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God's promises are *always* fulfilled



As told by Luke

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God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? (Numbers 23:19).

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: None of my words will be delayed any longer; whatever I say will be fulfilled, declares the Lord” (Ezekiel 12:28).

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17).

You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed (Joshua 23:14).

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This 12th **Sandwich** paper centres on the third Gospel, which is an inclusio, that starts and ends with the **fulfilment** of real-world affairs (Luke 1:1, 24:44). In between these two, are six other **fulfilments** of major significance (1:20, 4:21, 9:51, 21:22, 24, 22:16). The table shows these eight in detail.

Text	Word	Greek
Luke 1:1	Forasmuch as many have set out to carefully organise an exhaustive explanation of the things that have been fulfilled (<i>plerophoreo</i>) among us, as they handed over to us who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having followed closely from the chronological beginning of the story, to write <i>it</i> out for you afterwards precisely and accurately, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the immovability of the words that came to you by word of mouth.	<i>Plerophoreo</i> means to fulfil or wholly accomplish. This verbal adjective is in the perfect tense, which indicates a present-tense report of an action that has been completed but has effects in the now. One of those real-world affairs could be to keep a promise, to substantiate a prophecy or to accomplish a previously proclaimed objective.
Luke 1:20	And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled (<i>pleroo</i>) in their proper time.	<i>Pleroo</i> means to make full or complete: to fill a hollow thing with something, to inflate something that came into the world flat and empty, wholly there but not yet endowed with volume and structure — like any organism that grows from a genetically complete seed, to keep a promise, to substantiate a prophecy or to accomplish a previously proclaimed objective.
Luke 4:21	And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled (<i>pleroo</i>) in your hearing.”	<i>Pleroo</i>
Luke 9:51	Now it happened that when the days for Him to be taken up were soon to be fulfilled (<i>sumpleroo</i>), He set His face to go to Jerusalem.	<i>Sumpleroo</i> means to jointly fill. In the classics this verb is most often used to mean to help to fill by pitching in, or to accomplish some potential by adding an additional helpful skill or asset or something like that. In the New Testament this verb is used only to describe a filling that befalls a group of people together (LUKE 8:23: the emphasis lies on their joint experience), or a cluster of days that jointly add up to a span of time that's now over (LUKE 9:51 and ACTS 2:1).
Luke 21:22	...because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled (<i>pleroo</i>).	<i>Pleroo</i> means to make full or complete: to fill a hollow thing with something, to inflate something that came into the world flat and empty, wholly there but not yet endowed with volume and structure — like any organism that grows from a genetically complete seed, to keep a promise, to substantiate a prophecy or to accomplish a previously proclaimed objective.
Luke 21:24	...and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (<i>pleroo</i>).	<i>Pleroo</i>
Luke 22:16	for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled (<i>pleroo</i>) in the kingdom of God.	<i>Pleroo</i>
Luke 24:44	These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled (<i>pleroo</i>).	Must be (<i>dei</i>) means that the fulfillment is required, or morally obligatory. The imperfect form points to something that's been long deemed necessary: it ought to be so according to long-standing conviction. The present tense refers to necessity derived from an acute situation.

Jesus and the number 8

Eight things being fulfilled by Jesus, and eight bears the imprint of His name, which has a numerical value of 888. Further, the name "Jesus", when applied only to the Lord, occurs exactly 888 times in the NT, and we do not know of any other person's name that also gives the value 888 in the Greek language ([Menorah-bible; Meyers](#)). Where fulfillment is required, He is the great fulfiller, He wholly accomplishes and completes everything. Let's examine each of these fulfillments.

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Forasmuch as many have set out to carefully organise an exhaustive explanation of the things that have been fulfilled (plerophoreo) among us, as they handed over to us who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having followed closely from the chronological beginning of the story, to write it out for you afterwards precisely and accurately, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the immovability of the words that came to you by word of mouth (Luke 1:1).

At the start of his gospel, Luke asserts that real-world affairs have already been **fulfilled** (*Plerophoreo*), the tense is perfect, indicating that an action has been wholly completed but the effects are present. One of those real-world affairs could be to keep a promise, to substantiate a prophecy or to accomplish a previously proclaimed objective. As Jesus said to His disciples, *Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it* (10:23-24).

Fulfillment of Scripture

These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled (pleroo)(Luke 24:44).

At the end of his gospel, Luke records the words of Jesus to His disciples, that during His time with them He spoke that everything written in the Hebrew Bible must be **fulfilled**. 'Must be' (*deo*) is imperfect form and points to something that's been deemed necessary for a long time. That is, it ought to be so according to long-standing conviction. *Deo* means to bind, and describes the forced joining of elements: bundling things or binding one thing to some other thing to achieve a purpose ([Abarim Publications](#)).

'Fulfilled' is *pleroo*, and means to make full or complete, to fill a hollow with something, to inflate something that came into the world flat and empty, wholly there but not yet endowed with volume and structure - like any organism that grows from a genetically complete seed, to keep a promise, to substantiate a prophecy or to accomplish a previously proclaimed objective ([Abarim Publications](#)).

The law, the prophets and the psalms (or 'writings') were sections in the Hebrew Bible, so Jesus took His disciples through all the Hebrew Scriptures, opening their minds (*nous*). 'Nous' refers to our cognitive processes, the intellectual mind, our conscious and reasonable faculty. 'Nous' may have been rooted in the Proto-Indo-European root "nas" from which comes our English word "nose". Moreover, it was through his nose (Genesis 2:7) that God gave life to Adam ([Abarim Publications](#)). That is, our intellectual and understanding capacity derives from our being in the image of God.

Jesus gave His disciples understanding from the Hebrew Scriptures about His sufferings, His resurrection, and the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins that would be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. So, in between Luke 1:1 and 24:44, can we find allusions to these in matters in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms that Luke provides?

Fulfillment: God over nature

18 Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? For I am an old man, and my wife is old as well." 19 The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20 And now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will be silent, unable to speak, until the day these things take place" (Luke 1:18-20).

The full account of this episode can be read from verse 8. Despite Zechariah's unbelief, the promise of God cannot be thwarted. It will be **fulfilled**. John, the promised son of Zechariah and Elisabeth, is also the promised messenger to prepare the way before the Lord (Malachi 3:1, Luke 7:27), and as confirmed by the prophet Isaiah, and quoted by Luke from Isaiah:

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“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God’” (Isaiah 40:3-5, Luke 3:3-6).

Moreover, John was the promised prophet Elijah who will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents (Malachi 4:5), just as was stated to Zechariah above (Luke 1:16-17).

Fulfillment is the work of a wonder-working, nature-controlling God. Even a miracle-unbelieving-Zechariah didn't stop the Lord from honouring His promise.

Fulfillment: Jews reject; Gentiles collect

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:16-21).

This account is the first detailed record of the Lord's preaching after He had been tempted by the slanderous, backbiting Diabolos, the Devil. The Lord succeeded in His temptation battle with the Devil by fulfilling the Hebrew Scriptures. After 40 days of hunger, Jesus wasn't tempted to make bread but found His satisfaction from every word of the Lord (Luke 4:1-4, Deuteronomy 8:3). Also, Jesus wasn't tempted by the Devil's gift of all the kingdoms of the world should He worship him, reminding him that He was to worship the Lord His God and serve only him (Luke 4:5-8, Deuteronomy 6:13). Finally, when the devil dared Jesus as the Son of God to throw Himself down from the highest point of the temple and into God's protective hand, the Lord reminded Satan that one is not to put the Lord God to the test (Luke 4:9-13, Psalm 91:11-12, Deuteronomy 6:16).

Interestingly, the Lord had fulfilled the Hebrew Scriptures, specifically from the Torah and the Psalms. However, His message in the Nazareth synagogue where he had been brought up, **fulfilled** part of the prophetic Scriptures from Isaiah 61.

What was **fulfilled** on that day by Jesus, God's Spirit-anointed messenger, was good news to the destitute (the) forsaken, repairing the shattered, no demand for rightful retribution against the captives, regaining of sight to the blind, healing the crushed, and proclaiming the anniversary of the Lord's act of accepting.

However, the Lord rolled up the scroll at this point, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down omitting much of what Isaiah 61 records, such as the day of God's vengeance, comforting the mourners, enjoying God's permanent covenant, His causing deliverance to grow, and giving His people reason to praise him in the sight of all the nations (Isaiah 61:1-4). Those days could wait.

The congregation was amazed at the gracious words coming out of his mouth, but they wanted proof of His many miracles in Capernaum, by repeating them in His hometown of Nazareth. But, Jesus knew His people would not accept Him, so He gives this remarkable wordplay on the word 'acceptable' (*dektos*). He had declared that the “acceptable” year of the Lord had arrived, but He is not “accepted” by the people of his own hometown.

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The Lord reminds this Jewish enclave that eight centuries before them God had visited His people in judgment for their sinfulness by way of rainless skies and great famine for three and a half years. However, the Lord blessed a Gentile woman of Sidon through Elijah while he helped none of the needy widows in Israel. Similarly, there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, yet none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Gentile Syrian.

This exclusive Jewish backwater were so out of touch with God's plan to bless Gentiles through the Jews that they were enraged, forced Jesus out of His hometown, and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But he passed through the crowd and went on his way (Luke 4:20-30).

Fulfillment: God controls the days

51 Now it happened that when the days of His receiving up were soon to be fulfilled (sumpleroo), He set His face to go to Jerusalem; 52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. 54 And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" 55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, 56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And they went on to another village (Luke 9:51-56).

Sumpleroo means to jointly fill ([Abarim Publications](#)). So, here it refers to a cluster of days that jointly add up to a span of time that's about to be over at the point of Christ's ascension to heaven. Indeed, God controls the days, and all that happens in them to fulfil the ascension of Christ.

Fulfillment: God controls the times & nations

20 But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand. 21 Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the countryside must not enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled (pleroo). 23 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath against this people, 24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (pleroo) (Luke 21:20-24).

Days of vengeance fulfilled

Much is written in the Hebrew Bible about the Lord, the God of vengeance. The psalmist said: *O Lord, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth* (Psalm 94:1), because the wicked of the earth crush God's people. The prophets take up this theme too. Isaiah records that the Lord *has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion* (Isaiah 34:8), when he will repay Edom for her hostility toward Zion. And, as Jeremiah wrote, *a day of vengeance* belongs to the Lord of hosts, so as to avenge Himself on His Egyptian adversaries (Jeremiah 46:10).

Further, the Lord's special servant, has been anointed to proclaim the *day of vengeance of our God*, to strengthen those who mourn in Zion (Isaiah 61:2). Also, the Lord comes from the Edomites, who lived between Petra and the Dead Sea, the brother-nation to Israel, characterised from time immemorial by fierce, implacable, bloodthirsty hatred towards Israel, upon which they fell in the most ruthless and malicious manner, whenever it was surrounded by danger or had suffered defeat. *For the day of vengeance was in God's heart heart, and His year of redemption has come* (Isaiah 63:4). The Lord treads in His wrath, when He punishes Edom as well as all the rest of the nations, which in their hostility towards Him and His people have taken pleasure in the carrying away of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem, and have lent their assistance in accomplishing them.

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Jerusalem trampled down

The Lord said in His time that when His audience sees Jerusalem surrounded by armies, these are the *days of vengeance*, so that all things which are written (about those days) will be **fulfilled**.

'Trampled down' is a victory image drawn from the Hebrew Bible. Here are some examples.

By you we will gore our enemies; in your name we will trample down those who rise up against us (Psalm 44:5). The imagery is that of a powerful wild ox that "gores" its enemies and tramples them underfoot See also Psalm 60:12 and 108:13.

I (the Lord) sent him (king of Assyria) against a godless nation (Israel)... to trample them down like dirt in the streets (Isaiah 10:6).

I trampled down peoples in my anger, I crushed them in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth (Isaiah 63:6).

God comes from the direction of Sinai, His splendour has covered the skies, the earth is full of His glory. You furiously stomp on the earth; you angrily trample down the nations...for the salvation of your people, and your anointed (Habakkuk 3:3,12-13).

To summarise, God trampled down His enemies as a matter of judgment sometimes by using other nation as His instrument. Godless Israel didn't escape either using Assyria to trample them down (Isaiah 10:6). So, God tramping down His enemies under His feet is a symbol of victory over them. We find this repeated many times both in the Hebrew Bible and in the New testament. For example:

- Joshua defeat the five kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. He summoned all the men of Israel and said to the commanders of the troops who accompanied him, *Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings* (Joshua 10:24).
- The Lord said to my Lord: *Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet* (Psalm 110:1: Quoted in Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42–43, Acts 2:34–35).
- *For indeed the day is coming, burning like a furnace, and all the arrogant evildoers will be chaff. The coming day will burn them up," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. It will not leave them even a root or branch. But for you who respect my name, the sun of vindication will rise with healing wings, and you will skip about like calves released from the stall. You will trample on the wicked, for they will be like ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I am preparing," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies* (Malachi 4:3).
- *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet* (Romans 16:20).
- *Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has brought to an end all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be eliminated is death. For he has put everything in subjection under his feet* (1 Corinthians 15:24-27).
- Yet to which of the angels did God ever say: *Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet?* (Hebrews 1:13). *He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of god, waiting from that time until his enemies are put as a footstool for his feet* (Hebrews 10:13).

Overall, putting feet on enemies' necks is a powerful, ancient symbol of total victory, absolute power, and subjugation. It signifies the vanquished enemy is utterly powerless and under the victor's control. So, the reference to Jerusalem being trampled down by the Gentiles is a statement of Israel's subjugation by Gentile powers in the plan of God.

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"The times of"

The expression "times of" appears in numerous places of the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament. In the Hebrew Bible it is associated with the appointed times (*mow'ed*) or festivals of Yahweh (Leviticus 23:2, 4, 37, 44, Ezra 3:5, Ezekiel 45:17), and days of trouble and adversity (Psalm 49:5, 94:13, Jeremiah 17:17).

In the New Testament, "times of" (*kairos*) denotes the right, proper or opportune time. The ancients had no clocks and watches, and regarded time not as an absolute stage upon which events unfolded but rather as a series of cycles (called *chronos*) brought about by the interactions of all things. *Chronos* means time in the sense of a lengthy period (not clock-time) - hence English words such as chronology (the order of events) and to synchronise (events happening together). There were no clocks then, and defined "hours" of the day were indicated with the word (*ora*). Particularly when mankind made the transition to agriculture, understanding the year and its precise times, periods and seasons became crucially important.

In the New Testament (*kairos*) refers to a specific period in which an associated event can, will or must take place; a period not in the sense of any old stretch of time but a period specifically for an associated goings on ([Abarim Publications](#)). Next are the NT references apart from Luke 21:24.

Times of existence and ignorance

*24 God who made the world and everything in it...26 made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having allotted the times (*kairos*) of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live*

27 that they should seek God...29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

*30 The times (*kairos*) of ignorance God overlooked, but know he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:24-31).*

These first two texts from Paul to the Athenian Gentiles show two things. Firstly, the God of creation prescribed the right time for the existence of each nation and their geographic location. Secondly, the nations through lack of information, or intelligence, or self will for have substituted the worship of idols for the worship of the one and only God.

However, God overlooked (*hupereidon*) this ignorance for a time that was opportune to Him. In the classics (*hupereidon*) often described the act of over-looking out of disdain, but the emphasis lies not on the not-seeing of something, but rather on the seeing of something preferable beyond something that's avoided. So, here in Acts 17:30, God now demands repentance as He looks beyond the daft idolatry of the Athenians toward the judgment of such sins by Jesus Christ because of His resurrection ([Abarim Publications](#)).

Times of refreshing and restitution

*19...so that times (*kairos*) of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus. 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19-21).*

The proximity of the expressions '*times of refreshing*' and '*times of restitution*' in this text suggests that they are synonyms, and The Pulpit Commentaries agree ([Bible Commentaries, The Pulpit Commentaries, Acts 3](#)).

Times of refreshing and restitution continued

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This spiritual refreshing was symbolised in the prophets by the picture of rain pouring down and bringing life and fruitfulness and of rivers of life giving water (Isaiah 32:1-4; Isaiah 32:15-18; Isaiah 44:1-5; Isaiah 55:10-13; Ezekiel 36:25-26; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Psalms 36:8; Psalms 46:4), and in terms of receiving a refreshing drink in the hottest and driest of conditions (Isaiah 55:1-3), and by the shadow of a great rock in a hot and weary land (Isaiah 32:1-4). The idea is a 'respite, a breathing space from the plague of frogs (Exodus 8:15). Also, Saul was 'refreshed' at the playing of David's harp so that the evil spirit left him for a while (1 Samuel 16:23).

These 'seasons of refreshing' will be accompanied by the 'times of the restoration of all things', bringing back a condition that once existed but was lost. Such a restoration was foreshadowed in the Hebrew Bible (Isaiah 11:4-9, 33:21, 65:17-25, 66:22-24, Jeremiah 16:15, 24:6, 50:19, Ezekiel 16:55, 37:21-28, Hosea 11:11, Zechariah 14:16-21 ([Peter Pett's Commentary on the Bible, Acts 3](#))).

Moreover, it was also foretold by Christ when He declared that *Elijah does indeed come first and will restore all things* (Matthew 17:11; Mark 9:12). As He then spoke of His death, the restoration of all things began then. In the present verse the words have reference to the time when the course of that restoration shall be completed ([Bible Commentaries, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges, Acts 3. Bible Commentaries, Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Acts 3](#)).

So, we have taken a rather circuitous route to to our text; *Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*. In the New testament, "times of" (*kairos*) denotes the right, proper or opportune time, a specific period in which an associated event can, will or must take place; a period not in the sense of any old stretch of time but a period specifically for an associated goings on. As we have noted, the reference to Jerusalem being trampled down by the Gentiles is a statement of Israel's subjugation by Gentile powers in the plan of God, until God says "enough".

Following the fulfillment of *the times of the Gentiles* will be the *times of refreshing* and *the times of restitution*. These will come, as Peter asserted, from the presence of the Lord, through the sending from heaven the second time, Jesus the appointed Messiah.

Fulfilled Passover

Now when the hour came, Jesus took his place at the table and the apostles joined him (Luke 22:14).

I shall never again eat (the Passover) it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:16).

But look, the hand of the one who betrays me is with me on the table (Luke 22:21).

28 You are the ones who have remained with me in my trials. 29 Thus I grant to you a kingdom, just as my Father granted to me, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-30).

There are two tables here. One in the upper room that belonged to the owner of the house where Jesus was eating the Passover with the 12 before His death. However, "My table" in 'My kingdom' belonged to Him, and is where the Lord promised to eat the Passover again with all of His own as the fulfilment and celebration of Him as *Christ our Passover Who was sacrificed for us* (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, we quoted the rhetorical questions about God: Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? Joshua confirmed that every promise God made has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

Luke framed his gospel around the certainty that God fulfilled had His promises, and the Lord confirmed that at the end that every promise in the Scriptures will be fulfilled. Zechariah's unbelief in God's promises did not derail their fulfillment. And, if the favoured Jews rejected a fulfilled promise, the Gentiles were happy to accept.

To fulfil His promises, God controls the days, the nations, and the times, so that times of vengeance will be replaced by times of refreshing and restitution when the Lord returns to this world. To sit at His table in His kingdom to eat and drink with Him and all of His own in celebration of Him, will be the ultimate fulfilment, and a hope to cheer us along the way.

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