

# Looking at the Old Testament on Good Friday

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by David Schrock

Although the centerpiece of the Bible—Christ’s cross—is revealed in the New Testament, we cannot understand its meaning without the Old Testament. Indeed, Paul says Christ’s death and resurrection happened “according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4), which means according to the *Old Testament Scriptures*. Similarly, Peter says the prophets were led by the Spirit of Christ to “predict the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.” He writes more fully,

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10–12)*

Peter says something even more radical about the cross of Christ a few verses later:

*With the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. **He was foreknown before the foundation of the world** but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you. (v. 20)*

The cross wasn’t the tragic conclusion of a series of unexpected events. It was God’s predestined plan to put Jesus to death. Twice in Acts the early church attests to God’s eternal plan to put Jesus to death at the hands of wicked men.

*This Jesus, **delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God**, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (Acts 2:23)*

*For truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, **to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.** (Acts 4:27–28)*

Even more shocking, the cross wasn’t *ultimately* the result of man’s sin or Satan’s rage. Isaiah 53 says it was God’s will to put his Son to death, and Jesus himself says in John’s Gospel that he willingly laid down his life in obedience to the Father.

***Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;** he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:10)*

*For this reason the Father loves me, **because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. (John 10:17–18)*

To put all this together, understanding what Jesus did on the cross takes more than learning the history of his final week on earth. Certainly, we must know the events of Jesus' life and death, but if you listen carefully to the four Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), they regularly show how Jesus' arrest, trial, and execution fulfilled the Old Testament Scripture. Here are three examples from John's Gospel:

*So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to **fulfill the Scripture** which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." (John 19:24, quoting Psalm 22:18)*

*After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. (John 19:28–29, alluding to Psalm 69:21)*

*For these things took place **that the Scripture might be fulfilled**: "Not one of his bones will be broken." And **again another Scripture** says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced." (John 19:36–37, quoting Exodus 12:46 and Zechariah 12:10)*

So too, Christians must learn to understand the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection by reading the Old Testament with the New, and vice versa. As Jesus said on the day of his resurrection, "everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Writings must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44).

To understand what this means, we read the Old Testament with expectation that we will encounter promises and prophecies, types and shadows that prefigure the person and work of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:10–12). And when we remember Christ's death on this Good Friday, we do so with recognition that so much of gratitude towards Christ is based on understanding how his death and resurrection accomplished the eternal plans of God.

Tonight, we gather to meditate on but one strand of Christ's work on the cross. We will consider how Jesus's death provided salvation for us, as we turn to the Old Testament (Genesis 22 to be exact) and work our way forward to the glorious substitution of Christ for sinners on Mount Calvary.

Come join us at 7:00pm to worship the God who died in our place, securing eternal life for us through his cross and resurrection.

For His Glory and your joy, Pastor David