (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 8:13).
† Let's examine several passages commonly cited as unfulfilled prophecy and allow Scripture to explain their meaning.

The Promise Of A New Heavens And A New Earth
Isaiah 65:17-18
For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing And her people for gladness.
† Futurists commonly interpret this passage as predicting the destruction of the physical universe and the creation of another planet. But Isaiah connects the new heavens and new earth with the creation of Jerusalem as a place of rejoicing (Revelation 21:1-2).
† In prophetic language, heavens and earth can represent an established covenant order. Isaiah was describing the passing of the former covenant arrangement and the establishment of the New Covenant through Christ (Isaiah 51:16; Hebrews 8:13).
† The New Jerusalem isn't a future physical city descending onto a reconstructed planet. John identifies the bride as the holy city, and Hebrews identifies the heavenly Jerusalem with the assembly of believers (Revelation 21:9-10; Hebrews 12:22-23).
† Isaiah's promise reached its covenantal fulfillment when the

Old Covenant order passed away in AD 70. God's people now belong to the New Covenant creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15).

The Wolf Dwelling With The Lamb
Isaiah 11:6, 9
And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them.
They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.
† Some interpret this prophecy as predicting a future world where wild animals become physically harmless. But Isaiah's subject is the righteous reign of the Messiah and the peace established under His authority (Isaiah 11:1-5).
† The wolf and lamb illustrate the reconciliation of those formerly separated by hostility. Christ brought Jews and Gentiles together into one body and established peace through His cross (Ephesians 2:14-16).
† God's holy mountain represents His established kingdom, not necessarily a geographical mountain where animals must change their behavior (Daniel 2:35, 44; Hebrews 12:22).
† The knowledge of the Lord spread through the preaching of the gospel. Paul declared that the gospel had been proclaimed in all creation under heaven before AD 70 (Colossians 1:23).
† Isaiah's prophetic picture describes the peace and unity found in Christ's kingdom, not an unfulfilled zoological prediction (Romans 15:12; Ephesians 2:17).

The Restoration Of David's Fallen Kingdom
Amos 9:11-12
In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, And wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins And rebuild it as in the days of old;
That they may possess the remnant of Edom And all the nations who are called by My name, Declares the LORD who does this.

† This passage is frequently used to support a future restoration of Israel's political kingdom. But the apostles already explained its fulfillment during the first century (Acts 15:13-18).
† At the Jerusalem Council, James cited Amos to explain why Gentiles were entering God's people through faith in Jesus Christ. He didn't postpone the prophecy until a future millennium (Acts 15:14-19).
† David's fallen booth was restored through the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, the promised descendant of David who received His kingdom (Acts 2:29-36).
† The inclusion of the nations was evidence that the restoration promised by Amos was taking place. The Messiah's kingdom wasn't restricted to a geographical nation (Romans 15:8-12; Ephesians 2:19).

The Promise Of A New Covenant With Israel
Jeremiah 31:31, 33
Behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD, I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
† Some teach that Jeremiah's promise remains unfulfilled because modern national Israel hasn't entered the New Covenant. But Hebrews explicitly applies Jeremiah's prophecy to the covenant established through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:6-13).
† Jesus identified His blood as the blood of the New Covenant. He didn't announce a covenant that would remain unavailable for thousands of years (Luke 22:20).
† The apostles preached the New Covenant during the first century, and believers were already receiving its blessings through faith (2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 10:15-18).
† The Old Covenant was becoming obsolete when Hebrews was written. Its remaining institutional system disappeared with

Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 (Hebrews 8:13; Matthew 24:1-2).
† God's covenant people are now identified through their relationship with Christ rather than their physical ancestry (Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 9:6-8).

The Temple And God's Dwelling Among His People
Ezekiel 37:26-27
I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.
† Futurists often connect Ezekiel's temple prophecies with a future physical temple in Jerusalem. But Ezekiel connects God's sanctuary with an everlasting covenant of peace (Ezekiel 37:24-28).
† Jesus established that peace through His sacrifice. The New Testament identifies believers as God's temple, built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).
† Paul declared that God's people were His temple and that His Spirit dwelled among them. He didn't tell Christians to wait for another building in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16).
† The physical temple belonged to the Old Covenant system. Christ's completed sacrifice removed the need for its priesthood, altar, and repeated sacrifices (Hebrews 9:11-12; 10:11-18).
† God's promised dwelling among His people is fulfilled in His New Covenant community, not through the restoration of animal sacrifices (Revelation 21:3, 22).

The Outpouring Of The Holy Spirit
Joel 2:28-29
It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.

Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.
† Some Christians place Joel's prophecy into a future worldwide revival. But Peter explicitly identified the events of Pentecost as the fulfillment of what Joel had spoken (Acts 2:16-21).
† The outpouring of the Spirit accompanied the establishment of the New Covenant and confirmed the authority of the apostles who proclaimed Christ (Acts 2:32-33; Hebrews 2:3-4).
† Joel's prophecy also included signs associated with the coming Day of the Lord. Jesus connected that judgment with Jerusalem's destruction within His own generation (Joel 2:30-31; Matthew 24:29-34).
† The miraculous gifts served their purpose during the foundational period of the church. The Spirit continues to dwell in believers, but the first-century prophetic signs don't need another fulfillment (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Ephesians 2:20).

The Resurrection And The Time Of The End
Daniel 12:1-2, 7
Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.
Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.
I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.
† Daniel connects the resurrection with a time of unprecedented distress and the shattering of the power of the holy people. These events belong together in the prophecy (Daniel 12:1-7).
† Jesus used Daniel's language when describing the great tribulation that would come upon Jerusalem during the

generation standing before Him (Matthew 24:21, 34).
† The power of the holy people was their covenant standing under the Law, represented by Jerusalem, the temple, and its priesthood. That entire Old Covenant arrangement reached its historical end in AD 70 (Hebrews 8:13; 10:9).
† Daniel didn't place the resurrection thousands of years after that covenantal destruction. He connected the completion of these events with the shattering of the holy people's power (Daniel 12:7).
† From the fulfilled perspective, the resurrection was the promised deliverance from covenant death, accomplished through Christ at the completion of the Old Covenant age (1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Revelation 20:12-15).
† Believers who die today don't wait in Hades for another resurrection event. They depart to be with Christ because the promised redemption has been accomplished (Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8).

The Lord Standing On The Mount Of Olives
Zechariah 14:4, 9
In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.
And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.
† Many interpret this passage as requiring Jesus to return physically to the Mount of Olives and split the mountain apart. But Zechariah begins the chapter by describing nations gathering against Jerusalem and the city's suffering (Zechariah 14:1-2).
† The splitting mountain belongs to prophetic judgment imagery. Similar language describes God's intervention in history without requiring every geographical feature to undergo a literal transformation (Micah 1:3-4; Nahum 1:5).
† Jesus foretold Jerusalem's destruction and identified those

events as the days of vengeance in which the things written would be fulfilled (Luke 21:20-22).
† The Mount of Olives was also the setting where Jesus announced the destruction of the temple and the judgment coming upon His generation (Matthew 24:1-3, 34).
† Zechariah's declaration that the Lord would reign over all the earth agrees with Christ's exaltation and His present authority over every nation (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22).
† The fulfilled interpretation recognizes the Lord's covenantal judgment against Jerusalem and the establishment of His universal reign, rather than requiring a future physical appearance on the mountain.

The Mountain Of The Lord In The Last Days
Isaiah 2:2-3
Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it.
And many peoples will come and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths. For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
† Some expect this prophecy to be fulfilled through a future political kingdom headquartered in physical Jerusalem. But the apostles identified their own generation as living in the last days (Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2).
† The word of the Lord went forth from Jerusalem when the apostles began preaching the gospel after Christ's resurrection (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).
† The mountain of the Lord represents God's exalted kingdom. Daniel likewise described a kingdom established by God that would overcome the kingdoms of men (Daniel 2:35, 44).
† Christians have already come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. Hebrews doesn't describe that access as something postponed until a future earthly kingdom (Hebrews 12:22-24).

† Isaiah's promise finds its fulfillment in the kingdom of Christ and the gathering of the nations through the gospel (Romans 15:9-12).

The Shaking Of Heaven And Earth
Haggai 2:6-7
For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.
'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.
† This prophecy is sometimes interpreted as a future destruction of the physical universe. But Hebrews applies Haggai's shaking to the removal of what could be shaken and the establishment of what couldn't be shaken (Hebrews 12:26-28).
† The Old Covenant system was temporary. Its earthly sanctuary, priesthood, and sacrifices were shadows pointing toward the greater reality accomplished through Christ (Hebrews 8:5; 10:1).
† The kingdom believers were receiving couldn't be shaken because it was established through the eternal work of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:28).
† The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 visibly removed the remaining institutions of the Old Covenant order. Christ's kingdom remained, just as the writer of Hebrews declared (Hebrews 8:13; 12:27-28).

The Promise Of An Everlasting New Creation
Isaiah 66:22
For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me, declares the LORD, So your offspring and your name will endure.
† Isaiah connects the permanence of the new heavens and new earth with the endurance of God's people. His emphasis is covenantal permanence, not the replacement of the physical

planet (Isaiah 66:21-23).
† The New Covenant established through Christ is everlasting. Its priesthood, sacrifice, and promises don't need to be replaced by another covenant (Hebrews 13:20; 7:24-25).
† The church is the New Covenant people of God, and Christ's kingdom has no end. The promise of an enduring new creation is therefore understood through the completed work of Christ (Luke 1:32-33; Ephesians 3:21).
† We aren't waiting for God to establish another redemptive order. We live under the covenant that Christ has already established (Hebrews 9:15).

Historical References
† Flavius Josephus, writing in The Jewish War, Books V-VI, described Jerusalem's siege, the destruction of the temple, famine, and the suffering of the Jewish people during the Roman war. His account provides historical background for the judgment Jesus foretold.
† Tacitus, in Histories, Book V, described the Roman conflict involving Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. His account independently confirms the historical setting of the first-century catastrophe.
† Eusebius, in Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapter 5, reported the departure of Christians from Jerusalem to Pella before the city's destruction. His account supports the historical tradition that believers responded to warnings concerning Jerusalem.
† These historical writers help establish the events surrounding AD 70. They don't independently prove every covenantal interpretation, but their accounts confirm the historical destruction that fulfilled interpreters connect with Jesus' warnings (Luke 21:20-22).

How It Applies To Us Today
† We don't need to live in fear of another great tribulation, another destruction of Jerusalem required by prophecy, or another Day of the Lord waiting to complete what Christ

promised His first-century disciples (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:22).
† We should interpret Old Testament prophecy through Jesus and His apostles rather than through modern political events, newspaper headlines, or speculation about national Israel (Luke 24:44-47).
† We belong to the kingdom that cannot be shaken. Our hope rests in Christ's completed redemption, not in the rebuilding of a physical temple (Hebrews 12:28; Ephesians 2:19-22).
† We should rejoice that the New Covenant is established, the heavenly Jerusalem is our home, and believers have direct access to the Father through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22-24; Ephesians 2:18).
† The fulfillment of prophecy doesn't mean God's work among His people has stopped. We continue to teach the gospel, love one another, serve those in need, and proclaim the completed work of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20; Galatians 5:13-14).
† The question isn't what Old Testament prophecy still needs to happen. The question is whether we're willing to accept the New Testament's explanation of what God has already accomplished (Acts 3:18-24).

Q & A Appendix
Q: Doesn't Isaiah 65 predict a future physical new earth?
A: From the fulfilled perspective, Isaiah's new heavens and new earth describe the New Covenant creation. The New Jerusalem is identified with God's people, who have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem (Isaiah 65:17-18; Hebrews 12:22-23; Revelation 21:9-10).
Q: Doesn't Isaiah 11 require literal animals to live peacefully together?
A: The passage uses prophetic imagery to describe the peace and reconciliation established through the Messiah. Christ brought those formerly separated into one body (Isaiah 11:6-9; Ephesians 2:14-16).
Q: Isn't David's kingdom supposed to be restored in the future?
A: James applied Amos' prophecy to the inclusion of Gentiles in

the first-century church. Peter proclaimed that Jesus had already been exalted to God's right hand (Acts 15:13-18; Acts 2:30-36).

Q: Doesn't Jeremiah promise a future covenant specifically with Israel?

A: Hebrews identifies Jeremiah's promised New Covenant with the covenant established through Christ. Believers were already participating in its blessings during the first century (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13).

Q: Doesn't Ezekiel describe a future physical temple?

A: The New Testament identifies believers as God's temple and His dwelling place in the Spirit. Christ's sacrifice fulfilled what the former temple system anticipated (Ephesians 2:19-22; Hebrews 10:11-18).

Q: Didn't Joel predict a future outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

A: Peter explicitly identified Pentecost with Joel's prophecy. The promised outpouring began during the first century (Acts 2:16-21).

Q: How can Daniel's resurrection be fulfilled if people still physically die?

A: The fulfilled perspective understands the promised resurrection in relation to deliverance from covenant death. Physical death continues, but believers now depart to be with Christ (Daniel 12:1-7; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Philippians 1:23).

Q: Doesn't Zechariah 14 require Jesus to stand physically on the Mount of Olives?

A: The fulfilled interpretation understands the mountain imagery within Zechariah's description of judgment against Jerusalem and the Lord's reign. Jesus connected Jerusalem's destruction with the fulfillment of what had been written (Zechariah 14:1-9; Luke 21:20-22).

Q: Doesn't Haggai predict the future destruction of the universe?

A: Hebrews applies Haggai's shaking to the removal of what could be shaken and the receiving of an unshakable kingdom (Haggai 2:6-7; Hebrews 12:26-28).

Q: Are there any Old Testament prophecies that still require

future fulfillment?
A: From the full preterist perspective, the redemptive prophecies concerning Christ's coming, the kingdom, judgment, resurrection, and New Covenant creation reached their fulfillment by AD 70. The kingdom and its blessings continue, but their prophetic establishment isn't still future (Luke 21:22; Matthew 24:34; Revelation 22:6-10).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Isaiah 65:17-18; Isaiah 11:6, 9; Amos 9:11-12; Jeremiah 31:31, 33; Ezekiel 37:26-27; Joel 2:28-29; Daniel 12:1-2, 7; Zechariah 14:4, 9; Isaiah 2:2-3; Haggai 2:6-7; Isaiah 66:22.
† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books V-VI; Tacitus, Histories, Book V; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book III, Chapter 5.

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