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CURRENT SERIES

Gospel

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Well good morning. So for the 13 weeks we're going through the whole Bible from beginning to end. Covering the whole thing, going right through it. Last week we finished the Old Testament. This week we're going to look at the gospels, and as we do that I just want to tell you that I think we can cover the whole Old Testament in a two-minute summary. Do you think I can do it? Let's see if I can do it, okay?

So God creates Adam and Eve. Adam sins, thus destroying God's original design for humanity, and so God raises up Abraham and promises to bless the whole world through his family. Thus the Jewish nation is born. The Jewish patriarchs travel to Egypt where they spend 400 years. When they come out of there, Moses leads them out and God promises his presence and his power, delivers them with miraculous signs. We've got the plaques, we've got the parting of the Red Sea. God takes him to Mount Sinai and there he gives them the Law. So they have their Lord, now they have the law. Joshua takes them into the land and they conquer Canaan. They set up shop there and you'd think they've got everything they need, right? They've got their Lord, they've got the Law, they've got the Land. Problem is they like the Pagan idols and they keep going back to Pagan idols. And God brings judges in to try to help them, and after the judges kind of run their cycle the people ask for a king, which establishes the kingdom.

We have three well known kings, Saul – a terrible king, David – a great king, Solomon – a mediocre king. During that time all of the poetical literature is written; Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. When Solomon is a mediocre king and turns the throne over to his son, the kingdom has a civil war and the 10 tribes of the north decide they're going their own way. They have 20 successive bad kings, and after about 200 years they're carried off into captivity, never to be seen from again. They're scattered to the four winds. The two kingdoms of the south also have 20 kings; 8 of them are good, 12 of them are bad and so they last a little over 400 years where they're carried into captivity in Babylon as a judgment for their sins. They live there for 70 years. During the time of the kings and the captivity almost all of the prophets prophesy, 12 of them actually to the kings before they're carried into captivity and 2 of them prophesy in captivity about the future kingdom, and then the last 3 when they come back to the land. They return, Ezra helps them rebuild the temple and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Nehemiah helps them build the wall. Malachi, the final prophet prophesies, lays down his pen and then there's 400 years of silence. During that time there's no writing prophet, no speaking prophet, and during that time the nation of Israel experiences just terrible, terrible domination by world powers and humiliation by world powers. In the midst of all that the people are confused about who the Messiah is going to be. Is he a suffering servant or is he going to come and establish the kingdom. And these religious groups or sects rise up, Pharisees, Sadducees, who plunge the people into legalism and it's into that that Jesus Christ comes.

After 400 years John the Baptist comes and he cries out, "Prepare the way of the Lord. This Jesus is coming." Jesus shows up and demonstrates himself to be from God. And that's what we're going to spend our time looking at today.

Now let me just say whether you're a Christian or not a Christian, whether you believe the Bible, whether you don't believe the Bible, objective history clearly says that the 33 years that Jesus walked on this earth had more to do with changing the face of the globe than any other individual solitary life ever lived. In fact, we in the Western World date time back to Jesus – B.C. before Christ, A.D. in the year of our Lord. All of history revolves around the time that Jesus Christ came into the world, and so knowing who he is this is a very significant thing.

The life of Jesus is recorded in the Bible in four gospels. Now when we come to these four gospels frequently we struggle a little bit trying to figure things out because we're reading the Bible like a book. And so we kind of expect it to go in chronological order that you would have the first gospels start and then it ends, and the next one picks up and then it ends, but The Gospels themselves are actually four books that are complete from beginning to end. And I doubt

that Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John ever thought, “Well my book is going to come in the middle of the flow of the Bible where, you know, Mark is going to come after me, or Luke is going to come after me.” Probably not. They were writing to a very specific audience to communicate a message about Jesus. And it’s also important to understand that these guys did not record everything there was to know about Jesus. They used selected things to be able to explain their point of view, what they were trying to get across.

So if you will, grab a Bible and open it to the last chapter of The Gospels, John chapter 21. John is the last writer of The Gospels, wrote the latest in history, last one, and in the last two verses he explains a little bit about the nature of what was going on here. In verse 24 of John chapter 21 it says:

“This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.”

Now let me just pause for a second. Every Sunday I get up early and I post online a preview of the message, and this week I got some feedback really early this morning from a Muslim friend of mine who was saying, “Are you going to also talk about the other 40 or 50 gospels that didn’t get included in the Canon and why they didn’t get included in the Canon?” I said, “I don’t have time to do that,” but I just can’t resist. (congregation laughs) So let me give you a couple of sentences about that. There’s a lot of other books that were written in the centuries following these gospels. The reason why those did not get credit and get put in the gospel is because they were not written by the apostles or other eyewitnesses that were actually there. So someone who writes a book 200 years later claiming to be Judas is obviously not going to get used in the Bible, right? Like that would be kind of crazy.

Now today we have some pseudo-scholars out there where people say, “Oh yeah, there were all of these books that just didn’t get included and the Church just kind of made up the ones that they wanted.” That is actually so un - anti-historical and so anti-scholarly that it’s sad that it comes from university professors, but it does. Matthew was one of the ones who walked around with Jesus. John walked around with Jesus. Luke was with Paul, came to Jerusalem, researched his gospel by talking to eyewitnesses, and Mark was a disciple of Peter. These men actually got credit for writing the word down because everybody knew them. And when Matthew finished his gospel people wanted to read it because they wanted to find out what Matthew, who was with Jesus said about Jesus. Not somebody that wrote 200 years later and claimed to be somebody that everybody knew they weren’t. Sorry guys, that’s a “hobby-horse” of mine. I hate it when modern scholarship just like makes up stuff and people buy this. I guess it was Dan Brown who helped that with his fictitious

book. But sometimes we read fiction and think it's true. Most of journalism today tends to fit into that category. So, anyway – sorry about that. I'm just kind of – it's third hour so I'm going there. (congregation laughs)
Look at verse 25, back to the text:

“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”

In other words, John is saying, “In the three years I spent with Jesus there were so many incredible things that happened every single day that what I record in here is just a small part of what Jesus did.” In fact, John is saying, “I recorded the things I did, the things I picked out to record because I had a reason for doing that.” In fact, if you'll turn back one chapter to chapter 20 he tells us his reason. So he picked out specific events and specific teaching. In chapter 20, verse 30 he says:

“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

In other words, these are the ones that specifically point to Jesus' deity and that's why John recorded those. So sometimes as you read through The Gospels you'll see one gospel will put one account or one miracle or one story in, and the other gospel may leave it completely out. They have different reasons for putting it in there. They weren't copying each other – they were writing their own books. In addition to that sometimes you'll see a story in there where there's a slightly different set of details given. And frequently that's because we have two people that are watching the exact same event. One of them is observing some things and recording that; another one is observing the same event and seeing some additional things and recording the ones that fit. And so when you read The Gospels you've got to read them as if they're separate books from the viewpoint of the author.

Now to help you out, I've put together a little chart here, and by the way, you don't have to write all of this down because I've posted this chart online onto the sermon page. In fact the one I posted online has about three times more information than this one. So let me just walk you through it. Now the gospel of Matthew, Matthew was one of the disciples that traveled with Jesus, and in Matthew's gospel he is primarily writing to a Jewish audience. He's writing his book to a group of Jews trying to get his message across to them, so he pictures Jesus as the prophesied king. It includes a lot of Old Testament prophecy that

he brings forward in his book. In addition to that when it comes to tracing where Jesus came from, his birth line or his genealogy, he traces it from

COMPARATIVE CHART OF THE FOUR GOSPELS			
MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Jewish	Roman	Greek	All
Prophesied King	Obedient Servant	Perfect Man	Son of God
From Abraham	None	To Adam	To God
fulfilled, kingdom, righteousness	immediately, kingdom of God vs. kingdom of darkness	compassion, save, prayer, concern for poor	believe, light, life, "I AM"
Stressed Humanity			Stressed Deity

Abraham to show that Jesus truly was a Jew and fit into the family of Abraham. When it comes to the key words, we see the word "fulfilled" because it's a lot about prophecy. We see the word "kingdom", a lot about establishing the Davidic Kingdom. We see the word "righteousness" because the Jews were concerned about the Law and righteousness. And Jesus fulfilled all of that. So that's Matthew's gospel and his audience.

When it comes to Mark, Mark is writing primarily to a Roman audience. To Roman believers who have believed The Gospel, and Mark is writing primarily to them. The characteristic that Rome valued above all was this servant attitude, loyalty, fidelity, follow-through, courage, faithfulness, and responsibility. And so Luke portrays that characteristic of Jesus that was there, which is that he's the obedient servant. He takes orders from his Father and he follows those, a message that would be very well received in the Roman community. When it comes to tracing Jesus' birth and where he came from Mark doesn't record any because who cares where a servant came from. Where he came from is not important - he's a servant. What matters is not his family tree. What matters is his personal characteristics -- does he follow through. So Mark starts with John the Baptist and his ministry. Nothing about the birth, nothing about angels singing, nothing about Mary, and nothing about where he

came from. And then words in Mark immediately, servant's always doing what he's told to do, and Jesus is immediately moving. Also the Kingdom of God

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versus the Kingdom of Darkness is a high presence. It's this conflict between these two, and Jesus the obedient servant is on the side of righteousness.

When it comes to Luke's gospel, Luke was a Greek physician and so he writes to a Greek audience. He researches his book, he tells us, he travels with Paul, he meets with the apostles. He writes his book and he pictures Jesus as the perfect man. In Greek society, the Greek philosophers were constantly looking for the character ingredients that made up the perfect man. And Luke says Jesus had those as he appeals to his audience. Now for Luke, he traces Jesus' family line all the way back to Adam to show that Jesus is relevant for every man, not just Jews, but for Greeks too. Some people look at Matthew and they see Matthew's genealogy of Jesus' life and Luke's genealogy and they say they're different therefore they contradict each other. They don't contradict each other - one just traces the Jewish line back to Abraham and the other one goes all the way back to Adam. They're different because they're writing for a different purpose. For him the key words for the perfect person is compassion, someone who cares about others, saves, prayer, and concern for the poor.

The last gospel is John's gospel and John is the latest one to write and he writes to all audiences - Jews, Gentiles, everybody alike. John's focus is on Jesus being the Son of God. He emphasizes his divinity and points to that in his writings. Interestingly when it comes to tracing where Jesus came from John goes right to God. In fact in John chapter 1, verse 1 it says, "In the beginning

was the Word,” the divine communication, “and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” In other words he says Jesus was God in the beginning and God’s communication to us, and he goes on in that chapter to say, “and the Word became flesh and dwelled among us.” In other words, the Word, God’s communication, took on human form, Jesus Christ and moved into the neighborhood with us, and we beheld his glory, the only begotten from God full of grace and truth. In other words, he doesn’t even bother to talk about Jesus’ parents or his birth or anything. He goes right back to before time began that Jesus existed with God the Father. The key words are believed, you believe in Jesus. Jesus calls you to believe. Light, that enlightens the world versus darkness. Life versus death. And then he emphasizes “I am” statements. The holy name for God in the Old Testament, “*Yah weh*” was the Hebrew word which meant “I am.” And Jesus, seven times in the gospel of John claims, “I am” pointing out that he’s from God.

Now the first three gospels really stress Jesus’ humanity and John’s stresses Jesus’ divinity. Now all of the gospels stress both of those, but there’s a heavier emphasis in the first three gospels on the humanity and a heavier emphasis in John’s gospel on Jesus’ divinity. So that gives you just a little bit of overview of the difference between the gospels.

When it comes to looking at the geography of the ancient world you notice fairly quickly, I’m pushing the wrong button here, sorry about that. You notice



fairly
quickly
that
the
land of

Palestine is just a little blip on the radar screen. Look at the Roman Empire, which extended all the way up into Europe and then went all the way over to

India, looking at that. Jerusalem, or the land of Israel is just this little, small piece of land and yet that's where Jesus spent all of his time.



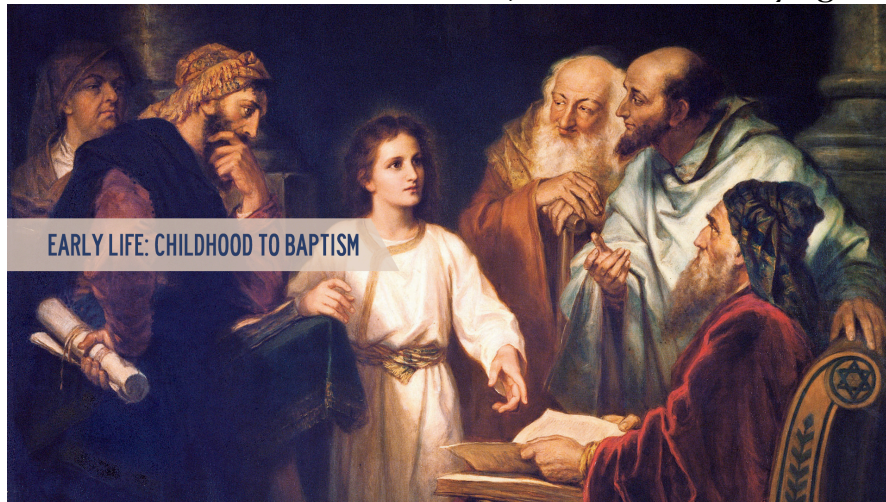
He spent a big chunk of his time in Judea, down in the area around Jerusalem, he spent a big chunk of his time in Galilee up by the Sea of Galilee. He did make trips out into other parts, all the way up to Caesarea Philippi, Tyre and Sidon. He went out into the desert out by Jericho and so forth, but most of his time was spent in those two areas.

Now we don't have the bandwidth to trace the events step-by-step of his life, so I'm going to cover it in four big movements. Okay - ready, from birth to ascension. We're going to do this in just a few minutes. Can we do it? Yes we can. Okay here we go.

So Jesus' early life from his birth to his baptism. Most of us know the story of Jesus' birth. Anybody that's been around Christmas, you know Jesus was born of Virgin Mary. A really poor class couple. They come to Bethlehem because of the census there. Jesus is born. Immediately persecution breaks out because Herod finds out that the prophesy of Micah has come true. A baby has been born in Bethlehem that's going to be the ruler, so he tries to kill all of the babies and Jesus makes his one and only international trip. As a young child he's taken to Egypt where they hide out for a couple of years and that's the only

time he traveled out of this area. He comes back, his family takes him back into the Galilee area to the city of Nazareth and there he's raised. We know nothing about his early childhood.

The first time we see him is at age 12 when his family brings him to the temple for the Hebrew right of passage. And part of that is they bring all the little Hebrew boys in there at the age of 12 or 13, and they line them up in front of all of the Rabbis and the Scribes, and the little boys get to ask questions. It's



EARLY LIFE: CHILDHOOD TO BAPTISM

kind of symbolic and cute. And the Rabbis talk and it's this idea that as a Jewish man you need to learn the Law. Only the difference is when Jesus starts to ask them questions they don't know the answers to them, so they start asking him questions. And he gives them the

answer and it amazes them. And for two days he holds court in the temple where the religious scholars are overwhelmed by this kid's knowledge and his wisdom and his insight into the things of God, where Jesus clearly establishes that he is different than the static religious debates of his day.

He goes back to Nazareth, we don't hear anymore about him until age 30 when he emerges. During that time we assume two things: one is that he became a carpenter like his dad, and that somewhere in there his dad died because when Jesus starts his earthly ministry we never hear about Joseph again the rest of the time. So he probably lost his father as a young man at some point in there, and at age 30, Jesus Christ emerges on the scene at his baptism. He shows up where John is baptizing, and all four gospels record this and here's what they say: "The spirit of God descended on Jesus and a voice from heaven clearly spoke and said, 'This is my Son.'" Now this voice that spoke from heaven is different than any other prophet. Speaks from heaven and says "This is my Son, the one I love, in him I am well pleased." And Jesus then begins his earthly ministry.

The first thing he does is he's taken into the wilderness and tempted for 40 days, proving himself to be the Son of God. Now at this point in time I want to introduce you to our first part of our storyline of the life of Jesus. First part of

our storyline of the life of Jesus. The storyline for the life of Jesus is that **Jesus comes in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of a savior and offers salvation and the true kingdom of God.**

The Old Testament prophesied a savior. And Jesus comes in fulfillment of that. Jesus comes to offer both salvation, this is significant, and the true kingdom of God. In other words Jesus' offer was not confusing. He came both to be the suffering servant like they had prophesied in the Old Testament about him, but also he came as the reigning king. He came to offer both salvation and the kingdom to the nation of Israel. And so from there his early ministry is met with an incredible amount of acceptance. He begins to go out and he begins to



preach and teach and the multitudes follow him. The people are favorable to him, even the religious leaders are initially enamored by him. In John chapter 3, one of the ruling council elders, Nicodemus, shows up and comes to talk to Jesus and says, "Listen Jesus. We know that you are a teacher who's come from God because nobody can do the miracles that you're doing unless God is with him." In other words, the "we" there means the religious leaders had been talking about this and they said, "There's something unique about him. He must be from God - how can he do these miracles." So Jesus goes on and he does his ministry.

His teaching is unique. You read the Sermon on the Mount you find out it's not just about keeping all the rules. It's about a righteousness that actually comes

from the heart. In fact, the rules are only valuable if they're done from a true heart of God's righteousness. And we find in Jesus' teaching that he says, "It's not the rules that save you, and it's not even the outside influences that corrupt you. It's all about what's going on in here (points to his heart)." Which is very different from what they're hearing from everybody else. They're hearing, "If you do the right things then God will love you." And Jesus comes on the scene and says, "God already loves you." John 3:16 Jesus says, "For God so loved the world." God loves you. Jesus says, "I didn't come into the world to condemn you, you're already condemned. Your own heart condemns you. I came into the world to save you," demonstrating that Jesus came on the scene to save us. Now here's what's very important about Jesus' teaching. The Old Testament clearly communicates that no person, prophet, priest or king could save themselves much less save the world. Couldn't do it. Jesus Christ comes to do both. He doesn't need to save himself because he's already from God. He comes to save us and to save the world. That's what he comes to do.

Not only do we see his teaching, but we also see his miracles. Jesus is doing miraculous things, not primarily to get attention but primarily to help people, to heal people, to solve problems for people. And Jesus is overcoming the power of sin and the curse by individually healing people. We also see Jesus doing a number of exorcisms, particularly in the book of Mark where Jesus is directly confronting demonic possession of people demonstrating that he has power over Satan.

One of the greatest miracles and one of the most well known miracles is recorded in all four gospels is the feeding of the 5,000 where Jesus takes a little boy's lunch and begins to multiply it, demonstrating that he's not like Moses. Moses prayed and God dropped manna from heaven and Jesus himself personally can take the bread and multiply it and feed the people, as he announces that he's the bread of life. He's the bread of life.

Now in the midst of all of that there's something that happens where everything changes. I want you to see it. Grab your Bible, look at Matthew chapter 12. Remember Jesus came to bring the offer of salvation and the kingdom. Watch what happens in Matthew chapter 12, starting in verse 22. This is fascinating. You've got to see this. Matthew chapter 12 verse 22:

"Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said,"

Now catch this, they said:

"Could this be the Son of David?"

See what they're asking? Could this be the promised one, the prophesied one from the Old Testament, the Messiah that was going to come, the branch of Jesse, the son of David to establish the Davidic Kingdom? Is this the Messiah? And watch what the religious leaders say:

"But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, 'It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.'"

They asked the question, "Could this be the son of David" and the religious leaders of their day answered no, this is the son of the devil. He's of the devil. Jesus confronts this. This is the unpardonable sin, to take the work of God and credit it to Satan. To say the very act of God's salvation, casting out a demon out of someone is actually a work of the devil, and I want you to see the change that takes place. Look at verse 38 - immediately after that Jesus talked to them and it says:

"Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, 'Teacher we want to see a sign from you.'"

Now wait a minute. You just saw one; he just cast out a demon. He gave this guy his sight and gave him the ability to speak. That doesn't count? You called that son of the devil. We want to see a miraculous sign. Jesus' response is decidedly different. Look at what he answers. Verse 39:

"A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."

Well what's that? He tells us:

"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

What's he talking about? He's talking about his burial. This is the only sign you're going to get: my crucifixion, my burial, and my resurrection. Now watch what he says next:

"The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here."

In other words, the men of Nineveh that Jonah went and preached to will be witnesses for the prosecution against this generation because they listened to a little, dinky prophet, but the one greater than the prophet, the actual Messiah has come and he's shown you that he's the Messiah. And you've rejected him. Chapter 13 -- immediately after this Jesus starts teaching in parables. And his disciples say, "Why are you teaching us in parables. Why don't you just explain it straight forward? Why are you using these parables?" And Jesus says, "I'm using these parables because you're the only ones that need to know the truth. The rest of them, they rejected me. They rejected me. I'm focusing on you."

What we see here is that at this turning point part way through Jesus' ministry the people seem to be open to Jesus, but the religious leaders say no. He's of the devil. Jesus now turns his attention to the salvation part, and in the second part of our storyline, **While some accept Him, most reject Him, and He is crucified, buried, and resurrected.**

As he offers both the kingdom and salvation, some of them accept Him, but most reject Him leading to his rejection, his crucifixion, his burial, and his resurrection. So the second part of Jesus' ministry is really marked by a decline in popularity and a decline in attention from the crowd as rejection begins to grow.



In fact, if you will turn over to Mark chapter 8, so this is halfway through Mark's gospel, 16 chapters in Mark. Halfway through his gospel, we read this account in verse 27. Jesus is talking to his disciples and he said:

"Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, 'Who do people say that I am?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.'"

There were a lot of opinions out there. "The religious leaders say you're the son of the devil. The other people, they have all kinds of opinions about you." Jesus asked:

"But what about you?" he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' And Peter answered, 'You are the Christ.'"

Peter gets it right. "You're the Christ. You're the chosen one, you're the one sent from God. You're the anointed one. You're the fulfillment of prophecy. You're God."

"Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him."

"Keep this to yourselves, keep this among us."

"And then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this,"

Now he's telling them, "Hey here's what's going to happen. I am going to be rejected, crucified, die, rise again." Do the disciples like this? Uh huh.

"Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."

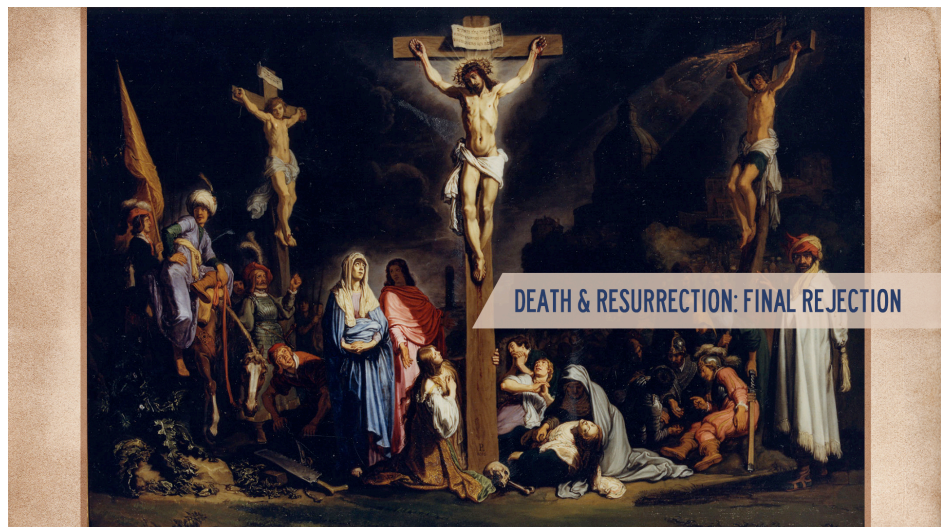
"No way, you're the Messiah. You're the reigning king, you can't die."

"But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. 'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.' Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: 'If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or

what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

From this point forward Jesus puts his focus and attention on his disciples and that small band of crowd, and begins his march to Jerusalem. We see the transfiguration where Jesus shows them, "Hey this is real. I'm really God." Then he marches into Jerusalem and the triumphal entry where the fickle crowd says, "Save us, save us, Hosanna, save us now. Hosanna save us now." And yet that same crowd a couple of days later would be shouting "Crucify him crucify him." Jesus then tells them in the incredible Olivet Discourse, Matthew chapter 24 and 25. He tells them the future. "I'm going to die now, but I'm going to come back again and I'm going to establish this world order." And he gives them a lot of information about what's going to happen at that time. The only clear thing that he says about when it will happen is in chapter 24, verse 14 where he says, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world and then the end will come," implying that every nation on the planet, every ethnic group on the planet will actually have a chance to hear. That's why we're into global missions all the time, sending people to the ends of the earth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because the end will come once everybody gets a chance in their language to hear the gospel. And so Jesus does the Olivet Discourse, and then he moves his disciples into the upper room for the final Passover. Now here's something very significant. John chapter 13 is where that section starts. From John chapter 13 to John chapter 21, roughly a third of the gospel of John, covers the last 43 days of Jesus' life. One-third of the gospel focuses on that. The gospel writers give an inordinate amount of space to discussing the events directly before and the crucifixion and the resurrection and the commission that's afterwards, as if the gospel writers understand this is the most significant part for us to get. And that's where they put their focus.

In the final movement of the life of Jesus we see his death and resurrection being the final rejection of Jesus and it starts in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus actually comes



before the Father and in great anguish he says, "If there's any way I don't have to do this, any way I don't have to go through this, let this cup pass from me. But I'll do your will." And the Father sends him on. He's betrayed and he faces a trial. The trial is a joke. They can't bring forward a consistent witness against him. In the midst of the joke Pilate keeps saying "He's not guilty, he's not guilty." Pilate feels twisted into having him crucified. The religious leaders are happy about that; they lean toward this. Jesus experiences torture, mocking, beating, and finds himself hanging on a cross. That cross, the most vial, painful, torturous way to die, and for six hours Jesus Christ suffers on that cross.

Now Isaiah told us why he was there 600 years before he got there. He was dying for the sins of the world. Paul confirms that in Romans when he explains it in detail, what was actually taking place as Jesus died for the sins of the world. The substitute, the lamb, the sacrifice in our place paying for our sins. During that time God confirms that Jesus is God with five unbelievably miraculous signs that we talked about earlier in the spring. Even so much so that the Roman hardened soldiers who stood at crucifixion duty, killing person after person after person, calloused by all of this, they turn at his death and they say, "This man is the Son of God. This man is the Son of God." They find faith in the very crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus is buried. Three days later he rises from the dead. The disciples are overwhelmed. They go from people that are just terrified to people that now see it and they become bold witnesses.

Jesus spends 40 days after his resurrection walking through and explaining to them what they must do, including giving them a commission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. He tells them, "As you take the gospel to the ends of the earth my presence will be with you, my spirit will be in you empowering you, and I will surely return and establish my kingdom." Here's what's so cool about this. That's where we get to be part of the story. This isn't something that happened and when John finished writing the story was over. They were writing to believers in various parts of the Roman Empire to remind them that the story of Jesus is ongoing. And so Jesus Christ brought salvation. He's going to establish a new world order some day, a kingdom, and in the meantime it's the responsibility of The Church to gather people from every ethnic group on the planet to be part of that kingdom. That's why at Hill Country Bible Church we encourage you to be involved in that when we do things like Backyard Bible Clubs to get The Gospel to the neighborhoods. We do things like "Explore God" to get The Gospel to our city. We do things like send missionaries to unreached people groups around the world to make sure that the gospel gets to every nation. In other words, your life is not simply having a good place to live and having a good job and having a good family, having good relationships and good food and good fun. All of that is part of it,

but your life is really about continuing the progression of The Good News so that other people can experience this life change. You see Jesus is the only one who could save us from our sins, and he did that. Jesus is the only one who can establish a perfect world order, and he's promised to do that. And the rest of the New Testament goes on to tell the story of how that began to come about and we are part of that story.

So as members of that story, it would make sense for us to pause and participate in that which people throughout the centuries, dating all the way back to the night before Jesus' crucifixion when he brought out the cup and he brought out the bread and said, "Remember me." So let's bow our heads as we prepare our hearts for communion, and I'm going to dismiss the servers to go, and begin to prepare the communion. They're going to bring this in in a moment. And as they're preparing and as you're preparing your hearts, I just encourage you with this. This world is marching day-by-day steadily toward a grand conclusion where Jesus Christ will gather all of his people into his kingdom. If you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ today you're getting to be part of that, not because of what you've done, but because of what Jesus did on your behalf. If you're not, I would encourage you today to strongly consider the sacrifice of Jesus on your behalf.

So as we receive our communion today you're part of a historical march that will continue until the day that Jesus Christ comes again. So enjoy him. I invite the servers to come forward. We ask you to take communion, hold it and we'll take it all together in just a moment.

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