

Israel's Faithful King

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good evening, everyone. Good evening, everyone. So, welcome to all of you, and particularly if you're a first time here and you're wondering, who's this mark that I need to speak to with all those notices?

I have that mark. But actually, just to let you know as well, I'm not going to be here next Sunday, so if you want to speak to me about that particular thing on the notices, you can speak to Jeff instead for next week.

And who is Jeff? Jeff's right there. Jeff, the only one that's... Jeff, would you like to stand up?

Thanks. Unmissable.

Now, if you have come in and you might have picked up a newsletter, you will notice actually two sermon outlines. If you're here expecting to hear Psalm 40, well, I'm sorry, about six hours late, you can get on YouTube and be able to catch up.

I think, I'm not sure who was preaching this morning, but that was this morning's sermon. So, the sermon outline that's relevant tonight is the one that is the insert, which is our continuation in Matthew's Gospel.

[1 : 1 1] Now, as Helen has said at the start, we've been looking at Matthew for a few weeks now, and we're going to keep going until Easter. And some of you have been away and coming and going. So, let me do a quick recap.

Now, actually, let's start with the word itself, recap, because it actually means, or it's a short for recapitulation. And that's what I said Jesus' life was over the last few weeks, a recapitulation of the history of Israel.

Now, this word actually means a short and repeated summary of something longer that had just gone before. So, Matthew has been showing that Jesus not only fulfills the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, but that many events in his life recapitulates those of Israel's.

And by doing this, Jesus demonstrates himself to be the true Israel. Now, as recaps go, whereas Israel's history unfolded over centuries, centuries and thousands of years even, Jesus' recapitulation of that history is condensed into three relatively short decades.

And yet, we will find that Jesus' life still captured key moments in Israel's history. And so, that's the other way to understand Old Testament prophecy.

[2 : 3 7] Jesus fulfills the Old Testament not simply by bringing to pass key predictive verses in the Old Testament, but also by recapitulating Israel's history.

Key moments in its history anticipate what the Messiah will do. And foreshadow the type of Messiah God will send. And as we look at our passage today in the two key events in Jesus' life, that's what we see again.

First, his baptism in chapter 3, verses 13 to 17. And then secondly, his testing in the wilderness in chapter 4, verse 1 to 11. So, as we look at both of these more closely, I would like for you to see if you can identify which events in Israel's history they are intended to recapitulate.

What might Jesus' baptism, for example, correspond to in Israel's history? And similarly, what might his testing correspond to?

So, have those two questions in the back of your mind as we now look at chapter 3, verse 13, where we read, Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

[3 : 4 9] But John tried to deter him, saying, I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me? Jesus replied, let this be so now. It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.

Then John consented. Well, I think the main question that comes to mind as we read this is, why does Jesus need to be baptized?

After all, if you have your Bibles open, and you look quickly just before in verse 11, John had just explained that he had come to baptize with water for repentance. So, is Jesus now coming to John for baptism because he needs to repent or wants to repent?

Well, if you look at my outline, you will know that that is the wrong answer. All right? No, Jesus does not need to repent. And this is implied when we look at John's question, really.

For he says to Jesus, I'm the one that needs to be baptized by you, not the other way around. And as Jesus replies, he actually confirms that.

[5 : 03] He says, let it be so now. Yes, John, you're right. You're technically right. But I, Jesus, am coming for baptism for another reason.

Now, what's that reason? Well, Jesus answers directly in the words afterwards, isn't it? He says, I'm doing it in order to fulfill all righteousness.

So, that's a pretty straightforward answer. But the question then is, what does Jesus mean by fulfilling all righteousness? And that is a bit more challenging for us to answer.

But before I do that, I would like you to just think about it yourself or turn to the person next to you and just discuss that question which is on the slide. What does Jesus mean by fulfill all righteousness in verse 15?

So, I'll give you a couple of minutes. See if you can try and work that one out. See if you can try and work that one out.

[6 : 27] I'll get you back together.

Okay. Okay. put up your hands if you think that was an easy question to answer. Anyone found that question easy?

You can say so. Be honest. Of course, if you put up your hands, you'll have to answer it. Jillian was there in the morning, so that's why. Now, if you found that hard to answer, don't worry, because it is a hard question to answer.

In fact, Bible scholars have written lots of words about it and not all agree. But for me, the key to answering this question is to remember, as I said in the introduction, about the idea of fulfillment. Remember that I said that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament not just by fulfilling specific prophecies, but by recapitulating key events in Israel's history. So, as we saw, for example, in the last chapter or chapter 2, Jesus recapitulated, didn't he, when Joseph brought him to Egypt, Israel's own journey, when Jacob himself and his sons had to go to Egypt to escape the famine, and then as they were called back out by God and freed from slavery, we saw in that prophecy that out of Egypt I called my son in Hosea.

[8 : 19] So, now remember then, that as we are going on in history, remember that Israel then journeyed to the promised land. What happened then? First, Moses had to lead Israel through the waters of the Red Sea, the parting of the Red Sea.

And then 40 years later, Joshua did the same, did he not? But this time, through the river Jordan. And did you notice where John was baptizing?

In the Jordan. So, what is happening here is that Jesus is recapitulating the role of Moses and Joshua in leading their people, or his people, out of slavery and the wilderness, respectively, and into the promised land.

And by undergoing baptism, Jesus, as Israel's leader, is also doing something further. He's identifying himself with the sins of his people.

He's taking that burden on himself. For he who is without sin, himself, by being baptized, is signifying to everyone present, including to the Father in heaven, that he's saying, let their sin be my sin.

[9 : 34] I'm willing to stand with my people. Whatever falls on them, let it fall on me instead. And he's willing, therefore, and he's showing that he's willing, to be their representative.

Actually reinforced, as he emerged from the water, verse 16, for as soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was open, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

And a voice from heaven said, this is my son, whom I love. With him, I'm well pleased. What we're witnessing here is Jesus' anointing.

Now, no doubt you've seen images of knighting. I've got one of the queen. I find it interesting that even when he's kneeling, that he's still slightly taller than she is.

But anyway, you can see the queen, and I suppose King Charles is going to start doing this. He gets tapped on the shoulder as he's knighted, and then as they arise, she pronounces them, doesn't she?

[10:39] Sir, whatever, or lady, whatever. Well, the same is happening here to Jesus as he emerges from the Jordan. But in his case, what happens is the Spirit of God descends on him, and God his Father pronounces from heaven, this is my Son whom I love.

With him, I'm well pleased. And the precise choice of the words here is actually very important because they echo two key Old Testament passages.

And here we have then another layer of fulfillment. The first of these is the one that was read earlier tonight in Psalm 2, which is a Messianic psalm pointing to the Messiah.

But in its original context, Psalm 2 is about the anointing by God of his king in Israel, whom he is raising up to rule over the nations.

And in response, the call is for all people to pay homage to him, to take refuge in him. And so this phrase, this is my Son, isn't only about Jesus being God's eternal Son, which he is, but it's about the relationship that God establishes when Israel's king is anointed.

[11:59] And so if you look at verse 7 of Psalm 2, this is the language of anointing. You are my Son. Today I have become your Father. Remember, today, that is only now.

Because the king at that time becomes God's Son and God becomes his Father. There is a delegation of authority from the Father, God, to the king and a promise of empowerment.

I am anointing you and I'm going to support you just as I would a son. And so likewise, at his baptism, Jesus becomes Israel's king.

But there's also a second Old Testament prophecy tied to these words and we find that in Isaiah 42, verse 1. We didn't read it, but let me read it to you now. It says, Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight, whom I'm well pleased, whom I love.

I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. And so here, Israel's king is God's servant from Isaiah, a chosen Messiah loved by God in whom God takes delight.

[13:13] And we see here don't we? The explicit reference to the giving of the spirit. I will put my spirit on him. And again, just like in Psalm 2, his rule will be to bring justice to the nations.

Now many of you will know Isaiah and in Isaiah there are actually four so-called servant songs. This is one of them. And each of them speaks explicitly about who the servant will be and what his mission will be.

And of course, the most famous one is actually found in Isaiah 53. And if we turn to verse 11 and 12, which is on the screen as well, this is what we read.

After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied. By his knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many and he will bear their iniquities.

Therefore, I will give him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils with the strong because he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors.

[14:15] For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. And here, I think you can see, can't you, the numerous connection with Jesus as Messiah. First, this is God's righteous servant fulfilling all righteousness.

Next, the servant achieves this by his vicarious death, dying in place of others. He will bear their iniquities. He's numbered with the transgressors.

And all this speaks to the idea of representation, isn't it? Of identification of the servant with the sins of the people. And so, what we see is that even as Jesus emerges from his baptism, by the very fact of these words at his anointing, we already have an idea of what kind of Messiah, what kind of king Jesus will be.

He will fulfill his mission as Israel's king by becoming God's righteous servant in Isaiah. And for those of you who have been following along over the last few weeks, if you go back all the way to Matthew 1 and verse 21, remember what the angel said to Joseph at Jesus' birth.

He said, you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

Exactly what the servant is going to do.

[15:41] Pouring his life unto death, isn't it? So, let's move on then next to the next event which is his baptism.

And again, we will see the same sort of pattern happening with his testing as well. So, chapter 4 and verse 1. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Now, the first thing we need to know here and make sure we're clear on is that it is actually God who leads Jesus into the wilderness. This is not a temptation whereby the devil has set it all up. It's not like Jesus sort of wandered into the desert by mistake and then got pounced on by the devil. No. None of this is taking God by surprise.

In fact, God is the one who ordains this. Why? Well, so that Jesus can again fulfill God's prophecy. How?

[16:40] Well, I'm going to let you think about this one again. So, the next slide, the question. Think about what event in Israel's history is Jesus recapitulating.

Remember how we say recapitulating is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. What event in Israel's history is Jesus recapitulating with the testing in the wilderness?

So, give you another minute to talk about it and then this time I might ask for answers because there's quite a potentially straightforward answer to this. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[19:13] On the slide. Thank you.

Thank you. It is also written, Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

All this I will give to you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me. Just Jesus said to him, Away from me, Satan, for it is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

And then the devil left him and the angels came and attended to him. Well, I hope you can see some correspondence or similarities between the temptations that Jesus faced and some of the ones that you might remember Israel facing.

So if you recall, Israel too was hungry and needed food, didn't they? And God supplied them with quail and bread from heaven. Now, they too were prone to testing God.

[20:40] Remember how they kept asking, Let us go back to Egypt. There is no food. There is no water. Why did you take us out here to die? Blah, blah, blah. We want to go back to Egypt. We want to be slaves.

It was better there. So they too tested God, didn't they? They weren't tempted to test God. They actually tested God. And lastly, they succumbed to the temptation of idolatry as well, didn't they not?

Because when Moses was up in Mount Sinai, what did they make for themselves? A golden calf. I think one of the things that this shows, the correspondence shows, is that really, there's nothing new in the method of the tempter, is there?

These are really just the same old tricks that he's been using all the time, isn't it? Since the beginning of time. Go all the way back to Adam and Eve, even.

It's the same old method, isn't it? But unfortunately, as humans, we fall for them all the time. We still keep falling for them all the time, even when we know his method.

[21:54] And so, you know, I mean, I'm not the devil, but if I were him, I would be saying to myself, why change when it works? I know some of you are teachers, and you know, if your lesson plan works, you know, and your curriculum hasn't changed, you just use it the next year, right, Bevan?

Maybe tweak it here. Why change? You know? And so, I have to say, that's probably what the devil is doing. It works.

Why change? And you know, in the Apostle John's first letter, he summarizes our weak points, doesn't he? The ones that the devil targets all the time.

And they're on the slide, on the next slide. What are they? The three things? They are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. So, just think about your own temptations for a minute.

You wouldn't have to discuss it with anyone this time, so don't worry. What are you most susceptible to? Don't focus on the superficial ones, like the temptation of chocolate or chips, those kind of things, or for some of you Asians, durian.

[23:06] But consider, consider the deeper temptations. What are you most susceptible to? And what do they often relate to?

Those very things on the screen, isn't it? Lust and pride. And Satan knows that, so he uses it to arouse our fear and greed, doesn't he?

He knows how to play on them, or entice us with them. You're afraid of not having enough in life? Not enough money? Not enough friends? Not enough recognition? He's able to whip up those insecurities, isn't he? And that's the same tactic he uses here, isn't he? On Jesus.

Except for Jesus, it didn't work. Are you hungry, Jesus? Well, turn these stones to bread. You can do it. You are the son of God.

[24 : 07] Of course you can do it. Or if you don't want to do it, well, you know, ask God to. Surely, he cares for you. He wouldn't let you suffer, would he? You know, I'm not sure that this is how we exactly ask God, but oftentimes, you know, it's sort of like, if God really loves me, you know, then he'll help me, wouldn't he, to win the lottery with this ticket, to turn my Bitcoin investment into a big windfall.

Or else you cram your life so full with who knows what, earning money, climbing the corporate ladder, social hectic life. and then you say to God, if you really care for me, then please make sure I don't have a mental breakdown.

Or you gear up yourself in your mortgage so high that you have to be under financial stress, and then you say to God, if you really care for me, then you will provide. We may not throw ourselves physically off the highest point of the temple, but we do often put ourselves in these sorts of particular situations, don't we?

As a result of our selfish desires. And then, we test God, don't we? To see if he will deliver us. And of course, if playing on our fears don't work, then God is always good at appealing to our pride as well.

You know, don't settle for second best. Just think about it. You can do better. You can do better with a better job, a better house, a better life, whatever else you want in life.

[25 : 49] All you need to do, all you need to do, all you need to do is worship and bow down to Mammon. Everyone else is doing it.

They're chasing them. You can do it as well. Give in to that dissatisfaction. You can do better. And you know, Satan knows that these are really strong desires.

And so, he prays on them, doesn't he? But I want us to look now at how Jesus responds. Firstly, by realizing that he does not respond with any superpowers.

Did you notice? He does not resort to his divine power to refute Satan. Instead, all he does, I mean, all he does, like it's so simple, but all he does is use the word of God, isn't it?

Each time Jesus refused Satan, he quotes from Deuteronomy, which is the law that Moses gave Israel to help them to live in the land. He submits only to God's authority.

[26 : 51] You see, Jesus, as the Son of God, you know, the tempter was right. He is the Son of God. And so, of all people, Jesus is the one who could have chosen to use his own authority to refute the tempter.

Right? He could have said, Satan, I'm telling you, da, da, da, get away. And actually, he would. But no, he doesn't do that, does he?

He uses, and he relies on the authority of God's word instead. Because Jesus is not falling for Satan's bait, is he? Imagine, the Spirit has just descended on him.

The voice from heaven has just affirmed, this is my Son. And so, Satan goes, well, if you are, prove it. Use that authority you've just been given.

It was a test, wasn't it? To see if Jesus was proud. But Jesus relied only what was accessible to all of us, isn't it?

[28 : 02] He rested his argument on God's word alone. And you and I have God's word too, don't we? And so he quoted, men shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Submitting to God's word was more important than food itself. It's the thing he depended on in life more than for food.

And by resisting temptation this way, that is, not using his divine power, Jesus proved himself worthy to be our substitute. Because he identified fully with us in our humanity.

He did not access, as it were, his divine powers to resist sin. He did it as a human being. And so he identifies with us.

He's able to represent us. And here's where the correspondence starts to diverge, right? Talk about the repeat of Israel's history in Jesus' life. Well, whereas Jesus, Israel failed in the wilderness,

Jesus passed, didn't he?

[29 : 09] Whereas Israel and all of us shows ourselves to be faithless, Jesus proved himself to be faithful. And so by doing that, he qualifies.

And then all the promises that God makes to Israel in Deuteronomy about blessing them in the land, Jesus actually qualifies for them in his own right. Because he's been faithful.

Now, as we turn then to our own selves and work out how we apply this, I think the natural thing for us to do is to read this account of Jesus' testing and think, oh yeah, I get it.

what we need to do now is to follow Jesus' example. You know, here's how we defeat the evil one. Just quote the Bible like Jesus.

Just remember that if Jesus can do it, so can we. But I say that if that is the only thing we take out of the passage, then we've actually misread and misunderstood the primary point of this passage.

[30 : 09] Because this passage is not about showing us how to, first and foremost, overcome temptation. We'll get to that in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus explicitly teaches us how to leave.

But, if you remember, this first few chapters is about trying to tell us who Jesus is. That he is indeed the worthy Messiah. And so the focus here is still rightly on Jesus and who he is.

And as Matthew is recapitulating Israel's history here, what he's showing us is where Israel failed dismally and we too and therefore need a savior, Jesus is faithful and therefore he is the worthy savior.

This, Jesus, look at him, is truly Israel's faithful king. He is the worthy Messiah. He is the righteous servant. And I know that Jesus' ministry here has only just begun, but this is almost like a little snapshot or a little opening sort of scene to show us that Jesus will continue to maintain his faithfulness to God throughout the rest of his life.

And as we read the Gospels, that is indeed true, isn't it? That he passes the test with flying colors each and every time. all the way to the cross, which was the final test, wasn't it?

[31 : 33] The test of whether he would go and lay down his life. And he could have said no, but he didn't. And so, as we read this passage, our first and primary response really should be to come by faith to Jesus as our worthy savior, to bow down again and worship him and say, what a wonderful king we have to follow.

Someone who identifies with us. Someone who carried all our burdens to the cross. Because we are like Israel, aren't we? We are so easily deceived by the devil, so easily spooked by our fears, seduced by pride and greed.

And so, if you ask me, you know, if you said to me, Christianity is all about just following Jesus' example, well, I'll tell you right now, I give up. Because I can't do it.

Just reading this and saying, I'll follow Jesus and avoid temptation, I'll have to say, I will fail.

Because first and foremost, who we need is Jesus as our savior, who is faithful on our behalf and therefore is our worthy king.

Once we put our trust in him, once we are given the spirit, once we love him and therefore want to then serve him, then we can talk about obeying him and then avoiding temptation.

[33 : 05] Because our motivation then is the right, isn't it? We're not motivated to avoid temptation in order to be saved. We are already saved by Jesus. And all our response is a thankfulness that flows up from that salvation.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for sending Jesus, the son you loved, in whom you delight. Thank you that he is a faithful Israel, the righteous servant, the one who fulfilled all righteousness, who poured out his life unto death, was willing to be numbered with us as transgressors, was willing to bear our sin.

Father, help us again to bow down and worship to him as our wonderful king. Save us through faith in him. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.