

Matthew 12:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

Analysis

Matthew states 'That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying.' This introduces quotation from Isaiah 42:1-4. Matthew frequently demonstrates Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecy—his Gospel contains over 60 Old Testament citations. The formula 'that it might be fulfilled' (ἵνα πληρωθῇ/hina plērōthē) indicates divine purpose: Jesus's actions weren't accidental but fulfillment of God's prophesied plan. Reformed theology emphasizes this: redemption unfolds according to eternal divine plan (Ephesians 1:4-5, Acts 2:23). Jesus is the goal toward which all Old Testament pointed. This specific citation comes from Isaiah's first Servant Song, identifying Jesus as the promised Servant—suffering, humble, effective. The quotation demonstrates Jesus's mission: not political revolutionary but humble servant accomplishing spiritual salvation through suffering. Matthew's Jewish audience would recognize prophetic fulfillment as proof of messianic identity. Every detail of Christ's life accomplishes Scripture.

Historical Context

Isaiah 42:1-4 (written circa 700 BC) described mysterious Servant of the Lord—interpretations debated whether this referred to Israel collectively, righteous remnant, prophet Isaiah, or future Messiah. Jesus's ministry revealed: the Servant is Messiah personally. Matthew shows how Jesus's withdrawal from Pharisaic opposition (v.15), healing ministry (v.15), and command to silence (v.16) all fulfill Isaiah's prophecy. Early church extensively used Servant Songs (Isaiah 42, 49, 50,

53) as messianic proof-texts. Philip used Isaiah 53 to explain gospel to Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-35). These prophecies demonstrated Jesus's identity through: predicted details of ministry and suffering, vindication through resurrection, and accomplishment of redemption. Matthew's frequent 'fulfillment formulas' aimed to convince Jewish readers Jesus is promised Messiah. Every aspect of His life and work fulfilled Scripture precisely.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Jesus as fulfillment of specific Old Testament prophecies strengthen your faith in biblical reliability and divine orchestration?
2. What does it mean that Christ's life wasn't reactive but purposeful—deliberately fulfilling prophesied plan?
3. How should Christians read Old Testament prophecy—looking for fulfillment in Christ rather than isolated moral lessons?

Interlinear Text

ὅπως	πληρωθῇ	τοῦ	ῥηθέν	διὰ	Ἡσαΐου	τοῦ
That	it might be fulfilled	which	was spoken	by	Esaias	which
G3704	G4137	G3588	G4483	G1223	G2268	G3588
προφήτου	λέγοντος					
the prophet	saying					
G4396	G3004					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 42:9 (Parallel theme): Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Isaiah 44:26 (Parallel theme): That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

Matthew 21:4 (Prophecy): All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Matthew 13:35 (Prophecy): That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

John 12:38 (Prophecy): That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?