

Matthew 19-03-10a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 10th of March 2019. We continue our study, our relatively new study, in the Gospel of Matthew.

It's a very exciting story looking at the Lord Jesus and at this point, the inception of His ministry. We've already seen the introduction, the genealogical record that establishes the Lord Jesus as King of Israel. We have a four-dimensional view of the Lord Jesus in the four Gospels and this will be review for most of you, but there is a perspective in each one of the Gospels.

And so we'll review that and we'll begin looking at the unique perspective that Matthew has on the Lord Jesus this morning as we look at the inception of His ministry in Matthew chapter 3. Let's take a moment as we begin our worship and our study and our fellowship this morning to go to the Lord and ask His blessing on all three of those things. Shall we pray? Father, we're so grateful for Your provision, Your protection, Your healing grace, Your watch care, Your involvement and concern over even the smallest details in our individual lives. We think about the scope of the universe and the vast expanses of space and galaxies and the tremendous power that is on display in the heavens and in the creation on this earth.

And there have been so many people who have been born and lived and died across the span of history and it is miraculous as we think about the fact that even with that grandeur and that immense, vast scope, You are yet our personal Heavenly Father and You know us as individually as if we were an only child. And we're grateful for Your love for us expressed ultimately in the Lord Jesus Christ and we're really happy to get the chance to look at His ministry afresh, His words and His works, the example of His obedience to You as He walked this earth and made preparation to give His life for our salvation. We pray that as we embark on this study and as we look at these things together that Your Holy Spirit will bless the content of it to each heart, that each one of us will see its pertinence and its applicability and how important it is for us to reflect on these truths and to live in their light.

We pray that You will bless the study, bless the presentation and the reception of it. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

As I said we have seen the genealogical introduction and this is a clue to Matthew's emphasis throughout his Gospel. The four Gospels give us an overview, a summary. We were watching together a documentary yesterday that is available online.

I think it's on Amazon Prime but it's called The God Who Speaks and I recommend that documentary. We watched it, Elizabeth found it and we watched it together and that's a good program. It's rare to be able to say that but a couple of my former seminary

professors and acquaintances and men whose commentaries I have consulted with great profit are in there.

Everybody from Josh McDowell, D. A. Carson, Dan Wallace who in his younger days taught Bible classes at Believers Chapel where Patty went to church and Patty got to know him and she introduced me to him when he was a professor at Dallas Seminary. We were actually walking down the hall and met him and he's gone on to do wonderful things in terms of preserving and exploring the Greek text of Scripture and he's interviewed in this thing extensively and it's fun to see him. Just as it's fun to look at myself in my later age.

Patty did not recognize him because he's 30 years on from the last time we talked to him. But many others are in there and it is a really good, solid, meaty, think about it type of presentation. So it's called The God Who Speaks.

It's on Amazon Prime and Elizabeth turned that up and I was really glad she did. Anyway, a couple of the points this morning, they resonated with me because they bear directly on our Matthew study and God often arranges things to where either experience or information comes to me as I need it in preparing to share these things. So looking at the four Gospels, you'll remember that it's like the wordless book.

It's something that pretty much most of us have run across in the past. But working backwards, the Gospel of John presents the Son of God, Jesus as the Son of God, his deity. In the beginning was the Word.

The Word was with God. The Word was God. When you come to Luke, he is the Son of Man.

It's his humanity. Luke is a physician. The Lord Jesus is shown as the great physician.

Luke interviews eyewitnesses. This is a personal point of view and there are many unique recollections and observations in Luke, and it is the humanity of the Lord Jesus that is on display. Jesus moved with compassion, does acts of mercy and healing.

Mark is the Gospel that is the recollections of the Apostle Peter, and it is the presentation of the Lord Jesus in his role as Savior. He is the Savior of the world. In Matthew, he is the King of Israel.

And Matthew quotes more Old Testament prophecy and establishes at the inception of his Gospel his legal right, his patrilineal claim to the throne of David. So we'll be watching and noting the emphasis that Matthew makes on Jesus as first and foremost the Messiah. All four Gospels unite in depicting the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus by first showing us John the Baptist.

All four Gospels begin with John preaching in the wilderness, a baptism of repentance

with a view toward the forgiveness of sin. And that is where we pick up this morning in Matthew chapter 3. In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, Repent. This is the imperative of metanoeo.

Metanoeo is related to the word gnosis. You know knowledge in your noe, in your mind. And so meta, it means to change.

We've got plenty of English words that have meta, which means there is something different. You have a metanarrative. I've used this example 100 times, but metamorphosis from a caterpillar to a butterfly, it's a change.

Something changes. And metanoeo is change your mind. Because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

It is at hand. It doesn't say it has started. It doesn't say that it has begun.

It doesn't say that the king is sitting on his throne and the kingdom is underway. It says it is at hand. You think about the Lord telling Moses that the time of his departure was at hand.

It's time for Elijah to depart. That time is at hand. You can review the uses of this idea that something is at hand.

You're standing there looking at the door about to cross the threshold to either go in or to come out or to make a change. And why is change of mind necessary? Because a change of government is at hand. You have to have a different mind to live in this kingdom.

You have to have a different mind to enter this kingdom. Do you see the connection? You've got to change your mind because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. You cannot enter this kingdom.

You cannot partake of it. You cannot enjoy its benefits and glory and its blessings with the mind that you have right now. That follows, doesn't it? Otherwise, he would just say, all of you that have been long awaiting the kingdom, here it is.

Come on in. You're ready. You've got it done.

Simeon, Anna, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, all of your like-minded friends, walk right in, sit right down, have a cup of Mississippi mud. Here it is. Here's the kingdom.

You're good to go. That's not the message. God sends the last of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist.

We saw his prophetic bona fides last time, right? Or bona fides, depending on where you're from. Bona fides. But around here in Texas, Oklahoma, we say bona fides.

He's bona fide. That's his hairy coat, his prophetic, somewhat ascetic lifestyle, and the location. Where is John preaching? And where is he not preaching? I suggested this last time.

We've got to get the people of Israel ready for the kingdom. Their head's not right. Their mind's not right.

The mind needs to change. So where do you go to address the most people and get the minds convicted to change? Where do you go? From a human perspective, where do you do this marketing? Where do you get this message across? Facebook, right? Seriously, though, in that day, where would you go? Population centers? Go to the place where people gather? Wait for a feast where everybody comes for Passover, everybody comes for Pentecost, everybody comes for the Feast of Trumpets, the Rosh Hashanah, the Head of the Year, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Booths. You get everybody in one place, you've got a captive audience.

They're there in Jerusalem. Let's go and talk to them there. So that's what we read here in Matthew chapter 3, isn't it? In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the center of Jerusalem at the temple.

This doesn't make any sense, does it? Why is he in the wilderness? What is wilderness? Have you ever seen pictures of Israel down by the Jordan River? It's not barren. It's just not populated. I mean, there's grass.

You can pasture flocks. You can water goats and things there, right? What does it mean, wilderness? Why does it say wilderness? The word in Hebrew is Midbar. It's a wilderness.

What does this suggest? How did this nation get to know God in the first place? They started out as slaves. They started out as subject. They had been subjected because of their apathy and indifference and disobedience.

They had gone down in blessing. Joseph invited his family down to Egypt to survive the famine and to live in plenty and to populate the land of Goshen, and they prospered. But something happened in those intervening years between Joseph and Moses.

In those somewhat silent years, when the account picks up in the first part of Exodus, remember Genesis ends? You remember the famous phrase with which Genesis ends? How does that end? In a coffin in Egypt, right? A coffin in Egypt. And it's a harbinger. Scripture says things for a reason.

When you pick up at Exodus chapter one, years have passed, and all of the people that were there in Goshen in prosperity and abundance and provision and privilege are now enslaved. And you've got the midwives being told to kill the male babies, and they're subject, and they're in hard bondage, and bricks without straw and all of that. So then what happens? God, with a mighty hand, does nine plus one plagues, and they come

out, and they cross the Yom Suf, and they go where for the next 40 years? The wilderness.

Wouldn't it have been easier for God to just raise up a guy in Egypt, and teach them in Egypt? Couldn't they have taken over Egypt? That's a well-provisioned land ordinarily. It's got the Nile and everything. Why didn't he just give them Egypt? It symbolizes something else, doesn't it? It's the place that it's good to be from.

It's like Barstow. It's good to be from. You've been there, and you're glad you're not now.

God promised the land to Abraham. This is the fulfillment of God's promise. To get there, they need to traverse the wilderness.

They get to know God in the wilderness, and what? What does it tell you? There's a review in the book of Hebrews. God tested them in the wilderness 40 years. God's voice in the wilderness, God's commands in the wilderness, God's provision, and occasionally withholding provision in the wilderness to see how the people will respond, is a test.

That testing is in the wilderness. How did the people do that came out of Egypt on the test? Pass or fail? The wilderness test. Pass or fail? What do you think? You can say it out loud.

Did the Exodus generation that came out of Egypt enter into the land of promise in triumph and glory? Thank you, Lord. We sure are glad we know you well, and we've benefited, we've grown, we're strong. We are all just like Caleb and Joshua, and triumphantly into the land they march.

It's not what happened, is it? In the wilderness, they died and turned to dust. I was listening with interest. Elizabeth was explaining to me that there... You remember our study a few years ago of Bart Ehrman and his books and how he started out as an evangelical Christian professor, teacher, expert in Greek and everything else, and then he had a tragedy in his life.

He decided it was all bunk. He is a self-proclaimed atheist, and now he's writing all of these books, throwing rotten eggs at Scripture and everything else. Forged, all these things.

Jesus is a myth. The Bible is full of mistakes and contradictions. We worked through enough of those to see that I feel really sorry for Bart Ehrman.

I grieve for his loss of faith and the reasons for his loss of faith in the same way that when you look at Israel coming out of slavery, it's a big adjustment. If you don't have faith in God, you're not going to survive that wilderness journey. They didn't trust God.

Because they didn't have that faith, they dropped. Now, are they unsaved in our

understanding of the Word? They are delivered out of bondage and into freedom. They are baptized, as it were, in the Yom Suf.

Hebrew says they were baptized with Moses. They came out. What is the inception feast that they come out of Egypt under? What's the whole symbolism of the 10th plague? I will pass over those who have the blood on the doorpost, and the firstborn in there will not die.

That is the symbol of salvation. When I see the blood, you do not die. These people, representatively speaking, are saved.

They're saved by the blood. They're baptized in the water and they enter out. So is their death in the wilderness loss of salvation? Or is it failure to walk the walk and to trust and obey as a believer? Are they ever called not my people in the wilderness? They are God's people.

They are His. He's their God. There's the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.

Is He leading a big group of unbelievers because all but two of them die in the wilderness? Did Moses enter the land of promise? No. Only two guys, Caleb and Joshua, which I think is fascinating when you think about the two witnesses in Revelation, because there's only two guys from the Old Testament age that go into the end of the Old Testament age. Two guys who are very faithful, who are part of Jesus' inner circle of strong disciples, and they are physical brothers in the way that Caleb and Joshua were spiritual brothers.

But you know my thinking about that. I think the witnesses are James and John. I think when their mother and they came to Jesus and said, grant to us that we can sit on your right hand, left hand in the kingdom, the kingdom was a reality to them.

They knew it was coming. When John proclaimed, repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, they believed it. They are down there listening.

Peter and Andrew and James and John and Philip and Andrew are down there. I said Andrew twice. Bartolomeo is down there, who is also Nathanael.

So those six, half the disciples are disciples of John the Baptist. And when he says the kingdom is coming, they believe it. And later on when Jesus comes and he identifies Jesus as the king, they believe that.

And so the mother of James and John, the wife of Zebedee, who as near as we can tell is Mary's sister, which makes James and John Jesus' first cousins. We just had my mother's first cousin here the last few days, really great to visit with him. And this is kind of a family thing.

But they believe, it's harder to believe within your own family than it is to come as a stranger. You know people too well. If they've got a disqualifier, you're going to know that in the family.

But the family of Zebedee believes. The family of Zechariah and Elizabeth believe. And the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and John comes to the Lord Jesus and they are with her.

And they come and say, we'd like James and John to sit at the right and left hand. What was Jesus' reply? He says, that's not mine to give. That's something my father's going to assign.

But he says, can you drink the cup that I'm going to drink? And can you be baptized with the baptism I'm about to be baptized with? And there's a hymn that's got the title for the answer. Are ye able, said the master, to be crucified with me? Yea, the sturdy dreamers answered. To the death we follow thee.

Lord, we are able. Our spirits are strong. You can still hear Ernie Ford singing that off of one of my mom's records.

Very, very great stirring tune to those words as well. But Jesus said, you will indeed drink my cup. And you will indeed be baptized with my baptism.

But to grant the right and left hand seats is not mine to give. Well, you go to Revelation and look at what those witnesses go through. They proclaim the word of God.

They are killed for their trouble and they are raised the third day. So, I think that corresponds. This is that kingdom.

Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Change your minds. But he announces it in the wilderness.

Why? What does Israel remember about the wilderness? What is their historical, national, ethnic memory about the wilderness? It is the place of deliverance from bondage, but it is the place of testing before you can enter the kingdom of rest. The land flowing with milk and honey. It is the place between where you got delivered out of bondage under the blood and crossing the Jordan into the land of plenty and the land of permanent inheritance.

It is the place of testing. So, when John does a ritual ministry of physical water baptism, dunking people in the Jordan, he is the last Old Testament prophet doing the last great Old Testament ritual. It's a ritual.

It is an external, visible thing. Visible rituals, visual symbols represent, communicate, and inculcate invisible truths, right? So, he is symbolically in the wilderness. He is

symbolically transforming people by having them die to their old way of thinking as they sink into the waters of the Jordan and rise to a new way of thinking when they come back out.

We know, they knew, he knew, this water baptism is symbolic. A lot of people go to Israel to get dunked in the Jordan, and it's a fun experience, but you can't think that there's anything special about Jordan River water. It's kind of muddy, even in pictures today.

It's been overbuilt, just like everything else in the Holy Land. It looks nothing like it did when John was there. They don't know what part of it he was at.

It's a complete fabrication. The water that flows in that thing was probably in the South China Sea when Jesus and John were around. Who knows what molecules flowed through there now, but there's nothing magic, nothing special about the place.

It was special at the time that John the Baptist was baptizing because it was a call to God's people. He's not saying, come ye out of Egypt. He's not saying, splash the blood on the doorpost and let God deliver you by your faith and confidence in his ability to deliver from death.

That's not his message. What's his message? Change your mind, believers. Change your mind, people of God.

You have been delivered. You belong to God, but your mind has to change before you cross this Jordan into this land, meaning the kingdom of heaven. The physical is used to represent the spiritual.

That's why he's at the Jordan. That's where they eventually, the second generation, crossed into the land. They were the ones that had the faith to conquer, to march around Jericho, to keep fighting when the hail and fire were falling from heaven on their enemies, to obey and to discipline themselves under Joshua, to take the land and to occupy and to be obedient.

So it is a call and it's a symbolic call. Secondly, that's one reason. What is that reason? The wilderness and the Jordan mean something historically to the people of Israel.

It doesn't mean anything to the Hittites, doesn't mean anything to the Romans, doesn't mean anything to other people. It means something to Israel because that is their heritage and it reminds them of their scriptures and of their history and of God's dealings with them in the past. They are God's people.

This is not a call to get saved. This is a call to enter into the fullness of God's blessing and God's promise and God's inheritance. Getting saved is not enough.

It's a great first step, but that just gets you to the wilderness. Now, pass the test by faith

and patience, inherit the promises. That's the first thing.

The wilderness, the baptism, John as a prophet harks back to the Old Testament recollection, the Old Testament message. What does God do throughout the Old Testament? He says, all day long I hold out my hands to the people. Something wrong with God's hands that they don't come? Is his arm shortened that he cannot save? Is his ear heavy that he cannot hear? What's the problem as he holds out his hands all day long in the Old Testament? They are a disobedient and stiff-necked people.

So once again, one final time, God holds out his hands to his people through John the Baptist. He's the summation of ritual. He's the summation of the call to true inheritance.

That's number one. Number two, why the wilderness? In the book of Ezekiel, one of the two great, long, prophetic, major prophet books along with Isaiah. Isaiah and Ezekiel, you could spend the rest of your life plumbing those depths.

But Ezekiel records what happens with the glory of God in Israel. Where did the glory of God first appear for this nation? Coming out of Egypt, they get backed up against what we call the Red Sea, and what happens? The glory of God appears in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. That glory accompanies them throughout their wilderness wanderings.

And when they enter the land, ultimately and finally, you have hundreds of years of the judges and the glory of God is nowhere to be found. And you notice in Judges, it says, every man did what was right in his own eyes. Then comes King Saul, then comes King David, then comes King Solomon.

And for the second time, you have the glory of God appearing in the vicinity of the Ark of the Covenant. The first time is when Moses in the wilderness constructs the tabernacle. And the glory of God, we call it the Shekinah, although that word is not in the Old Testament.

I'm not sure why we always talk about the Shekinah glory, because Shekinah is not in the Old Testament. It's never called that. It's the glory of God.

It's the kolod of Yahweh. It's the kolod Elohim. It's the glory of God.

But remember, God's presence is over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. And later when Solomon builds the temple and you have the new Holy of Holies there, the glory resides there. And the glory fills the temple the way it filled the tabernacle when it is finished, the first temple.

They disobey, the northern kingdom goes out, the southern kingdom goes out. We've seen that in our Kings and Prophets study over the span of several years. And when they come back and reconstruct the temple in the days of Ezra, in the days of Nehemiah,

what happens? They get it all fixed up and they're ready to dedicate it.

You've got the minor prophets encouraging them to build it. They get it done, although there's a lot of strife and there's a trowel in one hand and a other. They finally get it done.

And what happens in the temple? Nothing. The glory does not fill it. They're back in the wilderness, but they don't even have the tent.

They don't have the pillar of cloud, pillar of fire, and you've got basically 400 silent years. God has marginally allowed them to return to the land, but there is no further prophetic word. There is no what they like to call a revival as they had in the days of Josiah or one of the other kings.

God says, I've seen your revivals. They don't last. They're shallow.

They're superficial. You spring up in a day and wither under the hot sun. So for four centuries, this is the equivalent of going back to the pilgrims in our history.

1620, that's 400 years ago, right? That's how long ago it's been since anybody heard anything from the Lord. Malachi closes out the Old Testament. Now here's John in the wilderness preaching.

Why in the wilderness? Where is the Jordan and this spot where he's baptizing geographically, directionally from Jerusalem? Which compass direction is it? Think about my sky map. You've got the Sea of Galilee. You've got the Jordan River.

You've got the Dead Sea down here. And northwest of the top of the Dead Sea, west of the Jordan, you've got Jerusalem. And so to get to the Jordan, which direction do you go from Jerusalem? Due east.

And why is that? Because that's the direction the glory of God left in Ezekiel. Turn to Ezekiel chapter 8. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. Remember, Ezekiel opens with a vision of the glory of God, the wheels within the wheels, the cherubim and the vision of God's presence in heaven, the living creatures and the movement and the glory of God.

That's all of chapter 1. Chapter 1 closes, verse 27, "...from the appearance of his waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber, with the appearance of fire all around within it. From the appearance of his waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire, with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around.

This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." The glory of the Lord, that's the subject of the entire first chapter. Now flip over a few pages to Ezekiel chapter 8. "...came to pass the sixth year, the sixth month, the fifth day of the month, sat in the

house with the elders of Judah. The hand of the Lord fell upon me.

I looked, there's a likeness of the appearance of fire. From the appearance of his waist and downward, fire from the waist and upward, like the appearance of brightness, like the color of amber." This is the same thing we saw in chapter 1, right? And what is this? Like a rainbow on a rainy day, this is the glory of God that Ezekiel is looking at. "...he stretched out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my hair, and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the image of jealousy was, which provokes to jealousy." There is idolatry, there is corruption, there is an abomination on the wing, if you will, in the temple.

He's on the north gate. "...behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision I saw in the plain." This is like the vision he saw in chapter 1. He says, "'Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north.' So I lifted my eyes toward the north. North of the altar gate was this image of jealousy in the entrance.

He said to me, "'Son of man, do you see what they're doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here to make me go far away from my sanctuary?' What Israel is doing is driving God away.'" Now, this is a real thorn in the side of sovereignty theology, Calvinist Reformed theology, that says that God does whatever he wants to, and man is conforming himself to whatever God has decreed. God dwells in God's place, the place that God chose in Jerusalem, the place of his name. Why is he leaving? Because he has sovereignly decided that it is time to leave? God is sovereignly deciding to leave because man has put an abomination in God's place.

It's just north of the north gate. And God says, you see this thing? See these great abominations? This is making me go far from my sanctuary. Now turn again in verse 6. You will see greater abominations.

He brought me to the door of the court. When I looked, there was a hole in the wall. He said, "'Son of man, dig into the wall.' When I dug in, there's a door.

He says, "'Go in and see the wicked abominations which they are doing there.' I went in and saw, and there, every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls." These are like Egyptian tomb paintings on the walls of God's temple, and they are idols, idols of the land, gods of the land. And foreign gods, false gods, demonic gods, are being worshipped in the place where God's holy presence is supposed to be honored. Now, this is God's capital on the planet Earth, within the land that God gave to God's people.

This is the capital, and this is the temple within that capital. This is the place where God's holy heavenly presence touches the Earth. This is the spot.

And what are God's people doing? Heinous, abominations, idolatrous, evil, grotesque, evil. And God says, you keep this up, I'm leaving. I will withdraw my presence.

I will withdraw my glory. People with that attitude, if the kingdom of heaven is at hand, what do they need to do? Change your mind. Your mind is wrong.

Your head is wrong. Your priorities are wrong. The things you worship are wrong.

The things you count on and look to for benefit. Why would people do this? Why would they put these paintings on the walls of God's temple? Why would they worship abominations at the place they're supposed to be worshipping God? Did they just wake up in the morning and twist the ends of their mustache and say, what evil, heinous thing can I do today? What's the most rotten abomination I can perpetrate? Is that why they did it? Why do they turn to these idols and gods? Why would anybody do that? Especially when they're God's people and their heritage is belonging to God to worship, why would they do that? They think there's an advantage. They think there's a benefit, right? I can get something this way that I don't get from God.

I know people who worship this God and their crops grow and their children multiply and their coffers are fuller than mine and their life and circumstances are better than mine and this is what they do. So I'm going to do what they do because I want a benefit. This will benefit me.

This will make me better. This will bless me. I'm going to depend on this.

I'm going to rely on this. I'm going to trust in this for benefit. Isn't that why somebody would do that? Are they trying to perpetrate evil or are they trying to get ahead? They want better circumstances, want a better life.

This will do it. I've tried the God thing. This looks better.

This is more attractive. This is more interesting. This may be more fun.

Maybe they've got some little side benefits like these temple prostitution and legitimizing things that are gratifying to the flesh and gratifying to self and they say it's okay when I go this way, that what I want to do is fine. They tell me it's okay. I like this religion.

I like this worship. I like this God of the land because it lets me do things that I think are really gratifying. That's why they do it, isn't it? Isn't that what we do today? Isn't that why we're willing to compromise the truth of the word of God when, well, if I'm honest, it's going to cost me financially.

If I'm a person of integrity, I'm not going to get ahead. I'm not going to be favored. I'm not look at all of the people who are bending this rule and cutting this corner and

worshiping this false God of expediency and of people pleasing and of conformity and of not making an issue out of the truth and they're all getting ahead.

They're accepted. They're promoted. They're getting along and getting by.

We saw this in Psalm 37, fret not thyself because of evil men. Remember the aleph, the first verse? Don't be fretting when you see people who are involved in evil trying to benefit themselves and gain. Don't fret yourself.

Trust in God. They're green grass this morning, but they're going to be withered dead and blown away by evening. You've got to trust God.

You've got to change your mind. Repent. The kingdom of heaven is at hand and if you want to be in the kingdom of heaven, why would it be the kingdom of heaven? Why is it called the kingdom of heaven? Isn't Jesus supposed to establish the throne of David in Jerusalem and Israel is going to be the, you know, carpenters are going to be singing top of the world and everybody's going to be bringing their glory in and isn't it an earthly kingdom? Why is it called the kingdom of heaven? Why does he say repent? Jesus is about to, you know, dig the throne of David out of the temple mount and set it up and sit on it and drive the Romans out and everything's going to be great.

Why is it the kingdom of heaven? All of the solid ritual visible realities speak of invisible truths, right? And the kingdom of heaven isn't just a thousand years long, it's eternal. Why scrabble and grasp and compromise and engage in evil to get temporary momentary benefits that are going to perish with the using when the kingdom of heaven is at hand, where moth and rust do not corrupt, thieves do not break in and steal. Which do you want? Do you want a piece of sponge cake that's going to dry up in an hour? Or do you want manna from heaven? Do you want a cruise of oil that never fails? Do you want divine food that is permanent and lasting and satisfying and exactly right, never too much, never too little, and the God who saved us and the God who preserves us is pleased.

The pleasure of God is coming up in this chapter before it ends. So, repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He's announcing it in the wilderness, and the glory of God is the issue.

What is their mind not right about? It's not right about the glory of God. We say, well, they're legalistic or they're petty or they're selfish. The problem is the same problem we have.

Down through history, from Eve in the garden forward, the problem is our lack of appreciation for the glory of God. When the serpent starts talking to Eve about fruit and wisdom and you shall not surely die and the rest of it, what single truth did Eve already know? And we know she knows it. There's no Law of Moses.

There's no 66 books. There's no Bible. But what does Eve know? What single thing could she have gone to in the resources in her soul and not succumbed to temptation, not looked at that fruit and seen it as desirable to make one wise? What could she have applied? You're Eve.

You're in the garden. Satan's just made his pitch through the serpent. You can't quote any scripture because it doesn't exist.

You've got a command. You can quote that. God said no.

But why did God say no? And why should I obey him? What is my compelling reason to do what God has told me to do and not do what God has told me not to do? What's the reason? If she quits looking at the serpent coiled around a branch in the tree with little tiny feet that he's about to lose, what would she see if she just looked around? Where is she standing? Where is she? What's the location? You know this. You can say it. Garden of Eden.

What's special about that? God created the heavens and the earth. Then in six days, he furbishes the earth, fills it with living things. Is she just on the earth in general? Is she standing in a jungle or a forest or on a mountaintop? Where is she? God planted a garden eastward in Eden.

We've got nature all around us out here in northeast Oklahoma. There's beautiful hills and pastures and trees. But if you go out here in a little enclosure, what do you see in a garden? What do you see? The most beautiful.

You pick flowering plants or you pick things that are nutritious. You can have a garden of vegetables. You can have a garden of flowers.

But this is the ultimate. You get the best stuff and the showiest stuff and the most gratifying. It smells the best and looks the best.

You pay special care to that. We don't go up and water the oak trees and try to say, oh, let's trim off the limb of this 175th hickory tree up on the other side of the hill. But do we take the weeds out of a garden? Do we put potting soil and care for it and nurture it? Eden is the garden of God.

Later on in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, when you're talking about when Satan was up there, what is part of the conviction of his fall? You were the summation of beauty. You were the best thing that ever came from God's hand. And where were you? You were in Eden, the garden of God.

You walked among the stones of fire. You were saturated, standing in the midst of what? The glory of God. If Eve had just looked around and appreciated the glory of God and then looked at the serpent's offer, what do I need that for? Look at where I am.

Look at what has been given to me. Look at the God who made me and provides for me and comes and walks in this garden in the cool of the day and fellowships with me. What more do I need than what I have got with the glory of God? When she and Adam did partake of the fruit, what happened? Their clothing of glory disappeared, and they looked at each other, and what did they know? They knew that they no longer had the glory.

They were naked. They were deficient. By going their own way, the glory of God is going to depart.

They can no longer stay in the garden. They can no longer stay where the tree of life is, lest they stretch forth their hand and in a deficient state persist forever. It was grace that they were driven out of the garden.

It was grace that they had to make their own way. Now, history is the wilderness. It is the time of testing.

Ever since exiting the garden, history is the midbar. It is the wilderness. God calls through his prophets, saying, change your mind.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. It is the call to us. How do we respond to that call? What is it we have to appreciate and have to have capacity to understand and to focus our attention on? The glory of God.

We've traced before, I'm not going to do it this morning, we've traced before what happens in Ezekiel chapter 8 and chapter 9 and chapter 10. Remember, chapter 9 is the inkhorn angel. God is going to judge Jerusalem because of this bad attitude and this abominable practice in the place of his presence.

They've desecrated it, they've defiled it, they've debauched it. And so in chapter 9, look at verse 3, the glory of God of Israel had gone up from the cherub where it had been to the threshold of the temple. God says, I'm not going to stay here with people who have a mindset of abomination, who don't appreciate my glory.

You don't appreciate the glory, you're going to be separated from the glory. And in this case, God's glory gets up from over the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat, and goes to the threshold of the temple. He calls to a man clothed with linen, he's got an inkhorn at his side, and the Lord says, go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over the abominations that are done within it.

Why a mark on the forehead? Why not a mark on the hand? Why not a mark on their chest or on their back? Why is it on their forehead? What is the distinguishing feature of these people? Which ones get the mark? This is like the reverse mark of the beast. If you get the mark of the beast, you agree with the beast, and you're entering into his system,

and you want to thrive in his economy. You want to buy and sell, and prosper, and have your own way, and have the things you want, so you take the mark of the beast.

What distinguishes these people? How does he know which ones to mark? They are sighing and crying. They are expressing an attitude of sorrow. They have a mind that says, these abominations are evil and wrong, and I grieve for the glory of God.

I grieve for appreciation of God, and God says, mark those people. They've got the mind that is going to let them enter the kingdom. The rest of these are going to be judged.

So the inhorn angel goes through, and God says in verse 5, go after, go behind him and kill. Do not let your eyes spare, nor have pity. Slay old and young, maidens and little children of women, but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark, and begin at my sanctuary.

Start at my sanctuary. And isn't it interesting? You know, judgment begins at the house of God, and most of these people are at God's sanctuary. These people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

They're not really interested in the glory. They're there for other reasons. They've debauched and defiled and corrupted and amalgamated and compromised, worshipping the glory of God, and they're judged.

And he says, start at my house. There's a big crowd of them there. We've got to watch out just because we call ourselves Christians and just because we have a Bible and we look at it regularly.

What is our attitude? What is our hunger and thirst for God's presence and God's power, God's glory? Is that what we're interested in? Or are we after comfort? Or are we after acceptance? Or are we after pleasure in some sense? How motivated, how much on fire are we for the glory of God? I trust and pray that we can be those. If God sent that inhorn angel out today, and he came here, would we get the mark? Do you look around our culture and our society? Do you look around what Christianity has come to represent? Do you cry and sigh? Are you sorry? Or for many Christians, hasn't it become a comfortable way of life? I've got friends. I've got acceptance.

I've got a safe place to send my kids for activities and keep them out of trouble. They'll be out playing croquet instead of the pool hall or the dive or the video arcade or whatever. It's nice fellowship.

It's good fun. There's activities. I have a sense of life and connectedness.

It's a lot of fun. I find pleasure in it. Are you there for the glory of God? Are you there for self-indulgence? Are you there because you are hungry for the presence and power of God to be able to approach his throne, to be ready to enter the kingdom of heaven? Or

are you happy with the kingdom on earth, such as it is, the humanly constructed thing that's got an abomination outside the north gate? Go through and mark and slay, judge everyone who isn't crying and sighing over the evil that has infiltrated God's people and God's capital and God's temple.

Then he said to them, verse seven, defile the temple, fill the courts with the slain, go out. And the slaying of these people defiles the temple. But why does God say, go ahead and defile it? Human blood touching a thing was defilement, right? An issue of blood was a defilement.

So in verse eight, while they were killing them, I was left alone. I fell on my face and cried out and said, ah, Lord God, will you destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out your fury on Jerusalem? He said to me, the iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great and the land is full of bloodshed. The city is full of perversity, for they say the Lord has forsaken the land and the Lord does not see.

They say, God has no problem with what we're doing. He's not looking at us. As for me, my eye will not spare nor will I have pity.

I will recompense their deeds on their own head. Just then the man clothed with linen who had the ink corn at his side reported back and said, I have done as you commanded me. As you continue on through chapter 10, you see the glory of God, verse four, lift up from the cherub, pause over the threshold of the temple and the house is filled with the cloud and the full of the brightness of the Lord's glory.

This is the way it started. This is how the tabernacle started. This is how the temple started.

By the time you finish chapter 10, the glory of God has departed, heading east, goes over the Mount of Olives and disappears. Where is John the Baptist saying, prepare the way of the Lord? He's east of Jerusalem. That glory can come back.

It's going to come from the east. John is standing there saying, make his path straight. Let the valleys be exalted.

Let the rough places and the hills be made a plain. Prepare the way for the glory of God to return. It left going east.

It will come back from the east. And you have that prediction later on in Ezekiel, I think it's chapter 48. We're going to pause here and take our break.

But the question for us is, is our mind right to enter the kingdom of heaven? If not, we need to heed the words of John the Baptist, even 2000 years later, change your mind. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Let's pause here and take our break.