

Christianity - Judaism Fulfilled

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[0 : 00] Good morning.

Thank you very much again for the opportunity to be able to share in your service this morning and to be able to bring God's Word to you. I did say the last time that it's always a privilege to be asked to preach somewhere we haven't before.

It's always a double blessing to be asked back. So I'm grateful for this opportunity this morning. I do want to bring you the greetings of your sister church in Denison.

Although it does make me raise my eyebrows when during the week I hear people praying, Lord, we want to pray for Bill's Hill because Andrew's preaching on Sunday. But when we move on, the context of that statement becomes clear.

So this morning we are continuing to work our way through the book of Acts. We are... There's the first mistake in my slides and it will probably be there all the way through because it's Acts 24 this morning.

[1 : 12] Just to show that no one's perfect. Okay, the Lord likes to keep me humble. So we're at Acts 24, not 23. And we are reading verses 1 to 23 this morning.

And as you can see, what we're looking at this morning is the idea that Christianity is Judaism fulfilled. And we're going to explore that.

And what does that actually... What does that mean as a phrase that Christianity is Judaism fulfilled? But more importantly for us as Christians, what actually is the practical day-to-day things that comes out of that statement if we talk about Christianity being Judaism fulfilled?

So let's start by reading this passage. Acts 24, verses 1 to 23. Five days later, the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus.

And they brought their charge against Paul before the governor. When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix.

[2 : 23] We've enjoyed a long period of peace under you as your foresight has brought about reform in this nation. Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude.

But in order not to weary you further, we would request that you would be kind enough to hear us briefly. We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world.

He's a ringleader of the Nazarene sect and even tried to desecrate the temple. So we seized him. And we would have judged him in accordance with our law.

But the commander Lysias came and took him from us with much violence, ordering his accusers to come before you. By examining him yourself, you will be able to learn the truth about all of these things that we are bringing against him.

The other Jews joined in the accusation and asserting that these things were true. When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied, I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation, so I will gladly make my defense.

[3 : 47] You can easily verify that no more than 12 days ago, I went up to Jerusalem to worship. My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogue, or anywhere else in the city.

And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. However, I admit this, that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the way, which they call a sect.

I believe everything that is in accordance with the law and that is written in the prophets. And I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked.

So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and men. After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.

I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance.

[5 : 07] But there are some Jews from the province of Asia who ought to be here before you and to bring charges if they have anything against me. Or these who are here should state what the crime they found me when I stood before the Sanhedrin.

Unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence, It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am in trial before you today.

When Felix, who was well acquainted with the way, adjourned the proceedings. When Lysias, the commander, comes, he said, I will decide your case. He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard, but to give him some freedom and to permit his friends to take care of his needs.

Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we were singing a few minutes ago, Speak, Lord, and that's what we want to do just now.

I pray that everything that now comes out of my mouth would come from you and that it would go into people's hearts and minds here, that we would put your word into practice in our lives by the power of your Holy Spirit so that we would be changed and transformed in our thoughts, in our attitudes, in our actions, so that we can say, as Paul said, that we would strive to keep a clear conscience before God and before men, that we would be able to live lives, that whether we can open our mouth and speak about our faith, we pray that even in silence, our lives would still witness to you because we spend time in your presence and we spend time among your people.

[6 : 54] And we ask this now in Jesus' name. Amen. So Acts chapter 24 presents us with a courtroom scene.

We have the accused. I don't know how you can see in my picture here, but we have the accused, Paul, himself a former persecutor of Christians, or as they're called in this passage, the way.

And at the back there we have... Oh, my. Excuse me a second. The more control got excited.

There we go. And at the back there we also have the prosecution, Ananias ben Nedebus. Now, to give you some context, technically Ananias is not actually the high priest, although that's how he's referred to in this passage and in other parts of Scripture.

He was the high priest, but he was, after serving 12 years in that position, he was removed from office, to put it politely, taken to Rome where he faced charges of corruption and cruelty and various other things.

[8 : 19] So in actual fact, the title high priest is now given to Ananias as a courtesy, just in the same way that pastors or prime ministers or people who hold military ranks, colonels, lieutenants, and so on.

We still give them that title as a courtesy, as a matter of respect, as recognizing the position that they've held and the service that they've given. So Ananias at the moment is serving in a temporary role.

And what's interesting, the reason why I mention this is because he was succeeded by another man, another high priest called Jonathan. And Jonathan, the high priest, didn't actually serve in that office for very long because after a very short period of time, he was murdered in the middle of a service.

Now, his murderers were never caught, but everybody knew that the reason why he was murdered in the first place was because he was very, very critical of the lifestyle and, again, the corruption and the cruelty of the Roman procurator of Judea, a man called Marcus Antonius Felix.

So, the high priest, who is now temporarily replacing his successor, is now charging Paul in the court of his good friend Felix, who arranged to have his successor murdered.

[9 : 59] So, just to let you understand, this is not just some British high court where the judge and the jury and everybody else are impartial. Right from the very beginning, everything is stacked against Paul.

But even if you're not interested in the historical drama or the political drama of the chapter, as I said at the beginning, there are several important lessons in this passage for us today.

The accusations against Paul are summed up in verses 5 and 6. We have found this man to be a troublemaker. Well, that's true, but then, let's be honest, being a troublemaker is very often a matter of opinion in some cases.

You know, one man's troublemaker is somebody else's hero. Stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. That's true.

You know, trouble kind of, you know, followed Paul around like a wee dog, but it wasn't because Paul was actually causing the riots. It was, as has happened here very often, that when Paul spoke about what it meant to be a Christian, what it meant to be a follower of the way, that people reacted eventually.

[11 : 16] If they couldn't reason and argue against Paul, which very few folk could, then as people tend to do, if you can't beat them in argument, then just beat them. It was basically how things went.

He's a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. Again, that might be technically true as an apostle. He has a position of honor and authority among the Christians.

We'll argue about being called a sect in a minute. And he even tried to desecrate the temple, which is manifestly untrue. If you have an opportunity to read some of the two preceding chapters, 22 and 23, the reason why Paul went up to the temple, and it wasn't even his idea, to be perfectly honest, was that some of the other apostles suggested, look, people get really upset by you, Paul, because they think that you're trying to do away with Judaism.

So we've got some people here who have taken a vow. Why don't you take them up to the temple and you pay the offering in order for them to fulfill their vow and show everybody that you still respect the teachings of Judaism.

And so that's what Paul went up to do. And just his mere presence in the temple was enough to, yet again, he didn't even have a chance to speak, preach or anything else. Just his mere presence there was enough to annoy people and cause a riot that led them to being in this court today.

[12 : 46] So this is the charges against Paul. And this is Paul's defense. He says, I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the way, which they call a sect.

I believe everything that is in accordance with the law and that is written in the prophets. And I have the same hope in God as these men themselves here, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

So this is what Paul's defense is, that for him, he is not teaching some false, blasphemous corruption of Judaism.

As I said, and as the title of this sermon is, what Paul was saying is that in his experience and his study of the Scriptures, that actually Christianity was the fulfillment of all the things that Jews believe and every hope that the Jewish people had and have today.

So, for example, in Paul's writings as we read them, one of the things that Paul is very clear about is that Jesus is the Messiah. And this is one of the great hopes.

[14 : 02] This is the golden thread that runs through the whole of the Jewish Scriptures is this idea of a Messiah, God's anointed one. And to be honest, it's kind of difficult in some respects to define what does Messiah actually mean?

Because when you read the different Old Testament Scriptures, in some cases, the Messiah is seen to be a teacher. In some cases, he's seen to be a warrior. In some places, he's seen to be a servant.

In some places, he's seen to be a king. And so, in Jewish belief, they had this idea that one day, God would send this Messiah, this anointed one, this representative of God.

And particularly at the time of the New Testament, although the high priest, sorry, the lawyer, Tullius, spoke very respectfully let's just say buttering up almost, Felix, what the Jewish people really wanted was for the Messiah to come back and kick the Romans out of Israel and let them be a free people again.

They just didn't want to say that very loudly. That was their expectation, that the Messiah would come, that Israel would become a free nation again, that it would become the most important nation on earth, and that everybody would see that the Jews were a special people, that God loved them so much that he had given them this Messiah and he had given Israel as a place for them to live and worship God in peace.

[15 : 41] And Jesus himself made it clear that this was who he was, that he was the Messiah. So, in the beginning of Acts, a passage which presumably you've already looked at as a church, you'll be familiar with the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who had this fantastic meeting with Jesus, didn't recognize who he was.

And Jesus gave them what is probably the best Bible study that has ever been given. And I look forward to the day when I can get to heaven and hear the audio recording. There will be something there in heaven of this Bible study.

And so we're told in, I said Acts, sorry, Luke chapter 24, Jesus said to them, how foolish you are and how slow you are to believe that the prophets have spoken.

Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them all that was said and all of the scriptures concerning himself.

Like I said, there's a Bible study. You know, Jesus starts at Genesis and works his way through to Malachi and says, that's me, that's me, that's me, that's me, that's me.

[16 : 58] And helps him to understand that every time the scripture speaks about Messiah, it's speaking about him. so Paul was aware that Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and his return were all fulfillments of the law and the prophets.

and Paul would have been confronted with this truth about who Jesus was after his conversion and his conversion itself was a dramatic thing that we hear about in Acts chapter 8 that on the road to Damascus, Paul had this powerful confrontation with the risen Jesus himself that he heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him and this time the accusation against Paul was true and that is, Paul, Paul, why are you persecuting me?

Just as a way aside, that's a lovely phrase that reminds that when God's people are under attack and under persecution, God takes that very, very personally. Any attack on a Christian as far as God is concerned is an attack on God himself.

That's how God sees it. But it was, as I said, it was this dramatic encounter with the risen Jesus that transformed the fanatical and ruthless Saul the Pharisee into the fearless and committed Paul the Apostle.

It was an encounter that not only changed his mind about who Jesus was, it changed his entire life as he was commissioned to share this newfound knowledge about who Jesus was with other people.

[18 : 43] And just as Paul had to have his mind changed about who Jesus was and see Jesus for who he really is, we need the same thing today. We need to see Jesus for who he really is.

You know, people question whether or not Jesus even existed. And if he did, then they like to think of him as maybe a really good moral teacher. We love his parables. We love stories about sheep and boys running away and coming back and things like this.

But Jesus went further than that. He wasn't just a teacher. He wasn't some kind of political or religious leader or anything like that.

Time and time again, Jesus made the most amazing claims about himself. Jesus claimed to be nothing less than God himself. And you see it when you read the Gospels.

You know, Jesus allowed people to worship him. That broke the first commandment about having no other gods. Jesus forgave people's sins that people rightly criticized him for and said that only God has the power to forgive sins.

[19 : 50] And they kind of missed the point, therefore, of the implication of what they had just said. Jesus had, we're told in John chapter 5 at one point that the Jewish people there picked up stones to stone him for blasphemy.

And it says there the reason why they wanted to do that was because Jesus was calling God his own father, therefore making himself equal with God.

So Jesus made, had in no doubt, who he was. And because of that, the writer C.S. Lewis says this, a man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.

he would either be a lunatic on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the son of God or else a madman or something else.

Let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about him being a great teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend us to. So when Jesus claims to be God, then what C.S.

[21 : 06] Lewis was saying was there are only three options here. One is the man is a liar and he's trying to deceive people. He is basically trying to start a cult and have people follow after him. Or he is completely insane.

He's well intentioned. Some of you are chronologically gifted, if I can put it like that, will remember when the presenter David Icke was going about claiming to be the son of God.

And everybody's reaction right away was the man needs medication. Because David Icke was the only person that believed that he was the son of God. So either Jesus is a liar, or he is insane, or as C.S.

Lewis says, or he's right. He is God. But you can't say that he's a good person. He either has to be God, or he's not.

So, this morning the question is, do we see Jesus for who he is? Because he claimed to be God, he demands as a result of that, that we listen to him, that we follow him, that we obey him.

[22 : 20] Jesus did not come to earth looking for fans or admirers. Jesus came into this world looking for worshippers, looking for disciples who would follow him and who would live in obedience to him.

Simply admiring who Jesus is isn't enough. Secondly, Paul argues that not only does Jesus fulfill the great Jewish hope for the Messiah, he says that Christianity fulfills the great hope of the Jewish law.

law. Again, this is one of the other central beliefs, if not the central belief of Judaism, this idea that they need to fulfill God's law.

Initially, God's law was really simple. It started out with just ten commandments, which are relatively easy to understand, relatively easy to memorize and learn, maybe not so easy to put into practice, but ten is a good number to be able to work with.

But over the centuries, Jewish scholars poured over the whole of what we would call the Old Testament, and they went from ten commandments to 613.

[23 : 38] Quite a number. But that's what they got down to, was this idea that they could say there are 613 commandments that we need to keep. We need to be able to keep every single one of them in order to be considered righteous before God.

And even today, in our present day, Jewish people, devout Jewish people, seek to fulfill these 613 laws with an effort and an ingenuity which is both frustrating and awe-inspiring.

So, I was watching a documentary a few years ago looking at a Jewish community down in London, and there was an episode where they were showing how people prepare for Passover, again, probably one of the great and most important of the Jewish festivals.

And in one household, they had a cooker which was wrapped in plastic and kept in the garage and only came out of the garage and was only unwrapped on Passover because the law says during Passover that Jewish people cannot eat anything with yeast on it.

And so, therefore, in order to make sure that when the Passover meal was getting cooked that it couldn't possibly be contaminated with anything with yeast on it, they had a separate cooker that was kept away from the daily cooking that was done the other 364 days of the year.

[25 : 15] and this was only ever used one day in a year to cook one meal, then it was all wrapped up again and put back in the garage until next year.

In Israel today, if you go into any big hotel or you go into any big high-rise or any building with lifts in it, lifts in Israel have a Sabbath setting, it's called Shabbat setting to be technical, and what happens is that on the Friday before sunset when the Sabbath begins, a man or a woman walks into the lift and they turn the key and they walk out and from that point on the lifts go up and down all day, just up and down, up and down, they stop at every floor and the doors open so that you can get in, stand there while the lifts close and wait patiently while the lifts go up or come back down to your designated floor, why?

Because the act of pushing a button in a lift is considered to be work and therefore a breaking of the commandment. And again, in buildings, it's more common now, but we have the Israelis to thank for this in the first place, again, you walk into a building in Israel and the lights will come on automatically for exactly the same reason, because to simply reach for a light switch and flick it on or flick it off is doing work and therefore breaks the Sabbath.

And I could give you many more examples, but this is the level that Judaism has got to in attempts to keep the law, and I would imagine that living with that level of can I do this, can I not do this, is it okay to do this now, can I do this later, must be exhausting.

I don't know about you, but when I come to church, or when I am at home worshipping God, I want to come into God's presence and enjoy it, and as our brother said in his prayer, we're commanded to come into God's presence and to be still and to know that he is God's.

[27 : 30] I can't imagine how exhausting it must be and how stressful it must be to worry, what commandment have I broken this week? Number 515, did I look at somebody the wrong way?

And Paul said, not knowing about shavat lifts and lights that switch themselves on, but Paul said, the problem is that we have the wrong idea about the law.

The law is not actually there to make us righteous. The law is actually there to remind us of the complete opposite of just how impossible it is to be righteous before God. So Paul says, therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law.

Rather, through the law, we become conscious of our sin. And I think that is the problem with 613 laws. You're constantly looking at them and thinking, which one have I kept?

Which one have I not kept? How do I therefore go and give an offering to make up for this and repent of that and all the rest of it? As I said, it's wearying. But that's the point of the law, is to remind us that actually we fail at the very first hurdle.

[28 : 47] Like I said, if we don't recognize who Jesus is, we've broken the very first commandment to have no other gods before me. And everything else is domino effect after that.

You've just broken the other 612 from that point on. You've failed at the very first step before you even get to commandment number 2. But this is not bad news.

It sounds like it. But the point of the law is not to be a stick to beat us over the head with. The point of the law is to be a signpost to point as to how we can be saved.

And so therefore Paul says, oh, oh, me and the pointer are not having a good morning. There we go.

So it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works, not by 613 commandments, so that no one else can boast.

[29 : 50] Because that's the problem if you try to keep 613 commandments. You know, you can say to yourself, what a wonderful, righteous, spiritual person I am. That's not the point of the law.

The point of the law is to say the only person who can make me right is God. And that's Jesus. You keep coming back to Jesus. It's all about him.

It's got nothing to do with us whatsoever. And again, this is not just a Jewish concept, this idea of keeping laws, of things that you can do and things that you can't do.

People still live under this mentality today. They just don't recognize it. So how often if you are speaking to someone about I was at church and I believe in Jesus, how many people actually say, well, you know, I'd like to go to heaven.

I hope I'm going to heaven. Why? Because I'm a good person. That's law keeping. And it doesn't work. You know, you can be a good person.

[30 : 57] You might never have got drunk in your life. You might never have lifted your hands to your wife or your husband or your kids or anything else. You might never have had so much as a parking ticket or a speeding ticket.

One or two of you have got embarrassed at that point. You can be a pillar of the community. None of that matters.

I'm not saying these things are bad. I'm just saying none of these things work before God. I don't have this on my PowerPoint but there's a scripture that says that all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

We cannot compare ourselves to God in any way, shape or form. But when we try to be a good person, that's what we try to do. And I've said this many times and it's one of those things that's worth repeating.

If you could be saved by doing good things, my question to you is this, how do you know you've done enough good things to be saved? And if you do enough good things, can you stop doing good things?

[32 : 07] Or do you need to start all over again? And it becomes exhausting, just like trying to keep all those commandments. And yet God makes it really simple on one level and that is God, there's nothing I can do to save myself.

I need to trust in your son, Jesus, the Messiah, the anointed one, the one who came to die for my sins and ask him to come into my life and ask him by his power to change and transform me.

And that means that we start doing good things, not because we have to, not because we're frightened of God, but because we're grateful to God for the salvation that he has already given to us for free.

And it no longer depends on what we do in order to be saved. That doesn't mean that we can live any way we like. Said it already, we do good things not to be saved, but we do them in gratitude and in thanks for what God has done for us.

And it takes that pressure off because now we're not trusting in ourselves, we're trusting in Jesus. So anyone who says, I hope to go to heaven because I'm a good person, someone who's living under the law, they're probably not even Jewish and they probably have no idea, but they're living under law that doesn't work.

[33 : 40] Thirdly, Paul says that rather than Christianity doing away with Judaism, Paul says the opposite, that actually God has not rejected the Jewish people.

In fact, if anything, Paul is always careful to stress that the primacy, the importance of God's people of the Old Testament. So in Romans he says, for I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes, that I've just explained, to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile.

And that's something we need to always keep in mind. God's plan of salvation was the Jewish people first, and then through the Jewish people salvation would come to everyone.

And so, for instance, Paul points out in his writings, he says that Abraham said that God said to Abraham that he would be a blessing for all the nations, not just a nation, but for all the nations.

Why? Because out of Abraham's descendants would come Jesus, and out of Jesus comes salvation. So Paul says that God's plan of salvation starts with the Jews, and then reaches out to the rest of us.

[35 : 02] And then later on, in Romans chapter 11, Paul makes this point, that Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way, all Israel will be saved.

In our words, salvation started with the Jews, it spread to the Gentiles, and then it's going to come back full circle, back to the Jews again. And why does Paul say this?

Because, and this is an important verse for all of us, because God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. And that's an assurance that you cannot get by following laws, that when we are saved, we are permanently saved.

And again, I can say that because it doesn't depend on us, it depends on God. God does not change, God does not change his mind, God does not decide one day, I've had enough of you, you annoyed me for the last time, God does not decide that you've done, you know, you keep coming back to me and saying, God, forgive me for doing this, then you go and do it and you come back and you ask me to do it again, that's not who God is.

God does not reject anyone when they have come to him in faith. And so Paul says that the Jewish people are God's people and always will be, but at the moment God, he actually uses the phrase later on, the goodness and the severity of God, his goodness is seen in that God's plan was always that salvation wouldn't be for everyone, that's why the Bible says that God so loved the world, that whosoever believes in him will not perish, but will have everlasting life.

- [36 : 44] That was always God's plan. Interestingly enough, Jewish tradition teaches that Gentiles were created by God to fire the fields of hell. They completely missed the point, that they are God's chosen people, but God's plan has always been that his choice, his choosing, his salvation would always be wider, but never ever at the expense of the Jewish people themselves.

And so, just as Christianity began with a large, Christianity began among the Jewish people, and again, as you've gone through the book of Acts, you've seen this, you know, the commission to the believers was that you will be my witnesses where in Jerusalem, and Samaria, and Judea, and to the ends of the world.

These circles are like somebody throwing a stone into some water and spreading out. That was God's plan. But when you're in the book of Acts, as you've been doing, you'll notice that the disciples were quite comfortable in Jerusalem, thank you very much, even after they received the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jerusalem's nice, you know, we know everybody, our friends, our neighbors are here. What happened? There was a falling out, there was persecution of the believers in Jerusalem, and they had no choice but to get out of Jerusalem and move.

God kicked them out of their comfort zone. And it says that because of that, some people went to a place called Antioch, because it says that when they left Jerusalem, people spread the good news about Jesus among the Jews, but then they got to Antioch, and folk did strange things, they spoke to non-Jews about who Jesus was.

- [38 : 29] We read elsewhere that Peter, his prayers were interrupted by a dream, and he was basically told by a vision of God to go and speak to a centurion, and folk put him through the ringer for him being a good, devout Jew going into the home of a Gentile.

And Peter said, well, when I got there, I told them about Jesus, and then God decided I told them enough, and he gave them the Holy Spirit. It's a great way to have a sermon ended, by the way, I will take that any time.

If God wants to interrupt me right now by people being saved and coming to know him, I'll gladly sit down and say amen. But that's how God pretty much forced the Jewish people to recognize that salvation was for everyone.

again. And basically what Paul is saying is that day is going to come back again. That one day, a day is going to come, and I hope it's going to come soon when the Jewish people will recognize Jesus for who he is.

They're still waiting for a Messiah, not realizing he's already come. And when he comes back, it's going to be very different from the first time, and it's going to be very different from what they expect with their current view at the moment.

- [39 : 52] But a day is going to come when the Jewish people will recognize Jesus as the Messiah, that Jesus has fulfilled the law, and it says that when that happens, the Jewish people will become the evangelists of the world.

That's what God's plan and destiny is for the Jewish people. But how does that affect us as Christians today? Well, let me give you a few suggestions.

first of all, as I've already said, it challenges us to see who Jesus really is, and to recognize that there is no other way to be saved except through Jesus, through recognizing who he is, by accepting him as Lord, as Savior, as God, and committing our lives to him, as he rightfully demands and expects.

Secondly, as I've already said as well, it challenges us to see that we are saved by faith in Jesus, not in works, by putting our trust in him.

And that doesn't, as I said, doesn't mean that we can live any way we like, but it will change us and transform us in a way in which trying to do it on our own can't possibly do for us. thirdly, here's where it gets hard.

[41 : 19] It challenges us to see that there is absolutely no place for anti-Semitism in the church. There are people who have this idea that, for instance, in the Gospels, people who believe that it's both, if we love Jesus, we should actually be attacking the Jews.

There are people who genuinely believe that. And their argument and justification for it is because in the Gospels, when the crowd were standing before Pilate, they said, let his blood be on us and on our children.

And so their argument is that we can attack the Jewish people because it's God's will because they said they were under a curse because how they treated Jesus. That was one of the justifications for the Holocaust. And yet, I would like to think this morning, I've already shown you that while people uttered very stupid, very rash words on that day, there is absolutely no evidence in Scripture that God took that curse and applied it to the Jewish people.

If it's anything, I've shown you the complete opposite. The Jewish people still remain God's people today. And we need to recognize that and we need to respect, we need to respect that.

there's also, you might not have heard this term and if you haven't, don't worry about it, I tell you your life is better for not having heard it.

[42 : 44] There's also an argument called replacement theology. Replacement theology. And it says that God has abandoned the people of the Old Testament in favor of the people of the New Testament.

Testament. That the Old Testament, the nation of Israel, has been replaced by the church of God. Well, no it hasn't. All that's happened is that the people of God has been expanded to include the people of the New Testament.

It has never replaced the people of the Old Testament. So we need to recognize that we still need to respect and to recognize the Jewish people and we need to therefore, as the church, as Christians, we need to be outspoken.

When we see anti-Semitism, when it's happening, if we are going to be salt and light, if we are going to honor who Jesus really is, then we need to be the people who are not attacking the Jewish people, we need to be the people who are defending them when it happens.

And out of that comes my fourth and my final point, it challenges us to recognize that God has not rejected the Jewish people. And so, therefore, we reject this notion of replacement theology, we reject this idea of somehow the Jewish people being under God's curse.

[44 : 13] And therefore, our first, our most important thing that we can do as Christians is that we continue to pray for the salvation of the Jewish people. Christians, to pray that they will have the same blessing that we have as Christians.

To not only pray for the Jewish people, but to pray in support. There are many organizations who are seeking to evangelize among the Jewish people today, whether that's here in the UK or in Europe, America, as well as Israel itself.

And I'm not going to name any because I'm not endorsing any, but really, if you wanted to know more, you will find plenty of organizations that that is their remit, that that is their call from God is to evangelize among the Jewish people.

To pray for them. Give them not only prayerful support, but if God calls you to, sign up for a newsletter so that your prayers can be more informed. If God believes in your heart, give financially to their work and pray, as I said, for the salvation of the Jewish people.

Not only pray for the Jewish people, not only pray for evangelism among the Jewish people, pray today for those who regard themselves as Hebraic Christians or Messianic Jews, whatever term they want to use.

[45 : 40] Those who have come to recognize Jesus as Messiah, as God and the Savior, who now see their whole life transformed, who have a completely new understanding of the Old Testament and its laws and its practices.

I was blessed many years ago to be part of a Passover meal, a Seder meal as it's properly called, led by two Jewish Christians.

And this is a sermon, a message for another day, but the insights that you see in a Passover meal, when you see it properly in its proper scriptural context and you see how it points to Jesus, it's absolutely amazing, it's absolutely mind-blowing.

pray for Jewish believers today. Pray for that not only God will strengthen their faith, but pray for their protection because they are facing the same kind of persecution, not just verbal, but physical, that Paul experienced 2,000 years ago.

And like many people, they are very often, because of their commitment to Jesus, they're ostracized from their family and from their friends and from their society.

[47 : 04] Just as Paul faced these accusations and was seen as a troublemaker, seen as a rebel, a failure, then very often that's the same experience that Jewish Christians have today.

That's how they're treated by their community because they're seen to have turned their back on who they really are. Psalm 122, verse 6, says that we are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

There's a direct command in Scripture, and I'm not adding that as one of 613 commands, I'm just pointing out that that's what God says. Pray for Israel as a nation today because the Jewish state of Israel today is, it makes no bones, it's a secular state.

It doesn't see God as being its head of state. It doesn't see Jesus as the Messiah. It's just a country, a political entity.

I love God's sense of humor. The Jewish parliament is called the Knesset, which unsurprisingly is a Jewish word, a Hebrew word, and it means the meeting place. Knesset will not mean anything to you.

[48 : 18] The translation meeting place doesn't mean anything to you, but you know that the word that is used for meeting place right the way through the New Testament is one that you'll recognize.

It's a Greek word, synagogue. So I love the fact that Israel declares itself to be a secular nation, and yet its government meets in a synagogue.

Pray one day that that will be true, that it will not be simply a place of politics, but it will become a place of worship where God is recognized. Pray that Israel as a nation will be what God intended it to be, and that is to be a witness to the nations, an example to the nations.

So let me recap. Pray for the Jewish people. Pray for their protection. Pray for those who are working to evangelize among Jewish people.

Pray for Jewish converts. Pray for Israel as a nation to recognize who Jesus is. The truth that Christianity is Judaism fulfilled is not just some nice theological argument that I'm trying to present to you here this morning.

[49 : 31] As we look at these last four points, as I said, it challenges us to see who Jesus is. It challenges us to see what salvation really is.

It challenges us to see how modern Israel really is. And it challenges us to see who the Jewish people really are as they continue to hope for a Messiah while trusting in the law for salvation.

Not realizing Messiah has already come and the law has already been fulfilled. And there is nothing more to do except trust in Jesus.

Instead of trying to obey 613 laws, to simply trust the one who is the way, the truth, and the life. And that no one comes to the Father except through him.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you in reality have made salvation so simple that sometimes we fail to understand it ourselves.

[50 : 40] We thank you that Jesus came into this world not to be an example of how to keep the law and show us how it's all done. But he came into this world not to be that king, not to be that warrior, but he came into this world to be a sacrifice for our sins.

And so we thank you that our hope and our trust is not in ourselves, it's not in our willpower, it's not in our self-control, it's not in the generosity of our giving or anything else.

But we thank you that our salvation isn't simply recognizing what Jesus has done for us and receiving it. We thank you that Jesus himself reminded us that salvation is from the Jews.

And so we thank you that that is a story in itself that the Bible reminds us that you chose a small, insignificant nation.

They were slaves in Egypt. And you took them out of there. You gave them a land of their own. You gave them your law. You gave them your word. You gave them your promises that one day a Messiah would come and that he would be the Savior of the world.

[51 : 58] And we thank you that as Christians we stand on the other side of those promises and we see them fulfilled in Jesus. And we thank you, Heavenly Father, that you are a God of wisdom and a God of mercy.

We thank you that even in the Old Testament your word says that you do not delight in the death of the wicked, but you would rather see the guilty repent and be saved. And so we thank you that you have given us a Savior in Jesus.

And this morning we do, as we thank you for him, we do pray for your people. We pray that you would open their eyes to see Jesus as Messiah. We pray that you would open their eyes to see that in him you offer freedom from keeping laws and rules and regulations and rituals.

That you offer a relationship that they cannot find in keeping laws. Help us to avoid making the same mistake and trying to live keeping laws and doing things and not doing things.

And we do pray, we thank you for the fact that you have established Israel as a nation. We pray that you would protect Israel, but we pray that you would also help it to become a nation of righteousness.

[53 : 18] That it would be obedient to your commands to recognize and to be kind and to look after the widow and the orphan and the stranger in their midst because they were once slaves in Egypt.

We pray that we will see Israel as a nation. We pray that we will see the Jewish people coming to recognize Jesus. And we pray that out of that we will see a tremendous movement of evangelism in our world.

That many people will be freed from this idea of trying to be a good person. And we'll come into a relationship with Jesus himself. And we ask all of these things with thanks.