

God's Rejected King

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Well, our music has certainly prepared us to return to the Gospel of Matthew this morning as we're taking a three week survey of this great Gospel to impress upon our hearts and minds that Jesus Christ is the King that God promised to give to his people and ultimately to all of the world.

The Bible starts with that promise, you could say in some ways in Genesis 3:15 after man had fallen into sin at the instigation and the temptation of Satan, God promised way back then that there would be one who would come and crush the head of Satan. In Genesis 3:15 he said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman," as he spoke to the serpent, "and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise Him on the heel." Christ would be the one who would deliver a death blow to Satan and Jesus said that, "I've come to destroy the works of the devil." 1 John speaks of that in particular. So that Christ has come and has destroyed the work of the one who tempted mankind into its rebellion and fall from the privileged position that God had created Adam to have.

As you follow through the unfolding of revelation, the progress of revelation from Genesis through Malachi in the Old Testament in our English Bibles, you find this unfolding of prophecy, of this anticipation, this building sense that God was going to send a Messiah, God was going to send one in fulfillment of that original promise made in Genesis 3:15. Prophecy after prophecy after prophecy over century over century over century giving little different pieces of the puzzle until it all came together in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Matthew, one of its primary purposes is to help us see that Jesus is the fulfillment of that prophesied Messiah; that he is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets had been promising for over 2,000 years to God's people. So the Gospel of Matthew tells the story of the life of Christ, it tells about who Jesus was and what he did, but it ties that life of Christ in a unique way to the history and the promises of the Old Testament, and the point that you and I are supposed to take from reading this Gospel is that Jesus Christ is God's promised King. There is no other. There was none before him, there will be no other king after him; that Jesus Christ is the one who fulfills all of these prophecies. And perhaps with our English minds and with our American perspective, it's easy for us to kind of miss the significance of that nuance but, beloved, I want you to think about it with me for a little bit. You know, Abraham lived 2,000 years before the time of Christ and it's been 2,000 years since the Christ that we

now find ourselves living, well, what we find is that the life of Christ is fulfilling something that was in part predicted 2,000 before that. That would be like us living in the middle of the fulfillment of prophecies that were made at the time of Christ and we're seeing them come to pass in the time of our very eyes, my point being is this was the culmination of something that had been building for centuries, for millennia, and now all of a sudden Christ is here and Christ is doing his thing, so to speak. That's a terrible way to put it, but the point that Matthew is bringing to us as he says over and over again, "This is to fulfill the prophets. This is in fulfillment of the Scriptures." And what we're doing here in this brief three week series is we're just seeing this, we're kind of going into Matthew and highlighting these things so that you can see how much emphasis Matthew puts on the fulfillment of prophecy. And as you're reading this and as we're going through it together, we should be asking the question why is that so significant? Why does that matter? Why is Matthew making such a point of the fulfillment of prophecy? And we'll answer that question at the end of our time together here this morning.

Matthew is saying that Jesus is God's promised King and the force of his argument is seen in the cumulative impact of these multiple fulfilled prophecies. You take them all together, one by one they would be impressive, one by one it would be a cause for wonder, when you see them all laid together from so many different prophets, from such different periods of time, in such different aspects of Jesus' life, the cumulative impact of that is overwhelming so that you say Jesus has to be the one of whom the prophets spoke, Jesus has to be the one who is the only King, and that calls for, beloved, that calls for a verdict from your life, it calls from a verdict, it calls upon your heart to render verdict, what will you do in response to this King.

And last time we started this looking at the first two chapters of Matthew and just by way of the briefest of review without even looking at any of the texts that we considered last time, we saw that the person of Christ himself is a fulfillment of prophecy. In the genealogies we see that he is the son of Abraham, the son of David. That means that he is the one who is in the promised line of blessing that God made to Abraham in Genesis, to David in 2 Samuel 7. Matthew shows in the early chapter of his Gospel that Jesus had the physical lineage, he was in the line of ancestry that God had promised through which he would bring this Redeemer. So his very person, his very ancestry shows that he is the fulfillment of what God had promised. Now secondly, we saw in the youth of Christ that these prophecies were filled, the prophecies of birth, of where he would be born from the book of Micah, the promise of a virgin birth in Isaiah 7, Matthew calls attention to the fact that Jesus was fulfilling these prophecies in his birth. Now beloved, think about it, think about the fact that this child was being born, he had no human capacity, as it were, to fulfill these prophecies. A baby doesn't have control over his circumstances or the timing of his birth, and yet Christ was in fulfillment of those prophecies. His very birth was a statement of the fulfillment of the prophecies that God had promised to send a king.

And so from the very start you're struck by the way that this life of Jesus described in Matthew, plugs into the Old Testament prophecies. That's just in the opening two chapters. What you find as you go on in the ministry of Christ, which is our third point

for this morning or the third point for this series, the person of Christ, the youth of Christ, we come now to the ministry of Christ and here's what you find just by way of overview. As you move on in Matthew, he picks up the life story of Christ just as his public ministry is beginning. Scripture doesn't tell us anything about the life of Christ basically between his year 12 and year 30, speaking in very rough terms. There's a couple of allusions that we could draw a few things from, but in terms of its focus, it's the public ministry of Christ and those who prepared the way for him, and what you find is right from the beginning as he transitions into the public ministry of Christ, he sets the stage that this is in fulfillment of prophecy.

Look at Matthew 3 with me. Matthew 3, beginning in verse 1. You will remember that God sent John the Baptist as a forerunner to Christ, that John was preaching a baptism of repentance, people were wondering who he was, maybe he was the Christ because he was such a unique powerful preacher and his ministry was so captivating and compelling, and yet he was simply the doorstep, as it were, to the temple that was Christ. Matthew 3:1, look at it with me, and throughout this message what I want you to focus on is the fulfillment aspect that Matthew is emphasizing. And basically just so you know, we're just going to read a lot of Scripture passages today, not a whole lot of exposition because we want to tie this theme together in a way that we cannot possibly miss.

Matthew 3:1, "Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Okay, John the Baptist is preaching, but look at what comes next, verse 3, "For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!"'" And so Matthew quotes from the prophet Isaiah and says, "What I'm describing to you about the historical occurrence, the historical person John the Baptist, his life and his ministry was in fulfillment of prophecies that Isaiah made 700 years prior, 700 years ago." This is remarkable and what I fear a little bit for you, for us, is that some of these things are so familiar to us that we start to take them for granted, but understand that Isaiah spoke of John the Baptist 700 years before he came onto the scene. How can that happen? How does that happen?

Well, Matthew is calling attention to the fact that it is fulfilling prophecy and he goes on and you see Jesus as he's resisting Satan in Matthew 4. You know about the temptations and you know that Christ responded to the devil three times quoting God's word, quoting the Old Testament to him. In Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," quoting from the book of Deuteronomy. In Matthew 4:6, Satan tries to quote the Old Testament to Jesus saying, "He'll command His angels concerning You. On their hands they will bear You up," trying to tempt Jesus to make a showy spectacle of jumping off the temple. But Jesus responds in the words of the Old Testament in verse 7, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" And in verse 10 he rebukes Satan saying, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only." This Old Testament emphasis on the events and on the words of Christ.

And so we see it in the temptation of Christ, we see it in the ministry of John the Baptist, and what amazes me is how it goes into details that you and I probably wouldn't even think were important if we were drawing this up on a white board, if we were planning this out, how it would go, but what you find as you go through Matthew's Gospel is that even the places where Jesus ministered, the very geography of his ministry was a fulfillment of prophecy made hundreds of years earlier. Look at Matthew 4:12 where it says, "Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali." Verse 14, "This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet," and he quotes Isaiah, Isaiah who wrote 700 years earlier. Seven hundred years, from our perspective that would be before the time that Columbus discovered America. And he quotes Isaiah, verse 15, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned." Matthew is telling us, telling his readers that this is no mere circumstance where Jesus was preaching at this time in his ministry, it was fulfilling a detailed specific prophecy made so many years ago. This was in fulfillment of prophecy. What are we to make of that? What does the fact that it was prophesied and then it occurred, what's that supposed to mean to us? Verse 17, Matthew says, "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

So John the Baptist, fulfillment of prophecy as we are considering this ministry of Christ. The ministry of Christ, that's our main point for this morning so far. John the Baptist, fulfillment of prophecy. The geography where Jesus ministered, fulfillment of prophecy. As you go on, you see Matthew calling attention to the miracles of Christ and the miracles were in fulfillment of prophecy. Look at Matthew 8:14 with me. Matthew 8:14, "When Jesus came into Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him. When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill." So Jesus here, Matthew is reporting, he's healing the sick. He's casting out demons who have supernatural power to do what they want to do. Human illness, demonic possession, Jesus is exercising control over it all. What are we to make of that? Why is that important? Why does Matthew emphasize that? Look at verse 17, "This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: 'He Himself took our infirmities and carried our diseases,'" quotation from Isaiah 53.

We're only a third of the way, a fourth of the way into the Gospel and we've seen Jesus fulfilling prophecy in his birth, in his genealogy. We've seen him fulfilling prophecy in the city in which he was born. We see fulfilled prophecy in the ministry of John the Baptist. Fulfilled prophecy in the geography of Jesus' ministry. You see fulfilled prophecy in his miracles that he performed. Beloved, this is like being on a beach with a heavy surf and the surf just comes and hits you on the beach, and again and again and again, wave after wave after wave coming upon you not with physical water but with the

water of the word washing upon you, pointing you to Christ saying this is the one that God had been promising all along.

And it goes on. It doesn't stop. The teaching of Christ was in fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew 13, turn there with me, if you would. Matthew 13. Jesus had been teaching in parables, here in this context specifically, the parable of the sower who went out to sow, a picture of the one spreading the word of God, and in verse 10 of Matthew 13, "the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' Jesus answered them, 'To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore,'" verse 13, "'I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.'" Verse 14, "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; for the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them.'"

So Jesus is teaching in accordance with prophecies made earlier, the nature of the audience was prophesied by Isaiah earlier. Do you see the theme? Do you see another wave coming upon the beach, as it were? God is keeping his promises. Christ is fulfilling all of these multifaceted Old Testament prophecies in his public ministry. This is the King to which you are to look.

Now Matthew keeps going and there's a little bit of a challenge here as the life of Christ unfolds. The Jews at that time as they were thinking about the Messiah, they were looking for a political king. They were looking for a king to bring them deliverance from the domination of Rome over their lives. What Jesus does is he teaches them, is that in this coming, in this first coming of his, he came not to establish a political kingdom on earth, he came for a different reason. He came in his first advent to deliver his people from their sin.

Look at Matthew 20. This is not quoted as a matter of prophetic fulfillment in Matthew's Gospel but it is important for us to see, and we'll go back to Isaiah in a different way at this point. In verse 25 of Matthew 20, "Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.'" This is what a king does in terms of earthly expectations. Jesus says there's a different kingdom here. Verse 26, "'It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'"

Now in the context of what Matthew is doing, I think this is mind-boggling. I think this is beyond the capacity, it's certainly beyond the capacity of the natural human mind to be able to understand what's happening here. You have the King that God sent into the

world, that God had been preparing the way through his servants the prophets for thousands of years saying, "This is the King that is to come." And you have this unfolding over the prior 20 chapters indicating that Jesus is that precise King in the fulfillment of the prophecies that had been made. Over and over again, you can't miss it. It's undeniable and Matthew makes that point dramatically and repeatedly. And yet here you find the very promised King, God's very promised King saying that he came with a mission that is unlike any earthly king. He came not to dominate. He came not to have his subjects serve him, as it were, but he came to serve his subjects. Look at there again in verse 28, "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." To give himself. This King is here in order to serve his subjects. This King is here to deliver them but to deliver them not from earthly political influence but to deliver them from their own bondage to sin, to be the ransom price that would bring about their release, that would bring about their freedom. This King came to give them freedom but it was not of the kind that they were expecting. It was of the spiritual nature of a spiritual kind as he interceded for their sins.

With that in mind, go back to Isaiah 53 with me. Isaiah 53:3, "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." Think about that in the context of what we're saying about who Christ is. This is the King. This is the prophesied one. This is one of the highest noblest nature that has ever walked on the face of the earth and ever will, and what's the response from his people? What's the response from those who saw him, who watched this unfold? What did they do with him? They despised him. They forsook him. And though he was King, he lived as a man of sorrows. He was acquainted with grief and the men who were around him, the very ones that he came to seek, to save, to serve, they despised him and did not esteem him. There should be developing in your mind the sense that something is very different here, something remarkable is here that calls upon your heart to consider, to meditate upon, and to consider this one of whom we are speaking. You see, when we gather together and we preach Christ to you, when we consider the Gospel of Jesus Christ and we proclaim this prophesied King, this promised King, understand that we're not up here proclaiming a system of morality for you to follow, we're proclaiming a person to you who has a right and a claim on you. A claim on your mind. A claim on your heart. A claim on your repentance. We're not simply telling you go and do a little bit better this week than you did last week, be a bit more moral than you were before, to be kind and love all people. No, no, we're proclaiming Christ here and Christ in the context of a magnificent prophetic plan that God has made plain over the ages, and you have the privilege as you sit here today with a Bible open on your lap, to see the very unfolding of the plan of God and his plan for humanity laid out in the person of Jesus Christ. And yet I fear that some are like those of old, man really hasn't changed that much, and certainly in our day more people than not hear these things of which we speak today and they despise Christ, they forsake him, they turn him away. They do not esteem him with the honor of which a King like he is deserving. Jesus said he came to give his life a ransom for many. This is exactly what Isaiah spoke of.

Look on in verse 4 when he said, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." Beloved, think about it. The inestimably great Christ comes to serve like this, to take the sins of his people upon his own body, to bear the punishment, to bear our griefs in his own body for our sake, for our deliverance, for our forgiveness. He bore the stroke that was due to us at the cross, and the response of mankind, the response of those who saw him in the first century, the response today is consistently the same: to despise him, to reject him, to cast him away, to ignore him, to mock him, to despise him. Such a great great King here not for the sake of his own honor in his first coming so much as to offer his life a ransom for many and look at the response that he gets. Do you understand how great Christ is and that the greatness of Christ and the fulfillment of the prophecies and the fulfillment of God's promise to send his King, can you imagine how great the guilt is to hear of him and despise, reject him? To send him away? To not immediately bow the knee to Christ in honor and humble worship of which he is so richly deserving? It's really unfathomable, isn't it? This is not what a King deserves.

Go back to Matthew 21, and I suppose the only thing that keeps my mind from just being utterly shattered under the weight of all of those things of which we're considering this morning, is the fact that this is the way that God planned it, and that this is what Christ wanted to do. It's not just the prophecies, it's not just that he did it, beloved, it's that this is what Christ wanted to do. In John 10, he says, "No one has taken My life away from Me but I lay it down voluntarily." It's not just that the prophecies are great, that Christ in his essence is great, the very heart of this King is unspeakably great. He voluntarily subjected himself to this kind of rejection so that his rejection would become the blessing and the salvation of his people all in fulfillment of God's plan.

Look at Matthew 21. You remember when he rode into Jerusalem on the donkey on the week before his crucifixion? Matthew 21:1, "When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, "The Lord has need of them," and immediately he will send them.'" Verse 4, "This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 'Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the fall of a beast of burden.'" So as Jesus rides into Jerusalem, bouncing along, as it were, on that donkey, prophecy is being fulfilled that was made centuries ago and this King comes in in a humble way in fitting with the humble nature of his first mission.

So the King had arrived and what did they do with him? What did they do with him? We've seen the ministry of Christ being done in fulfillment of these prophecies. What did they do with the King? You know the answer to that question. The King was there. The

eternal Son of God in human flesh was right in front of them and what did they do with him? They killed him. They murdered him. They silenced him in the way they best knew how. Our fourth point for our consideration here is the rejection of Christ. The rejection of Christ. As you come into Matthew 26, you can start to turn there, in Matthew 26, they rejected him and yet, beloved, what we must see, what humbles our heart, what amazes our affections, what elevates our esteem for Christ today more and more, is that even when these wicked men were killing Christ and sinning as they did it, their actions were in fulfillment of divine prophecy. The whole thing was unfolding according to a prophetic blueprint that could not err in a single detail.

Jesus quotes the prophet Zechariah at the Last Supper in Matthew 26:31. His disciples are gathered around him and, "Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written,'" do you see it there? "For it is written." It has been spoken in the past. The prophets said this therefore it must come to pass. The word of God must be fulfilled. Jesus said back in Matthew 5 that not one letter, not one jot, not one stroke of the law can fail until all is fulfilled. Everything about it had to be fulfilled to perfection and it was. Jesus says in verse 31, "it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'" But he gives them a word of hope alongside that, "After I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee." So Christ tells them just before the events start to unfold, just before he is betrayed into the hands of the Roman army by that wicked man Judas, he tells them just before, he tells them in advance, before it happens he tells them, "What is about to occur is in fulfillment of prophecy. Even your scattering away from Me is going to be in fulfillment of what God said would happen in advance."

Now Peter tried to set himself above the prophetic plan, verse 33, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away." Oh, Peter is going to eat his words pretty soon, wasn't he? "Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.'" And something that's often overlooked as people speak about Peter, verse 35, "All the disciples said the same thing too." It wasn't just Peter. They all said, "Lord, we'll never leave You," and they were gone within a matter of hours. They fled. But those unfaithful supporters were not going to stop the fulfillment of prophecy. It was not up to them. What was happening, the order by which this was happening was not in their control, it was not subject to their failures to be frustrated. Look at Matthew 26:55 and 56, "At that time Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me.'" But here it is again, verse 56, "all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.' Then all the disciples left Him and fled."

So at the darkest moment from a human relationship standpoint with the disciples who had promised their loyalty to him even unto death, at the darkest moment when they're all about to flee, Jesus says, "This is all in fulfillment of prophecy. This is what God has planned." And it just gives us, you know, you're just amazed at some many things about Christ, aren't we? So many things are just so wonderful about him and one of the things

as a man that you ought to appreciate about Christ in this moment is how he showed such unbending courage as he walked into the painful path that fulfillment of prophecy was going to bring to him, and in full confidence of God's plan, he went forward even as everyone else fled. There's no one like him. And if he had not done this, you and I would all be most miserably lost. Truly, the weight of the world was on his shoulders in this hour and his back was strong enough to carry the weight and he proceeded forth into those awful trials where he was wrongly accused, wrongly convicted, wrongly sentenced to die, and even as you're going through the trials, you find the emphasis on the fulfillment of prophecy.

Look at Matthew 27:3, "Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What is that to us? See to that yourself!' And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself." Suicide was a sign that this was not genuine repentance. Verse 6, "The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood.' And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day." You might say, "Well, why is this even important? Why are we being told about a paupers' cemetery here in the middle of the crucifixion of Christ? Well, it's because it was in fulfillment of prophecy. Verse 9, "that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: 'And they took the 30 pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me.'" Another instance of fulfilled prophecy. From beginning to end, don't you see it? From beginning to end, from his conception in the virgin womb of Mary throughout all of the course of his earthly Incarnation to this point, it's all in fulfillment of prophecy. This is what God had planned.

So this life of Christ is unfolding by prophetic blueprint. We're seeing that he is the King. And even those, I pointed this out on a number of occasions, even those who crucified him unwittingly testified to his royalty. Look at Matthew 27:37. Actually, go to verse 35, "when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. And sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there. And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews.'" Then in verse 42, verse 41 actually, "the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him," as he hung exposed on that cross. They were mocking him, "and saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.'" Well, that was a lie. They were never going to believe in him no matter what Jesus said, but in their words they affirmed the reality, against their wishes they affirmed the fact, "This is the King of Israel." Their words testifying in hostility to the reality that Matthew has been establishing all along, that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the fulfillment of God's prophecies. He is the King that God had promised to give to his people throughout the entire history of the Old Testament.

Now there's a certain impenetrable mystery to that. These wicked men acting in accordance with their own sinful desires crucified Christ and thereby fulfilled prophecy. Understand that God did not force them to do that. They were not acting against their will when they did this. They did it in perfect consistent harmony with what they wanted to do. They wanted to kill him and God did not force them, God did not tempt them to do that. God is so amazing in his power and his ability that he is able even to take the uncoerced evil that men do and use it to fulfill his purposes without being tainted by the sin of their actions.

Look at Acts 2 with me in this regard. Acts 2:22. This is a very important theme to Scripture, these things of which we've been speaking today. After the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter is preaching and he says after quoting long passages of the Old Testament in verses 17 through 21 from the prophet Joel, in verse 22 he says, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." Peter recognizes both sides of the equation. This was all of these things, including his crucifixion, was fulfilling a divine plan that God had established before time began. This was what God had determined to happen and yet it happens in the hands of men who had no desire to fulfill prophecy whatsoever, they simply wanted to kill Christ.

One other passage that we should look at in this regard in Luke 24 after his resurrection. We'll look at the resurrection in Matthew 28 next week. Luke 24 is where I want you to go. Luke 24:44, "Now He said to them, '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.'" That's expressing the idea of a divine compulsion. It absolutely had to happen. It was the will of God for these things to take place and therefore it was necessary that they all be fulfilled. Verse 45, "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written,'" do you see it again? It is written. It is written. It is written. "That the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance," in light of everything, in light of this prophesied Christ, what are we to say about it? What do the people of God do with that, then? Because he is the promised King, we declare the facts of his coming, we declare the significance of his substitutionary death on the cross for sinners just like you, and we tell people, we tell all men everywhere in every nation that will hear our words, we tell them that the only proper response to this King is this, verse 47 from the lips of Jesus himself, "repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Repentance, to turn from sin and embrace Christ as King is the only possible response that is fitting to this glorious fulfillment of prophecy, to the glorious person who came to fulfill them, the glorious one of whom they all were speaking.

Matthew, here's what I want you to see is, Matthew has given us a very broad sweep and I've given a very broad sweep of a broad sweep here today. It's kind of funny how that works, huh? But what no one can deny who has heard these words, what none of you can

deny is that God intends for us to understand that the life of Christ was the fulfillment of prophecies made for centuries in multiplied circumstances by multiplied prophets over multiplied centuries. Matthew has given a broad sweep and he has multiplied the evidence before us from beginning to end and all points in between. The question is what do we do with that?

James Montgomery Boice speaking of the nature of fulfilled prophecy, says this and I quote, he says, "Their cumulative witness is devastating. These are facts. What will account for them? The only fact that will account for such evidence is the existence," here it is, beloved, James Montgomery Boice said it long before I said this, the only fact because we've been asking all along what are we to make of this, right? I've been framing that question throughout this message, what are you to make of this? He says and I continue the quote, "The only fact that will account for such evidence is the existence of a sovereign God. He revealed in advance what would happen when He sent Jesus for the redemption of our race, then He saw to it that such things actually took place."

God used this lofty but rejected King to provide for sinners the way of life. It is through the death and resurrection of Christ alone that sinners can be saved, sinners just like you, and God brings his Scriptures to us with an implicit call to sinners just like you, "Come to this Christ. Come to Him in order to be saved." It's a command. It's also an invitation. It's an invitation that says you can be received, God tells you, "I will receive you in My Son. I will forgive all of your sins. I'll give you eternal life. Just come and bow the knee to this promised King."

Now perhaps until now you've not known Christ. Perhaps you've stubbornly rejected him. Perhaps you have merely been indifferent to him. My friend, what I want to tell you wherever you are on that scope of things, it's all the same. There's no excuse for that. Whether it's blasé indifference, whether it's hostile rejection, whether it's laughing, mocking scorn, your hostility toward God's promised King is an inexcusable sin. It is an eternal sin that can only be forgiven if you will come to Christ now for salvation and for forgiveness of rejecting the one who made you and gave himself up for you. That kind of rejection is no different in essence, it's no difference in quality than the ones who drove the nails into his hands; the ones who lied about him and betrayed him to Roman authorities, it's all of the same spirit of Judas. And I grieve over the knowledge that some of you have done that in the midst of a Christian environment and you've lived this way, you've loved your intellect, you've loved your independence, you've loved whatever it is that you love about yourself, and knowing the claims of Christ you've pushed him away so that you could have your own little kingdom. Let me tell you, your little kingdom isn't worth anything. Christ is all that there is and Scripture calls you to account. You see, beloved, it's time for your verdict. Will you repent and come to Christ?

Look at Acts 4 with me. Acts 4. We've been saying throughout this Christ is the only one, he's the only possible one. Scripture makes no apology for it. The Bible is not a pluralistic book. It is not a book that accepts the existence of other religions. It condemns them all and says Christ and Christ alone and in verse 10, Peter was preaching again and he said the same words that I would have you all here this morning to hear with your

ears, "let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He," meaning Christ, "is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone." He's quoting Old Testament to them again and he says in verse 12 that which everyone here needs to hear and understand, "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." It's exclusive. He is the King and he tolerates no rivals and he calls for your submission to him here today.

Now I'm glad, I rejoice that just as God has done a work in my life to humble me, to bring me to Christ, he's done that with so many of you as well. Some of you young people, some of you others that are just so indifferent to Christ, that in ways that just overwhelm me as I think about you through the week, "God, what's going on there? What's going on with this person's heart? How can they be so cold? How can they be so indifferent?" God never answers that directly for me but it gives me an opportunity to say a word to you in response to all of these things and I'll quote Charles Spurgeon here to close. Beloved, Jesus Christ has been presented to you in an irrefutable way from his own book. He has asserted his claim over you, his exclusive claim and said, "I'm the only One. You must come to Me for salvation." You've heard it. It's been clear and with the help of the Holy Spirit it has been affirmed to you in your heart that what you have heard from God's word today is true, it is right, and the question is if you walk out still refusing Christ, oh, you young people, oh, my heart is overwhelmed but it's my responsibility to tell you what Charles Spurgeon told his audience many years ago. If you would walk out in refusal of Christ, if you would not bow the knee, if you would harden your heart yet again to the promise of Christ and the Gospel, then this is all that's left for you to hear. Spurgeon said, "Go down to the pit if you deliberately choose to do so but know this, Christ was preached to you and you would not have Him. You were invited to come to Him but you turned your backs on Him. You choose for yourselves your own eternal destruction. God grant that you may repent of such a choice for Christ's sake. Amen."

Dear Father. We thank You for the clarity of Your word. We believe corporately in Your promised King. We realize that some according to the hardness of their own heart are rejecting Him. Show mercy to them, O God, that indeed they might repent and come to Jesus for Christ's sake, that they might see this King that was rejected and receive Him for themselves. In Jesus' blessed name we pray. Amen.

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