

# *Redeemer Bible Fellowship - Sunday School (Jan. 2025)*

## HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES

(With an emphasis on the NT use of the OT)

- I. Biblical Meaning is Single in Nature (1/5/25)
- II. Biblical Meaning is Straightforward in Sense (1/12/25)
- III. Biblical Meaning is Progressive in Details (1/19/25)

### **IV. Biblical Meaning is Embedded in Context**

Based on the concept of authorial intent (Week 1), it can never *mean* something to us that it never was intended to *mean* to them. (Contra. significance or application)

#### 1. Historical/Literary setting

- Who is speaking?
- What kind of literary style is being implemented?
- Who was it written to?
- When was it written?
- Where is it taking place?
- Why is it being said?/What is the occasion?

#### 2. Grammatical examination

**Matt Waymeyer:** Rather than simply a random collection of unrelated thoughts, every New Testament book was written as a cohesive set of assertions that progressively communicate a logical flow of thought.<sup>1</sup>

This understanding presupposes that every word was specifically chosen by God.

- Conjunctions (and, but, now, therefore, then, etc.)
- Verbal features (finite, participle, past/present/perfect tense, etc.)
- Theologically rich or unique words (atonement, propitiation, love, eternal life, etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> Matt Waymeyer, "New Testament Interpretation: An Exegetical Handbook for Expository Preachers," Unpublished TES Class Notes, 23.

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-Repeated words/phrases

-What is the author's main idea in the verse or paragraph?

## What about the NT authors' use of "fulfill" with regards to OT texts?

**Michael Vlach:** Depending on context, the word has various nuances including, "to fill up," "to make full," "to realize," "to bring to realization," "to complete," "to bring to pass," "to accomplish," "to fill to the top," "to consummate," or "to make complete." The term can refer to the filling up of fishing nets (Matt. 13:48), the completion of a speech (Luke 7:1), complete joy (John 16:24; Acts 2:28; 1 John 1:4; 2 John 1:12), being filled up with knowledge (Col. 1:9), Satan influencing someone to lie (Acts 5:3), a full number of martyrs (Rev. 6:11), among other uses. Context will determine the meaning of "fulfill" (pleroō). Its use does not necessarily refer to the direct realization of an OT prophecy or prediction, although that certainly does occur. [Loving others is the fulfillment (summation) of the law—Rom 13:8; Gal 5:14].<sup>2</sup>

**D.A. Carson:** Untutored Christians are prone to think of prophecy and fulfillment as something not very different from straightforward propositional prediction and fulfillment. A closer reading of the NT reveals that prophecy is more complex than that. The Epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, understands the Levitical sacrificial system to be prophetic of Christ's sacrifice, Melchizedek to point to Jesus as High Priest, and so on. In Matthew, we are told that Jesus' return from Egypt fulfills the OT text that refers to the Exodus (2:15); the weeping of the mothers of Bethlehem fulfills Jeremiah's reference to Rachel weeping for her children in Rama; the priests' purchase of a field for thirty pieces of silver fulfills Scriptures describing actions performed by Jeremiah and Zechariah (27:9); and, in one remarkable instance, Jesus' move to Nazareth fulfills "what was said through the prophets" even though no specific text appears to be in mind (2:23). Add to this one other major peculiarity: A number (variously estimated between 10-14) of Matthew's OT quotations are introduced by a fulfillment formula characterized by a passive form of plēroō ("to fulfill") and a text form rather more removed from the LXX than other OT quotations... The NT writers insist that the OT can be rightly interpreted only if the entire revelation is kept in perspective as it is historically unfolded (e.g., Gal 3:6-14). Hermeneutically this is not an innovation. OT writers drew lessons [not meaning] out of earlier salvation history, lessons difficult to perceive while that history was being lived... (e.g., Ps 78:2/Mt 13:35).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Vlach, *The Old in the New* (Kress Biblical Resources: The Master's Seminary Press, 2021), 139.

<sup>3</sup> D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 27, 92-93.

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Abner Chou: Fulfillment in [certain] cases is not prediction-actualization strictly speaking. Rather, [the NT authors] deal with the working-out and accomplishing of the ramifications of prior revelation... Put in terms of the prophetic to apostolic hermeneutic, perhaps the apostles were not always claiming a prophecy being fulfilled, but the completion or full development of the work of their prophetic predecessors. The theology has been brought to its fullest maturation [now that Christ has come and all things are summed up in him (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:18)].<sup>4</sup>

Examples:

Js 2:23/Gn 15:6, Mt 13:14-15/Is 6:9-10 (cf. Acts 28:25-27), Jn 13:18/Ps. 41:9, Jn 19:28/Ps 69:21

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<sup>4</sup> Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2018), 132-133.