

30 Years of the King

Matthew

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I knew the story was his story and if given the time and allowance, there's literally millions of those stories of people in their office, hotels, hospital waiting rooms etc., who much as you heard a common thread not only in the video but also in the testimonies, down on their luck, despair, heartless, seeing no way up, willing to take that risk and that chance of opening up a Bible.

Al, you mentioned that in today's world it's becoming harder to get into certain places with God's word. I'm going to go ahead and state for the record those doors will open when they get desperate enough. You see, one of the problems is our culture is not desperate enough for Jesus right now. We still believe that we can manage this mess. We still believe that if we just learn a little more, if we just cooperate a little more somehow we can ease the ramifications of the fall. And so, again, even though there may be hardships now, there's difficulties now, when you get desperate enough, you open up that drawer in the hotel and you open that Bible. When you get desperate enough not knowing what the doctor is going to tell you when your name is called, you pick up that Bible on the desk. And when you get to the point when you realize you can no longer control the uncontrollable, I know you guys will be waiting when the phone call comes. So again, thank you for what you do and at the end of our service as I'll share later, you have the opportunity to make those \$1.35 and \$5 Bibles available not just in our community but the community at large.

Briefly tonight speaking of God's word, I would encourage you to turn to Matthew 4. For those of you that may be new to us this evening or maybe haven't been with us in a while on Sunday evening, it's been a little different the last several weeks because one of the beautiful things about being a part of a family of faith that has so many different ministries and opportunities of expression is that we have had concerts and ordinations and ministry privileges, and tonight's the first time in some time that we've actually returned to the book of Matthew just for our very slow and systematic study of the word of God. Let me remind you as we walk through the gospel of Matthew, we're not walking through it for the sole purpose of seeing Jesus Christ through one of the four gospel perspectives, it's more than that. We're studying the book of Matthew because it is so strategic to the totality of scripture and as we study it, it not only connects us to the covenant of the Old Testament, it projects us into the church of the New Testament, it

takes us from those early first mentionings of doctrine and truth all the way back in Genesis and yet it forecasts the conclusion of all things in the book of Revelation. I am convinced that if we get a grasp on the book of Matthew, then we can, at some level, get a grasp on the totality of scripture.

At this point in our study, we've made our way through the first four chapters up to chapter 4, verse 11. Tonight, real quickly I want to read verse 12 and then if you'll allow me a few moments, I want to summarize where we've been, and oftentimes when you get in the weeds, oftentimes when you get in the details, that's wonderful but sometimes you've got to step back out and tonight I want to take that 30,000 foot perspective, what does 30 years look like from 30,000 feet.

Verse 12 of Matthew 4 it says,

12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

Now that may just seem like a transitional statement to you but that's a pretty weighty statement. Why? Because what we know as the ministry of Jesus Christ, the miracles, the messages, the impact on people's lives only comprise about 3 ½ years. I want you to see where you are in Matthew. You're in chapter 4, there are 28 chapters in the gospel of Matthew alone. For 24 chapters, it will only span 3 ½ years and for 3 ½ chapters it spanned 30, and the reason that that is important is because verse 12 of chapter 4 launches the ministry of Jesus Christ. Notice what had to happen: he heard that John was cast into prison. John was the forerunner, John was the one who would be his predecessor, and when he discovered that Herod had placed him in that famous prison most likely in a place we know as Caesarea, it was then that the public ministry of Jesus Christ began. Now we know that his first miracle chronologically was the turning of water into wine which is recorded in John 2. It is not recorded in the gospel of Matthew which is why we take that synthesis approach to all four gospels. But here in verse 12, we see that his ministry is about to begin.

So how did we get here? I believe just kind of a necessary recap of the first 3 ½ chapters of the gospel of Matthew. I want to break it down into four very simple concepts and you're going to notice somewhat a stream of thought, the phrase "of the king, of the king, of the king." Of the four gospels, all of them, though speaking of the same Jesus and the same Savior, they approach him from unique perspectives and the gospel of Matthew does something very unique, it presents Jesus Christ as the "King of the Jews" and one day the coming King of kings and Lord of lords. So it would be fitting that if you're going to have one who is a "king," you need a lineage, right? You need a genealogy. You need to know how do we know that this is the rightful heir to the throne which was spoken. In fact, today you can take anybody worldwide who claims to "be a king of royal blood," the first question that humanity is going to ask is, "Who did you come from? Who are your ancestors? What is your right to be the heir to the throne?"

Now there is another genealogy in the gospel accounts. The gospel of Luke gives us a genealogy but the gospel of Luke's perspective is to show us that Jesus Christ is the Son of Man. What's interesting about that genealogy is it goes all the way back to Adam to show us that Jesus Christ, yes, was incarnated in the flesh. But in Matthew 1, we have a very famous, but can we admit very overlooked section of the Bible. When So-and-so begat So-and-so who begat So-and-so, and you're on a Bible reading plan, you're like, let's just fast forward to chapter 2 and get to the good story. There are 42 names that are mentioned, oftentimes the spelling a little bit different than what we're used to in the Old Testament because we're going from Hebrew to Greek, what is this genealogy of the king? Well, it's the fulfillment of the prophecies. All the way back in the book of Genesis 3, humanity has transgressed, humanity has fallen into rebellion. The Lord is beginning to distribute the consequences of our rebellion and there in verse 15 of Genesis 3, speaking specifically to the serpent, the Lord makes this statement that, "The seed of the woman will crush the seed of the serpent." We oftentimes call this the protoevangelium, or the very first gospel. Why is it necessary to our study of the book of Matthew, particularly chapter 4, verse 12 of the gospel of Matthew? Because the very first prophetic word that we have regarding the Messiah is that he would be from a woman which means that there would be a genealogy, there would be a way to trace the lineage of where he came from.

We know specifically in Genesis 12 that this genealogy would become very specific in a man by the name of Abram, he would later become Abraham after the birth of the child of promise, Isaac. It would be from his specific lineage, from Isaac and Jacob, the 12 tribes, specifically that of Judah, which would produce whom we know as the Messiah Jesus Christ. And in Isaiah 53, the great suffering servant passage, it said that he took on our transgressions, our iniquities, because we as sheep have all gone astray.

When you look at that endless, what appears to be endless stream of names in Matthew 1, there's some pretty interesting things there. 1. As expected, there are people from a Jewish background but for the first time in any genealogy in the Bible there are Gentiles. That's right, that's our people. Gentiles show up, those that were not allowed in that special place in the temple, those that were not allowed at those certain festivals and feasts. It's the first genealogy in your Bible in the first chapter of Matthew, which is the first part of the New Testament, and all of a sudden we realize that Genesis 12 was true when it says that he would bring all nations unto himself.

We find an abundance of men, that's rightfully expected, but then there's a twist. For the first time in any genealogy in the Bible women make the list, and not just any women but we actually have the names of Rahab and, yes, David and Bathsheba. That's correct. Now the Bible's very sly, it says the woman that used to be the wife of Uriah but we know who that is, Bathsheba. And so when you look at the genealogy of the king, it's Jew, it's Gentile, it's men, it's women, it goes all the way back to Genesis 3, specific with Abraham for the purpose of the Messiah.

Then we get to chapter 2 and chapter 2 is usually where we want the story to make its surface because that is the "birth" of the king, and we discover that how the king will come and where he will come will be very different. According to Isaiah 7:14, it says,

"Behold, I show you that a virgin shall conceive and give birth." I think we can all agree this is going to be a different process, this is going to be a unique way in which the Lord is going to bring the Messiah, his seed of the woman to humanity. But even if that was not enough, in the book of Micah tucked in the minor prophets, chapter 5, verse 2, it says that it would be Bethlehem where he would be born. Most of us if we heard that the king of the Jews was to be born, we would just presume Jerusalem would be the place and there are some other places that we might throw in there, but let's be honest that if you've ever been to that part of the world, Bethlehem is one of the last places that you would ever select and/or pick. But when we look at the birth of the king, it was by a very unique means and a very particular yet unusual place.

Then there's the personalities that were involved. Mary would have probably been a middle school age girl in today's terminology. Imagine some young lady in 5th or 6th grade coming home and saying, "Mom and dad, I'm with child because of God." As a parent, I can just tell you how many hours later it would take before I would believe that story which is why it took Joseph many visits by several angels to believe that story. Imagine when she went to Joseph, that one who she had been betrothed to for years, that one who was willing to wait and be patient. The Bible says that he was minded to put her away privately and then the angel showed and said, "No, Joseph, this is by God's design. Take her unto your wife. Go on down to Bethlehem for the duration of the process." The angel of the Lord is a part of the proceedings. The magi or the wise men make their way from the east and, yes, the first ones to hear of the Savior's birth was a group of shepherds on the backside of nowhere that night. We know chronologically that the wise men would come some years later but nonetheless there in Matthew 2 we have all the personalities for the birth of the king.

By the time we get to chapter 3, though, a lot of time has passed. We find ourselves on the bank of the Jordan River. There's a very uniquely dressed and very articulate man by the name of John the Baptist who is gathered at that place and is bringing those that are there fruits of repentance worthy of baptism. He is confronted by those religious elites, those individuals that hold high positions and authority within the Jewish community, questioning this, "Are you the one that we've been looking for?" That's an interesting question. We would have thought they would have said, "What are you doing and what is the point?" Why would they ask him, "Are you the one?" Because all the way back in Deuteronomy 18:18, it said that the Messiah would come in the likeness of Moses. You and I have the beauty of hindsight. You go into 1 Corinthians 10, it says that they, Israel, was baptized unto Moses. That picture of leaving the bondage of Egypt under the water into the Promised Land days ahead, that picture that we hear so often at baptism where it talks about in the likeness of his death, raised to walk in newness of life. What did John the Baptist say? He said, "I'm not even worthy to tie the laces upon his shoes. Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

What are the prophecies that were involved or the prophetic aspect of this? All the way back in the Old Testament, 1 Samuel 7 and other passages, the Lord made it very clear that his agreement with, his covenant with this lineage of Abraham is that there would be a twofold aspect, there would be a physical one, what you and I know as that land grant,

that dirt of Israel, and there would be a spiritual one which would be that we who have transgressed in sin can be reconciled and redeemed to a holy God.

As we study the book of Matthew as we've alluded to in days past and it's going to become even more so in days future, there is this statement that is used time and time again in the gospel of Matthew that's not used in the other gospel at all, "the kingdom of heaven." Last time I checked, heaven is real, it is tangible, Jesus described it in John 14 as having mansions and a place to dwell. One who is a king is one who is sovereign over a place, an entity, he has a governance, he has what we might call guidelines and statutes to speak. All throughout the gospel of Matthew it's going to talk about the kingdom of heaven is at hand, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, but we know that these whom it was preached to first made the fateful statement of, "May his blood be upon us and our children." They rightfully said, "We would rather have Barabbas than Jesus." When we go into the other gospels, we'll see the kingdom of God. According to the gospel of John, God is spirit and we must worship him in spirit and in truth. There's this prophetic element regarding both sides of this covenant, the physical as well as the spiritual.

Then the unique personalty of John the Baptist. Interesting here in chapter 4, verse 12, it says, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee." When he was imprisoned he knew it was time to begin. If you would, fast forward a few pages to the right to chapter 11. I want you to see what transpires in just a brief amount of time. Matthew 11:14. I want to begin actually in verse 13 just to give you a little context. I want you to hear what Jesus says, "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John." Verse 14, "And if ye will receive it, this is Elijah, which was for to come." Did they receive it? No. Again, they chose Barabbas over Jesus. They said, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Elijah, one of the three individuals that's mentioned in the last chapter of the last book of the Old Testament alongside Moses and whom we know as Jesus Christ.

Do you find it interesting that here in chapter 4, verse 12, John the Baptist has been imprisoned, Jesus initiates his public ministry and it's not much down the road that he said, "You know, if you will receive this message, Elijah has come," we discover that they willfully overwhelmingly rejected it, which leads us to chapter 4, the preparation of the king. It says there in chapter 4 that the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness. It's a famous scene. It's a well-known story where the devil tempts him specifically with three opportunities to reject the word of God. You say, "What do you mean reject the word of God?" Every time the offer is made Jesus says, "It is written." There is the opportunity to turn the stone into bread, there is the opportunity to cast himself off the pinnacle of the temple and allow the angels to cushion his blow, there is the opportunity as he sees the kingdoms of the world to bow down before the devil and to inherit them at that moment and at that time.

When I mentioned the fact that these are prophetic, every one of these aspects have what you and I would call a second coming element. In Revelation 12 it says that the Lord again like he did in the wilderness, would supernaturally feed his people. "Turn that rock into bread." It says in Revelation 19 that Jesus on what we know as that area of the

Temple Mount will descend out of the clouds and touch foot there in that holiest of places. The devil tempted him, "Why don't you just come down right now from the pinnacle." Interesting, though he quoted Psalm 91, he left out four very critical words, "in all your ways." And finally the kingdoms of the world. In Revelation 11:15, the seventh trumpet sounds and it says the kingdoms of this world have now become the kingdoms of our Lord. We know that 40 days pass. The temptations are rejected. We know that Jesus obviously and Satan and the angels come and minister unto him.

Verse 12 of chapter 4, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee." It doesn't sound like much, it just sounds like kind of this transitional phrase but think about it, he's got the genealogy of a king, he's got a supernatural birth process as well as place, he's got one whom according to scripture the Holy Spirit left in the womb, John the Baptist who is the declarer of who he is, and Satan himself visits him for 40 days and 40 nights trying to get him to enact Revelation before he does the cross.

Verse 12, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee." Why is this so critical? Because even though the temptations had been offered, even though the genealogy was there, even though the declaration had been made, that very what appears to be benign statement states that he is willingly going to a cross to shed his blood for the sinful men who will consistently and constantly reject him for the next 3 ½ years.

He departed into Galilee. The ministry began. We will see shortly that his disciple will be selected. We will see shortly that he will gather them and he will preach probably the most famous sermon in all of the world, what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. The miracles will take place. The messages will flow. All of them because John was in prison, he departed into Galilee. The way of the cross began.

You know, when you have the opportunity to travel to what we call the Holy Land, there is what the tour guides call the Via Dolorosa. It is the way of suffering. It is that journey that Jesus Christ made those last few hours as he makes his way from imprisonment all the way to Mount Calvary. I'm not here to argue with the tour guides but the way of suffering was longer than a few hours, the way of suffering actually was 3 ½ years because the moment that he touched foot in Galilee constant opposition, constant contrariness even from his inner circle, even those who he called to himself were bothered at times by the message that he preached. He had the genealogy, he had the birth, he had the declaration, he had the preparation and yet still for 3 ½ years said, "Even though they go contrariwise to me, I still will set my face toward the cross." John's in prison and he departed to Galilee.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe tonight even on a Sunday evening as we're gathered in this fashion, maybe it's just one of those moments where as you take a 30,000 foot step back you realize how significant the gospel really is, how significant the love of Jesus Christ is, how vast his willingness was for you and for I, and maybe tonight is the night as you heard the testimony from Brother Al and the Gideons,

you may not literally be in a dumpster, you may literally not be in the places and the confines that he mentioned, but maybe in your soul you are, and maybe tonight's the night that you call out to Jesus, and maybe tonight you say, "I'm already a believer," or maybe tonight's the night where it doesn't stay in here, it goes to wherever the Lord would have you to go and you leave with a fresh perspective of how to walk in the power of the Spirit in the truth of his word. All I know is that we have the distinct privilege in the next few moments to heed the call of the Savior upon our life, whatever that may be.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, as we come to what we call an invitation, how glorious it is that you would invite us to be a part of any thing that you've orchestrated. When we look at what happened in the garden of Eden, when we look at what happened in our own respective lives, God, we have transgressed, we have trespassed, we have done so much contrary to you, yet your word says that the arm of your mercy and grace is longer than the list of our transgressions. God, we thank you that you give us the privilege of repentance, you give us the privilege of salvation, you give us the privilege of being your sons and daughters. At this time, God, may we render whatever and any decision necessary in regards to our relationship to you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.