

Jesus: A Life Predicted

The Excellence of Jesus

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With the support of our elders, I have decided to take a little break both on Tuesday and on Sunday to do a little self-contained series that you might call "The Excellence of Jesus." The excellence of Jesus and we're going to approach this in a couple of different ways. Here on Tuesdays for at least tonight and next week, we're going to talk about the Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment in Christ, and on Sundays we are going to do an altogether too brief series out of the book of Hebrews with the goal in mind to uniquely focus our attention on our lovely Lord Jesus Christ, to see him reflected in his word in a sense of grandeur, and then we'll top that off as a capstone to that, we are going to add a communion service on Sunday, July 23 to celebrate the fact that God has given us such a wonderful Savior in our Lord Jesus Christ. So we want to especially focus on the person and the work of Christ over these next two weeks and I trust that it's going to be a great refreshment to your heart. It's a time for us to, in a sense, kind of forget about ourselves, forget about our troubles, forget about everything else in life and just look to the Author and Perfecter of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, in a unique way, in a very focused way in this series and I am very excited about it.

So to start this, if you're going to start any discussion of Christ the only place to go is back before the beginning of time. If you are going to appreciate Christ and have a fully developed faith in him, you need to understand that Jesus Christ was God's plan all along. He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world and the earliest apostolic preaching after his resurrection and after his ascension, made this point very clear.

Look at the book of Acts 2, if you will, as we get started here, and it's just such a wonderful privilege for us to know Christ. It's a privilege for any man to speak about the glories of Christ in any context whatsoever, whether it's in a private evangelistic setting or if it's in a public preaching of God's word. There is no higher topic, there is no greater theme for discussion than Jesus Christ and we must make that clear and unambiguous in our thoughts and minds here this evening.

In Acts 2:22, Peter is preaching and he says, "Men of Israel," the point here being that Christ was the plan of God all along. Acts 2:22, "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." They were witnesses to the fact that Christ's ministry was attended by miraculous signs which

authenticated him to be alone the true Son of God. Verse 23, "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." We must understand together tonight that the crucifixion of Christ was not an accident, it was not a sorrowful turn of events where God's plan got off track and somehow God brought good out of it anyway. No, it was the predetermined plan of God all along that Christ would be nailed to a cross in order to purchase a people for himself. That's where it begins.

Look at Acts 3:18 as Peter is speaking to those who rejected Christ and crucified him. In verse 17 he says, "brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled." Remember that there were 1,000, 1,500, 2,000 years of history before Christ walked on the earth in the history of Israel when God called Abraham and made the Abrahamic covenant to him for the first time in Genesis 12. Thousands of years of history preceded the ministry of Christ, the crucifixion of Christ, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and throughout the period that followed in that 2,000 year period, God was speaking and planning the way through the prophets predicting the coming of Christ and the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. We must understand Christ from that perspective. He didn't suddenly pop onto the scene.

Christ himself was the plan all along and this is reinforced with more of Peter's preaching in chapter 4, actually as he's praying to God in verse 27, Acts 4:27, he says, "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," look at this, "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur." You can't deny the idea of predestination without denying the very clear testimony of the plan of God in Christ from the beginning of time. That's a serious theological error to attack predestination as some of our friends say that they want to do.

So what we want to see is that before time began, God had predestined, God had predetermined that Christ would be the Savior of the world. He sent him in order to fulfill the plan that was established before the beginning of time. In those thousands of years before Christ came, he sent the prophets. He sent prophets to prepare the way and over an extended period of history they gave out pieces of pictures that showed Israel how to recognize their Messiah. God's mouthpieces told in advance about the life, the death and the resurrection of Christ so that God had established the plan before creation and over time he unveiled progressively bits and pieces of what it would be like so that when Christ came, the way was fully prepared for people to understand that he and he alone was the true Son of God. God's mouthpieces, the prophets, foretold details of Christ's life before he lived and so you might say and for a specific title of tonight's message, we would call it "Jesus A Life Predicted." God's mouthpieces, the prophets, foretold details of Christ before he lived and did so centuries in advance. What we want to do this evening is simply sketch a few of those prophecies and then see their fulfillment in Christ from the New Testament, especially the Gospel of Matthew.

And beloved, what we're doing here is we're laying down things that are foundational for true faith. We tend to make a serious error as we go through our daily life, it's easy to do, it's understandable to do as we walk in this world and, you know, we're assaulted with issues and all of that, we tend to do this: we tend simply to relate Jesus, to relate God, to relate his providence to whatever is happening in our life right now, the things that we hope to have occur or the things and the trials that we are going through, and we narrow down our focus and we bring God into time in the window of our own life. Well, considering prophecy and considering the fulfillment in prophecy as a way to burst as out of that artificial closet, to burst us out beyond our perspective, to forget about ourselves, as it were, and to see Christ in all of his glory as the fullness of Scripture and the fullness of time over millennia reveals him to be. You see, when we talk about the Lord Jesus, we are talking about someone who is, in a sense, totally other, who is completely transcendent, and we must never forget the transcendence of Christ and one of the ways that we see his transcendence is through the fulfillment of prophecy.

And let me say this, brothers and sisters in Christ, that as we consider these things all too briefly here this evening, I would have you understand that we have a privilege laid out before us that was denied to the prophets themselves, that was denied to angels even. If you look over at 1 Peter 1, this is just by way of cultivating in our hearts a sense of reverence and appreciation for the privilege that is ours to see these things about Christ, not only to see them but to know him, to be redeemed by him, to be in union with Christ, to know him as Lord, to know him as Savior, to have a brother in heaven who represents us before a holy God. Never should we lose sight of the great majesty and the great privilege of that. So in 1 Peter 1:10 as Peter has been speaking about the salvation of your souls that you see there at the end of verse 9, you see this in verse 10, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." The prophets were conscious of the fact that they were speaking beyond themselves; they were speaking of things to come. As they prophesied, they wanted to understand more for themselves about what it was that God was declaring through them. They made careful search and inquiry.

And in verse 12 Peter says, "It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look." The prophets knew that they had a pearl of great price, so to speak, and they wanted to know more and it was revealed to them that their ministry was for others to come after them, and we as unworthy men and women, we have the benefit of that which God withheld from the prophets in their day. Beloved, don't you see, don't you see what a great treasure we have in the Gospel, in the Scriptures, in Christ? What a great treasure it is that men far better than us wanted what we have, wanted to know the things that we know and God said, "It's not for you to know in your lifetime. You are serving others to come," and here we are on the receiving end of such great blessing and grace. Well, all that should do is condition us to come to Scripture with a holy reverence, with fear and trembling, and with a sense of anticipation that these things about Christ

must be truly magnificent, truly be great, and to receive them in that sense; to, as it were, take off our shoes because we are standing on holy ground and to realize that God established a plan that he purposed through his sovereignty that was most certainly going to be carried out, and he progressed in revelation over time until the fullness of time came, in the words of the opening verses of Hebrews, and then he spoke to us in his Son, in the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been said about the prophetic word this, and I quote, "The Lord Jesus is mankind's only hope for righteousness, sanctification and redemption. In him alone prophecy finds its proper explanation and its adequate result."

So just to kind of wrap things up here before we pivot: God established a plan for Christ before time began and over the course of 1,500 years, he revealed the coming details of that life, of that magnificent man, that magnificent God Incarnate in human flesh, over the course of 1,500 years, he revealed details bit by bit in advance, and the life of Christ fulfilled those ancient prophecies, proving beyond any doubt that he was the promised Redeemer.

The prophecies started in Genesis 3 when God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden. Look at Genesis 3 with me. Some of this will be familiar territory. I don't mind that at all. These are things that we could never rehearse often enough. God, as you know, had expelled Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden for their sin and pronounced curses and in Genesis 14, he curses the serpent who deceived them and led them into sin and in verse 14 he says, "The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.'" Christ would deliver a decisive blow to Satan, bruising him on the head, even though for a moment there would be a temporary crucifixion of the Redeemer to come. This is the first biblical reference to a coming Deliverer. God in the face of the fall of man, steps in and in grace promises a Deliverer right from the start.

And as the Old Testament progressed, the prophet gave many pictures of the coming Redeemer that we now know as the Lord Jesus Christ, so let's look at five of those. Our first point, we could title it this way: the life of Christ predicted. The life of Christ predicted, and what we are going to do, we're not going to examine all of the prophecies that could be considered, we're just going to give five representative prophecies and then in the latter half of the message show their fulfillment from the Gospel of Matthew, and I'd just like to kind of gather everything together in one place like this so that the cumulative impact of these different prophecies and their fulfillments would point us to Christ from a full biblical perspective.

So, the first prophecy that we want to look at is found in Isaiah 7 and we could state it like this, that in Isaiah 7 the prophet said that the Redeemer would be born of a virgin. The Redeemer would be born of a virgin, and the prophet Isaiah ministered some 700 years before the time of Christ. If you do the math on that, from our day that would take us before the time that Columbus discovered America and so we realize the vast time

period that we are operating with to give us a sense of perspective. Isaiah 7:14, the prophet said, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel," meaning "God with us." The Redeemer would be born of a virgin.

You go on in Isaiah 9 and you see, secondly, that the Redeemer would be a descendant of David. A descendant of David. Isaiah 9:6, we are going to go through these rather quickly. I just want to highlight the passages for you. We'll spend a little more time on their fulfillment. Isaiah 9:6-7, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this." Isaiah prophesying that there would be a child born of a virgin in the line of David who would be entitled to the throne of David.

Where would this Redeemer come from? Thirdly, a contemporary of Isaiah named Micah said that he would be born in Bethlehem. Turn further back in your Old Testament to the book of Micah 5 and in verse 2 it says, "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." Do you see it again? From the days of eternity. God established that Christ would be born in Bethlehem and here is Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, prophesying the precise village in which Christ would be born. Bethlehem was an obscure village. You wouldn't guess it to be the place that would give birth to the Messiah and yet the prophet said 700 years in advance that it would be so.

There have been some that have suggested that Jesus was only a charlatan who learned the prophecies and then figured out how to fulfill them. That would be quite a feat for him to figure out before he was born the city to which he was to be given birth. No, this is the word of God. This is God from sovereign majesty declaring history in advance and then guaranteeing the flow of history in order to fulfill what had been prophesied so that what was prophesied would fulfill his eternal decree.

Going on, another aspect of the life of Christ, another prophet, Zechariah, who ministered some 500 years before Christ, said that this Redeemer would enter Jerusalem in triumph. Look at Zechariah 9, it's just a couple of books back from Micah. Zechariah 9:9 says, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Zechariah tells the Jews to look for their King, they will recognize him when he is riding in in triumph on a donkey.

Then one more a couple of chapters later in Zechariah, he tells us that this Redeemer would be betrayed. Zechariah 11:12-13, and we will pick all of these prophecies up in the book of Matthew. Zechariah 11:12-13 it reads as follows, "I said to them, 'If it is good in

your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!' So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.' So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD."

So we have five different prophecies of the coming Redeemer, of the Messiah, of Israel's King by which they would recognize him laid out before us, and as we come to our second point tonight, we see these prophecies about Christ fulfilled. We see these prophecies fulfilled in the Gospel of Matthew. So turn over to Matthew 1 with me and we'll parallel back to the way that we have outlined these prophecies for us here this evening. We could call this point: the prophecies of Christ fulfilled. The prophecies of Christ fulfilled, recognizing that these are prophecies made 500 and 700 years in advance. You know, what do we remember about history from 500 or 700 years ago? Maybe a faint shadow of a figure in church history. As time moves on, here is God fulfilling his word given through the prophets in perfect detail and recording it by the Spirit for us to see 2,000 years after the life of Christ. Just the sheer chronology of this is stunning.

Well, what can we say? First of all, Jesus was born of a virgin. Jesus was born of a virgin. Look at Matthew 1:18, and I'll read a little more extended passages as we go along now. In Matthew 1:18, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet," quoting from Isaiah 7:14, "behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us.' And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus."

Beloved, look, we believe that the Bible is the inerrant inspired word of God, right? That's what we believe. We understand that Isaiah prophesied some 700 years before the time of Christ. We believe that the Apostle Matthew wrote the Gospel of Matthew under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in order to guarantee its perfect truthfulness and accuracy to us and to believers of all time, right? That's true. When I say "right" and I ask a question, I'm not giving you liberty to disagree. We're not at liberty to disagree with the word of God. What Scripture is teaching you is to look at the Old Testament and see what was prophesied and then gives us the account of Christ and says this is the fulfillment of that which was prophesied 700 years earlier and these prophecies were made in advance of the predetermined plan of God. What that is supposed to do to you is 1, it should impress you with the majesty of the foreknowledge and the sovereignty of God to be able to conceive of a plan and then execute it to perfection; and then along with that, to point

you to Christ in such a way that there is no doubt in your mind whatsoever that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that only those who believe in him can ever be saved from their sins. So this is meant to bring you to a sense of recognition of Christ; to bring you to a sense of worship, of awe, of fear, of reverence that would compel your sinful and sluggish heart to come to Christ for your redemption; to realize that this is no ordinary man who walked on earth 2,000 years ago, this is the one who was the apex, who was the climax of the plan of God. He was born of a virgin and Scripture ties the two together.

Now, continue on in Matthew 2 and you see that Jesus was born in Bethlehem just as the prophet had said. Matthew 2:1, "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.' When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born." This was a matter of great consequence in the day. Where was the Messiah to be born? Where would we find this one whom the magi are seeking? And in verse 5, the religious leaders gave him the answer, "They said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet,'" then they quote from the prophecy we saw from Micah 5:2, "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." Micah said 700 years in advance the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Matthew says Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and understand, Matthew says, that this was to fulfill that prophecy made 700 years earlier.

So the cumulative power of these things starts to weigh in on our hearts. A miraculous birth, born without a human father, born in Bethlehem just as was said centuries ahead of time. Who can do this? Let's compare it with ourselves in our own lives. In fact, let's turn there just by way of comparison to James 4 just to set in contrast our weakness with the great strength of God; our uncertainty with the certain fulfillment of God's eternal decree. In James 4:13, here we are, here is our life, here is our reality in verse 13 of James 4, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." Brothers and sisters, men and women, boys and girls, understand that you cannot with certainty predict what your life will be like tomorrow, let alone what's going to happen centuries from now. God, on the other hand, can predict with perfect accuracy exactly what's going to happen centuries in advance and then guarantee the course and the flow of human history so that what he said comes perfectly to pass. We are dealing with something that is utterly transcendent, something that is beyond this realm when we talk about the life of Christ and the fulfillment of prophecy.

Now, go back to Matthew, if you would, as we continue to make a point by point comparison with the prophecies that we've selected with their fulfillment in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew opens, chapter 1, verse 1, in this way: Jesus was a descendant of David, we could say. He was prophesied to be one and here is Matthew saying Jesus was

a descendant of David. "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Now, would you like me to read the continual genealogy in the next 15 verses? I'll leave that to yourself to do. I would stumble over those Hebrew names probably more than a couple of times. Simply to say that Matthew opens his Gospel with a genealogy that proves by historical record the direct line from Jesus to David just as the prophets foretold. And if you go all the way back to the prophecies or to the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis, that it was through his seed that all the nations of the world would be blessed, here's the connection to Abraham as well 2,000 years before the time of Christ. This is supernatural. We are dealing with things that are beyond our realm. God is truly great and this was truly God's plan and we see him declaring it in advance and then fulfilling it centuries, millennia later in a way that is utterly beyond our ability to conceive, let alone to do in our own lives for tomorrow.

Fourthly, the prophecies of Christ fulfilled: Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph just as the prophet said that he would in Matthew 21. Matthew 21, Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph. 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.' 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 full of a beast of burden.'"" Skip down to verse 8, "Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD: Hosanna in the highest!' When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, 'Who is this?' And the crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.'" The prophecy fulfilled, once again, and Matthew specifically tells you so that you cannot miss it that this event occurred in fulfillment of the prophecy found in Zechariah 9.

Finally, we see that Jesus was betrayed, as you know so well in Matthew 26 and 27. Let's look at these verses, and even though it was foretold in advance, Judas did this wicked deed out of the motions of his own heart and bears forever the responsibility that he was a disciple of Christ and betrayed him unto crucifixion. His guilt is immeasurable.

Matthew 26:14, "Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?' And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus." And in Matthew 27:5, if you'll skip over there. I think I said verse 5, let's just start at the beginning of the chapter, chapter 27, verse 1 of Matthew, "Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death; and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor." As you contemplate Christ in the realm, in the context of fulfilled prophecy, isn't this just the most incongruent thing that has ever happened in human history? That the creature binds the Creator and leads him off to crucifixion?

Verse 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." Thus showing that he felt remorse but 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." An event that is alluded to in Jeremiah 19 as well. "For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled." Do you see it again? Prophetic fulfillment. It's all in caps because it's a quote from the Old Testament, "And they took the thirty 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."

What can we say about this to sum it up? Next week we're going to look, I'm not at all done, next week we're going to look at the prophecies of his death and resurrection to kind of bookend this consideration. But just to summarize briefly and simply this way: from the birth of Jesus to his crucifixion, fulfilled prophecy stamped his life and Scripture intends us to see that, believe it and to not miss it. The eternal God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, decreed the life of our Lord before time began. He announced it in time over the course of centuries before it occurred, bit by bit progressively revealing what this life of Christ would look like and now as we read the Gospels, we find that Christ fulfilled those prophecies. In the culmination of a great predetermined plan of God, God has established for all time in a way that no one could miss who would simply open their Bible and read it, that Jesus Christ is the true Son of God. He is the promised Redeemer. He is the King of Israel. And Scripture teaches us that he offered his magnificent, precious, sinless life as an atoning sacrifice for sinners just like you and me.

The question is: what are we to make of all of this? What are we to make of this supernatural attestation of the Lord Jesus Christ? What are we to make of fulfilled prophecy? How are we to think rightly about it? Well, it wouldn't surprise us that Scripture leads us specifically and guides us clearly in that matter.

Look at Acts 10 if you will, Acts 10:42. Acts 10, oh, let's open in verse 34 as Peter announces the Gospel to the Gentiles. In verse 34, "Opening his mouth, Peter said: 'I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)--you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed.'" Stop and mark it there. This is an historical fulfillment in time and space, in geography and in chronology. Christ is literally fulfilling these things in history, in real time, in real flesh, on a real earth. We are not simply proclaiming philosophies and human morality, the Gospel is that Jesus Christ literally

lived, literally died, literally rose again, all in time and space. This is based on historical fact predicted centuries beforehand.

In verse 38, Peter tells them, "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." In verse 39, he says, "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God," here it is again, "that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead."

Now, all of that is context for the question: what are you and I to do with this Jesus? Verse 42, what are we to make of the supernatural attestation of Christ? Peter says, "He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead." This cannot be disputed. This is not up for discussion or argument or question. Jesus Christ is the one uniquely appointed by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead, and it is appointed, Hebrews 9:27 says, that man would die once and after this comes judgment. Every man under the sun is due for an appointment before this Christ.

What does that have to do with our discussion tonight? Verse 43, "Of Him," speaking of Christ, "Of Christ all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." So the question becomes this, my friends: are you ready for that solemn day of judgment? Have you believed in Christ to receive forgiveness of your sins?

Now, look, let me be clear here. You young people, I'm not asking for your opinion of whether the Bible is true. It is. The question is have you believed in Christ to receive the forgiveness of your sins? I'm not asking if you're a basically good person. You're not. The question is have you believed in Christ to receive the forgiveness of your sins? I'm not asking if you attend church with your Christian family. I'm asking whether you have believed in Christ to receive the forgiveness of your sins. That's what we do with this prophetic attestation of the Lord Jesus Christ. We understand that the prophets announced in advance his coming so that we would all understand that everyone who believes in him receives the forgiveness of their sins. So I'm not asking you to consider what your friends or family might think. Their opinion is irrelevant. The question is have you believed in Christ to receive the forgiveness of your sins? I'm not asking about your past spiritual experience. I'm not asking if maybe in another place, in another time, you spoke in what you thought were tongues. I'm not asking about any of that stuff at all. The question is have you believed in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?

If you have, you have done so in the fulfillment of an eternal plan of God which should bring great joy to your heart and cause you to praise and worship him and thank you for this supernatural attestation which he has given to Christ. If you have not believed in Christ, if you remain cold and indifferent to him, if you prefer the things that you do over

serious contemplation of who this Christ is, beloved, let me just tell you, you are on the wrong side of the eternal decree of God as you sit here tonight. You stand in rebellion against the prophets. You stand in rebellion against the history of the course of humanity that led to Christ. You stand in rebellion to the Gospel of Matthew. You stand in danger of the worst of eternal judgment for Scripture makes clear that those who hear the Gospel and do not respond to Christ in faith face a terrifying expectation of judgment. There is nothing else to be said to you. There is nothing else that can help you. If you walk away from Christ in defiance or indifference, you walk away from the only hope of your soul.

So we ask one last time: have you believed in Christ to receive the forgiveness of your sins? Metaphorically speaking, the prophets of God line the walls of this room as Christ is exalted on the foundation of their testimony given in advance and, beloved, God will hold you accountable for your response to this one of whom they prophesied. Have you believed in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? Have you?

Let's pray together.

O God, corporately we believe the prophets and confess Christ is the only Savior by which men may be saved, but no one rides into heaven on a corporate confession. Help each one here to examine themselves, O God. Father, those that have held Christ at arm's length, those that are content to have played a game and to deceive people with their hypocrisy, maybe even their own family, maybe elders, maybe everyone in the church, yet deep in their heart they know that they have pushed Christ away, that they do not love him, that they have not received him and to this moment they have not cared, O God, we ask you by the mercy which motivated you to reveal these things to men, by the mercy which brought each one under the sound of my voice here today to hear about Christ yet again, help each one to examine themselves. Work in their hearts, O God, and lead them to Christ so that each one under the sound of my voice may answer truly, "Yes, I have believed in Christ for the forgiveness of my sins."

God, we ask you for that mercy. Father, we ask that you would take this testimony which you have given to Christ in the prophets and then in the Gospels, take it and carry it far and wide, that those who have not heard and even in unreached lands might hear of him yet and find that in Christ there is a Redeemer who promises eternal life for those who come. And Father, may all who hear come, that the purpose of the Gospel might be fulfilled, that sinners would be saved from the judgment they deserve and enter into the bliss and the assurance of the forgiveness of sin which you give to everyone who believes. We ask these things, our God, trusting not in the strength of our prayers but in the strength of the one who receives our prayers to answer with power even on this night. In Christ's name we pray these things. Amen.

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