

Matthew 20-05-03b

As we return now to our study, I hope you don't think we were going fast, because I am going to pick up the pace a little bit. But we've seen the background now. You have looked at the way Matthew's Gospel presents the Lord Jesus.

It comes into focus here, his eruption into human history in the first couple of chapters. There's early, early recognition by people who were advanced students of the Word of God and faithful believers who loved God and were watching and were not taken by surprise. Then you have the first two sections that we've seen.

I'm not going to review those, but we're on the cusp of chapter 10. We've also reviewed demons and angels, angels in general, demons in particular, and a fruitful source of reflection for us. I'm going to cover this a little bit this coming Thursday night as we transition from our special on angels and generally the end times to the book of Revelation, again because that last seven years of the age of Israel gives us clues in the physical realm that correspond with the closing of this age in spiritual terms.

Humanity is humanity, whether they are in the age of Israel or in the age of the church. Opposition is opposition, and it comes from the same source and has the same characteristics. It is just the battlefield that changes.

Instead of the physical earth, it winds up being the landscape of our souls. It winds up being the fabric of our fellowship. It winds up being the way that we see our lives as spiritual servants of God.

It's so important in the closing days of this age to be alert and to not let the day overtake us as a thief. There are a lot of ways you can be overtaken by surprise, but if you're overtaken like a thief, there's loss and chagrin and regret and a sense of having forfeited something that could have been yours, should have been yours, actually was yours. This is like taking title to a car, but the delivery truck is hijacked and you never get it because you didn't make the arrangements properly, gave them an old address or whatever.

Should have been yours, it's yours in title and in potential, but it's not fulfilled. We don't want to miss our inheritance, we don't want to lose our opportunity to learn and to grow and to be ready for service now and in the ages to come by not paying attention to where we are in God's plan and what the issues are. You cannot successfully resist an enemy if you don't know that enemy, if you don't know their tactics, if you don't know where they are and what they're doing, how can you possibly survive attack? So it's important for us to understand this.

It's important for us to be alert and ready and to use the full armor of God, which is spiritual armor against spiritual opposition. So we're going to be continuing that, but we touched on it and I've given you a clue to coming attractions here. When you look at

what demons did in the physical realm, that tells you what they're doing in the spiritual realm.

Observe, interpret, apply. So we pick up now in what I like to call chapter 10 verse 1, but everybody else calls chapter 9 verse 35. Then Jesus went about all the, sorry for the rustling noises here, I've got to get my cheaters.

These are trifocals by the way, they're not really mine, I inherited them, but they're perfect. God gave a relative of mine the very same eyes. She bought these glasses and they are just fantastic.

All three parts are perfect and we have the exact same eyes. So these are trifocals and I'm using them. So verse 35 of chapter 9, Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease.

And you have a note there that among the people is, is iffy, it doesn't really matter. It would be pretty difficult for him to heal sicknesses and diseases if he wasn't among the people. But it is helpful to note that there are textual issues from time to time in the scripture.

And let me say something about that. I recently watched a whole series of debates between Bart Ehrman and Dan Wallace and others about the text and as we know from some of our past specials on Ehrman's books, he started out as a God-fearing, Bible-thumping, conservative evangelical Christian, went to seminary, got the tools, but he then decided he was going to go to Princeton University. If you are going to go into the lion's den, you'd better be Daniel and be on really good terms with the Lord or you're going to get eaten.

Well, he got eaten and he lost his confidence in the text and he lost his faith through circumstances. If you want to delve into his history, you can. I'm just going to say that he is a prime example of what we closed the first session talking about.

If you do not understand the opposition and if you don't understand the plan and purpose of God and if you do not interpret your personal circumstances in the light of what the Word of God teaches, you are going to be a casualty. He is a massive casualty. You could imagine the Apostle Paul crying over him the way he cried over the Galatians.

Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? How did you get distracted and start believing another gospel? Well, it can happen. It has happened. Anyway, in the course of reviewing these points of debate back and forth, I just want to make this point.

I thought about writing a point-by-point rebuttal and I don't have time. I don't think any of us have time for anything but our last things here. So let me just say this.

The issue, all of Bart Ehrman's books are based on there's trouble in the text. There's corruption, there's disagreement and we don't have the originals so we can't know what Matthew originally said. We don't know if he said among the people or not because some manuscripts say yes, some manuscripts say no.

We don't know if Jesus actually claimed to be the Son of God because he doesn't do it in the Synoptic Gospels. He only does it in John and John is late and we don't know if John actually wrote John and all of these doubts, all of these aspersions. Let me just say this about that.

We do not need a pristine text. Let's say we had it. You know what would make Bart Ehrman happy momentarily is somebody using a spade in Jerusalem breaks open a little patch of ground and here's a box and in it are the pristine autograph manuscripts of all 26 New Testament books, 27.

Well there's argument about how many there are. Let's say that we find Matthew's original, he wrote it with his own hand, he signed it. So say I, Matthew the disciple, later the apostle.

Here it is. Here's Mark, here's Luke, here's every letter of Paul, every letter, all of Peter's and Jude and James, it's all there. The revelation is in there, signed with the same signature as the Gospel of John.

It's all there. What's Bart Ehrman going to do with this autograph? He's going to do, and I'm using him, I'm picking on him because he represents a whole school of thought. He's going to do the very same thing he's doing now.

Well, okay, but how do we know that the Matthew that signed this is the Matthew of the Gospels? And let's say we establish that. Well here's his fingerprint and here's his, you know, how would you ever satisfy the level of evidence required so somebody could say, okay, this is the authentic Gospel? Because let's say it is. By some unknown means we establish the real Matthew that walked with Christ, wrote this manuscript, and this is exactly what he wrote.

Well, what if there's a spelling error in there? What if Matthew was swatting a fly or something and left out a letter? Have you ever written, I'm an English major, I've never written anything that didn't have a mistake or two in it, and I'm good at it. I do it professionally. So there's human fallibility there.

Well, how do I know that this Matthew was actually inspired? Maybe he just made this up. How do you establish not only is it the original and it's the autograph and it's what he actually put down, but that that's what God wanted him to put down? How do you prove that? Well you can't. But let's say we have these pristine manuscripts and they take photos of them and distribute them to everybody.

We throw away all of our Bibles and all we have now is a bound copy of photographs of the autographed manuscripts of Paul, Peter, James, the Gospel writers, etc., leaving aside the Old Testament. So I hand that to you. You've got the actual words of Scripture now.

Knock yourself out. You don't know Greek. Okay, we'll all go to seminary.

We'll all get a master's degree in languages and theology so that we can read these things. Yeah, but you don't live in the culture. How do you know what that word meant to the people who heard it? How do you know what it meant to the guy who wrote it compared to you getting it all out of a book from a dead New Testament language that nobody's spoken in 1,500 years? How do you know it's right? How does anybody that started out with the Latin translations and the Sahidic and the Boheric and all of the other early translations, what if Matthew was written in Aramaic and then it got translated into the Greek? We're working out of English.

How do I know that the translation here, I don't need airmen to tell me that there's a problem in the Greek text. I've got enough trouble believing that these guys that put it into English knew what they were talking about. Look at the King James.

There's some horrific mistakes in the King James in terms of translation. And it all boils down to, how can I know that when I peruse the scriptures, it's God speaking to me? Well, I'll tell you how we know. In this age.

And we can talk about other ages when you want. How do we know in this age? Because the truth transcends the text. The truth transcends the translation.

Does it matter? Is it only the King James? Is it only the New American Standard? Is it only the NIV or the New King James that we use? Is it best? Is it perfect? Does it have problems? Of course it does. Well, can I not accumulate any truth or have any guidance or know that God is speaking to me unless somebody comes and authenticates the text and tells me, yes, that's really what it says. That's really what it means.

We're correcting a thing here. We're improving an understanding there. Do I need that? For faith and practice in this life, you do not need a perfect text.

That's why we don't have a perfect text. If God couldn't get us guided without a perfect text, we'd have a perfect text. The fact that we don't have it tells you this.

You don't need it. You actually don't need me up here explaining details. It's a wonderful exploration, and we can make great strides of understanding and have great fellowship in improving our understanding, but you don't need me to live your Christian life before the Lord.

Why? What was my concluding point in the first session? What kind of conflict are we in?

What kind of battle are we fighting? It's not the battle of, I'm right and you're wrong. It's not the battle of, I've got to defend my opinion because that was the one I kind of started this with, and I'm not going to be moved and say, you know, now that I think about it, I think I'm, forget what I said. I think you're right.

How often do you hear that in any debate? Well, if I had a nickel for every time somebody just said, you know what, that's very persuasive. I think you're right. I wouldn't have enough to buy a cup of coffee.

I never hear that. I don't say that. I'm as bad as anybody.

I'll defend my position to the death and go back and review if maybe I wasn't quite right later. We're all that way. It's in our nature.

What overcomes our nature? It's not a text. We don't have a faith that's based on a text. We have a faith that is based on this Savior that is unfolding revelation in this gospel that we're looking at.

It's the Lord Jesus Christ. It's his practice. It's his attitude.

It is what he said and do we have maybe an imperfect copy or maybe an imperfect recollection of what he said? It doesn't matter because we have God the Holy Spirit who transcends the text, who gives us the important points. If you are hungry for understanding, if you want to genuinely follow the Lord Jesus Christ, if you want to represent him on this earth as his body and his voice and his example and the light shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, you don't have to have advanced Bible class for that. You have to have the example of the Savior and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and the willingness to serve God.

We're going to see this upcoming in this chapter when Jesus talks to the disciples about what happens when they hit opposition. They don't have to have a big prep in advance. You know this.

You remember this. It will be given to you in that hour. It's your heart that counts.

It's your attitude of faith and hope and love that you cultivate and you meditate on the scriptures. You can figure out that something is not quite right. I'll give you an example.

One of these days in Paul where he's talking about a list of sins and there's one that really sticks out and doesn't make any sense in the context, I don't need a bunch of textual scholars to tell me that word is out of place. That was somebody's marginal note or some other thought and it got intruded because as you read that and as you think about the message and what he's talking about and who he's talking to, this one particular sin is just like a weird appendage that doesn't belong. It doesn't fit.

And it reads and applies way better without that one intrusion. But you spot it because you've got God the Holy Spirit saying, here's what's important to me. This weird out of place sin doesn't even apply.

This isn't a problem. It's these others. And that thing sticking in there is actually a distraction and a bump in the road that knocks your steering out of line.

So here we are. Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing every sickness and every disease. Just put a period there.

Among the people, I don't really think is there. It doesn't matter one way or the other. Now think about this.

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel. Does this sound at all familiar? Flip a few pages back in Matthew to chapter 4, verse 23. Now if you remember the outline I gave you in the first session, we had three sections of God speaking about the Lord Jesus at the baptism, Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness, and then people coming to realize that he's there, and the early watchers and the spiritually quick recognized who he was.

Then we went into the teaching section of the Sermon on the Mount, right? Well we're at that same place in our third section, after the triplet and before the teaching section, right? Well the last time we were in this place, look at what we had in 4.23 and following. Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. His fame went throughout all Syria.

They brought him sick people afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics and paralytics, and he healed them. Great multitudes followed him from Galilee, from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. We're in the same place in this section, finishing up the nine miracles, heading into the commissioning of the disciples as Jesus' representatives and the teaching section that accompanies it.

And it's almost identical, verse 23 is almost identical to our 935. These are some of the helpful markers in the story that tell us where we are. Now it says Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

Books closed, take out your sheet of paper, this is your pop quiz. What is the gospel of the kingdom? Jesus is preaching it. Matthew tells us this as though we're supposed to know.

He said the very same thing, preaching the gospel of the kingdom back in chapter 4,

which is before the Sermon on the Mount. And he expected us to know what the gospel of the kingdom is before the Beatitudes and all of the content in chapter 5, chapter 6, and chapter 7. So because we know this, we can confidently take our paper and our pen and write down gospel of the kingdom, colon, fill it in. What is the gospel of the kingdom? Is it the golden rule? Is it blessed are they who? Is it turn the other cheek? What is it? What's the gospel of the kingdom? Jesus went about teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

How can we not know what this is? Gospel means good news, euangelos, euangelion, right, angelos, messenger, message, angelon. Eu is good, like eureka, it's a good view, I've found it. Euphemism is a ephemism that's good.

So, euangelion, it's the gospel. So, good news of the kingdom. What's the good news of the kingdom? You get a star by your name.

Patty got it right. The kingdom is at hand, it's that simple. The kingdom is here.

Why does Jesus not need a whole lot of content as he's preaching the gospel of the kingdom? What did we see in Isaiah? How much were these people already on the hook to know about the kingdom? Was it described in their Bible? Yes. So, when Jesus comes to somebody's town or village and says, the kingdom of God is at hand, what should they already know without him telling them? This is a big deal. The throne of David is coming back.

The sick are going to be well. The dead are going to rise. Demons are going to be driven out.

The influence of evil and of Satan is going to be eliminated. God's promises of hegemony and autonomy and economic well-being, detailed in the Old Testament, the new piece of information that Jesus gives them is, it's now. It's about to happen.

It is near at the door. That's the gospel of the kingdom. He's teaching in their synagogues.

What's he going to do in the synagogue? Open up the Isaiah scroll. Open up the Ezekiel scroll. Open up the Jeremiah scroll and say, remember the descriptions of God's kingdom and his promises to you, the people of God? Here they are.

It's about to happen. Now, why would he do that? Why doesn't he just bring in the kingdom? A lot of talking. Why doesn't he just launch the kingdom and say, tell them afterwards.

Drag out the throne of David from under the temple mount or wherever they've got it sconced away and sit on it. And grab the scepter and say, I'm the son of David. This is God's kingdom.

All you old demons get out of here. Banish them all with a word and crank the thing up. Why does he announce it? Why are we told twice in Matthew 4, 23 and Matthew 9, 35 that Jesus went about all the towns and villages, all of them.

Everybody needs to know, not that it has started, but that it is at hand. What is the requirement that causes him to preach it in advance instead of announcing it after it starts. If the kingdom is at hand and you now know that it's at hand because you have been told the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the coming king has come to your town and said, the kingdom is here.

What does that do? What is my attitude? Remember that word that's prefixed repent for the kingdom of God is at hand. Change your mind. It requires a response.

Now, if I tell you, I think the rapture is extremely near and it's always been near. It's as near as our last heartbeat and our last quivering EG signal. Once your heart stops beating and you stop breathing and your brain becomes quiescent, it's the rapture.

You're there. So whatever days and hours we have left, whether we're alive and remain or asleep in Jesus, it's near. We know that just as Jesus announces the kingdom.

So what is the requirement? Attitude check. Gut check. What am I thinking about? What are my priorities? What am I doing? Am I ready for the kingdom? Now, when the early watchers and the quick and alert ones spotted the Lord Jesus at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus gave them the sermon on the mount and he said, you who are poor in spirit, you who are meek, you who are oppressed, here's what's coming for you.

He's talking to those who are already getting it done and encouraging them to continue and to finish strong because here's what's coming. Strive to enter. Don't be on the wrong road.

Don't be on the wide way going through the big gate. Narrow is the way and straight is the gate. Be on that road going through that gate.

Stay strong. Finish with a sprint, not with a gasp and a crawl, a low crawl. Finish strong, right? Because the kingdom is in hand.

The physical kingdom was in hand for them. The spiritual kingdom is in hand for us. We are not in the kingdom.

We are not building the kingdom. Jesus didn't say, you're already in the kingdom and he didn't tell the Israelites, you've got to build it so that I can come. This is modern Christianity's failure to understand the example of the earthly kingdom and its announcement.

Kingdom comes from God and those who enter into it and partake of it are those who are

prepared. We will enter into and be a part of the coming kingdom that is not yet. We're not on kingdom business.

We're not building. There's so much talk about kingdom work, kingdom, this kingdom, that it's, it's God's kingdom and we're not in it yet. Our job is to be ready for it and to encourage one another while it is while we still got time to be ready.

And so look at the material side of things in the gospels and you can see the spiritual side of things for us. Now, if the Lord Jesus has essentially come to our town and village and said, here's the gospel of the kingdom, it's right around the corner. What's our response? Gut check, attitude check.

What are my priorities? What am I pursuing? What battles am I trying to fight? Am I in the spiritual conflict or am I in a temporal conflict? Am I fighting circumstances? Am I wrangling with people? Am I getting too much in this world or am I thinking about the spiritual conflict that is just ahead of a spiritual kingdom? And am I spiritually ready? Am I using my resources? So that's our introduction here. Preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing every sickness and every disease. The Lord Jesus was present physically and healed physical diseases and physical sicknesses.

I looked at these two words. There's not a whole lot of difference. One of them has more of a focus on what's wrong.

The malady itself. My leg doesn't work. My eyes don't work.

My ears don't work. That's the first word. The second one, every disease focuses more on the resulting weakness.

What is the concomitant inability that comes with that? Okay. I have a withered hand. And because of that, here's what I can't do.

Jesus not only fixed the source of the problem, but restored the ability and the strength that comes with it. My eyes don't work. Now they do.

But now that they work, here's what I can do with my sight. So the sickness and disease, dis-ease is not a terrible translation. If you break that word down, you're not at ease doing things.

You're dis-eased. You're unable. There's a problem there.

And by fixing the sickness, the disease goes away. The weakness. The inability.

So these are the things that Jesus addressed in the material realm. The Lord Jesus is spiritually present. His power is with us with the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

So what does that do for us spiritually? It finds and fixes our problems and gives us the

enablement, being free from our besetting sin. The weight. Laying aside every weight and the sin that besets us.

Let us run with patience. The race that is set before us. Laying aside every weight and the sin that besets us.

We don't have the power to do that ourselves. That's the Lord Jesus. Healing sickness.

Let us run with patience. The race. I'm restored and I'm no longer dis-eased.

I'm no longer disabled. Problem is fixed. Now I can make positive progress.

I can run. I can advance. I can move up the hill.

Sickness and disease. But when he saw the multitudes, verse 36, he was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered like sheep having no shepherd. Weary, the better text says harassed.

This is the pressure and the persecution and the consequences of poor leadership on the part of the scribes, the Pharisees, Sadducees, the Sanhedrin. Those in leadership roles who were supposed to be shepherds that benefited the flock are instead harassing the sheep, pressuring the sheep, misleading the sheep, dragging them across rocky creeks where there's only muddy, foul water to drink, not taking them to green pastures. They're not beside the still waters.

Their souls are not being restored. Scattered like sheep having no shepherd. So when Jesus sees the multitudes, he is moved with compassion for them.

Weary and scattered, harassed and scattered like sheep having no shepherd. And this is a phrase, the sheep having no shepherd is an Old Testament description. And you remember without going there, there's a long chapter on the bad shepherds and their responsibility and what's going to happen to them.

So here's what's interesting. Jesus looks at that and he is moved with compassion. We as the body of Christ looking at spiritual malaise, looking at neutralization and deception and being led astray by spiritual leadership should move us with compassion.

And to the extent that we can find someone who is willing to discuss or willing to listen or willing to look for a better way to return to biblical faith, biblical obedience, we should have that same compassion. But in this movement, and by the way, this is a Splockna word, S-P-L-A-G-C-H-N, etc. It's almost impossible to say with an English mouth.

But it's only used of the Lord Jesus or of figures in his parables. But it's uniquely associated with the Lord Jesus. Jesus moved with compassion.

You find this in Mark, you find it in Matthew and in Luke. Moved with compassion. So

when he sees this and he says there are sheep without a shepherd, if you didn't have any... We lost all the rest of the Gospel of Matthew and we had to try to fill it in ourselves.

He looks on the multitudes. There are sheep without a shepherd. They're harassed and weary.

And so he says to his disciples, and then we've lost the rest. What would you expect him to do with these disciples? Therefore he sent his disciples saying, organize them, shepherd them, put them in groups and comfort them. There is a sense in which he is going to do that in this upcoming chapter.

But look at what he says, what he actually says. The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore go and labor in my field and reap this wonderful harvest.

It's not what he says. And it's surprising. And it's challenging to people who want to read it that way anyhow.

What does he say? The harvest is plentiful, but there aren't enough people to bring that harvest in. Not enough people. The laborers are few to bring in the harvest.

Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Here's the mistake, in my view, that is made with this saying of the Lord Jesus. Jesus looks on the multitudes.

They are harassed. They are scattered. Sheep without a shepherd.

What's the problem with unshepherded sheep? They are scattered. They're malnourished. Their wool is no good because they've been tangled in brambles and they've been injured and worse in rocky areas.

Sheep without a shepherd end up not being useful for the owner. They need to be shepherded and cared for so that they produce those products that make them profitable. Switching metaphors from sheep and shepherds, Jesus says the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

The notion almost universally is, well, the harvest are these people that Jesus is looking at and they need to be harvested. They need to be brought in. I would submit to you that the harvest is not the people.

The harvest is the righteousness that these people are being called to. The kingdom is near. Repent.

Change your mind. Bear fruits in keeping with repentance, John the Baptist said at the Jordan. Remember? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.

There is an abundance of righteousness that you can reap. There is a lot of wonderful reflection of the glory of God that you can enter into. Jesus isn't here calling for more evangelists.

Let's recruit some more disciples. The harvest is plentiful, but I've only got 12 of you guys. Pray the Lord of the harvest to find more than you 12.

That's not what he's talking about. Why are there few laborers? His 12 are laborers, but they're not laborers in evangelization or in grabbing the lost sheep. If he was going to say that, he would say, these people are like sheep without a shepherd.

Pray the owner that he will hire more shepherds. It's not more shepherds. It's more reapers of what is abundantly available.

That's what we need to be doing. Evangelism is a wonderful thing. I've said this a thousand times.

All of us got evangelized. It's a great thing, but it's not the goal. The goal is reaping the harvest of righteousness.

The fields are ripe for harvest. There are so many ways that we can be pleasing in God's sight, that we can lay hold of righteousness and inheritance and opportunity and skill for service. But pray the Lord of the harvest that there will be more of us who are laborers in that field.

More of us who will reap the harvest of righteousness that is on the stalks waiting. All we have to do is reap it. We don't have to plant it.

We don't have to cultivate it. We don't have to weed it. We don't have to get water in buckets and carry it out there and keep it alive in a drought.

The harvest is there. All you have to do is go out and claim it by faith. And that's why Jesus says, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Jesus doesn't at this point say, well, the fields are ripe for harvest. Therefore, I am going to send you out there to reap that harvest. But because of the way this is placed ahead of chapter 10, that's what everybody thinks.

Almost everybody. I'm the only person I know who doesn't think that. My dad used to say, if you're looking around saying they're all out of step but me, there's a chance that you're not hearing the right drum.

Honestly, it's such a puzzle. Why does Jesus say to his disciples, he said to his disciples, you all need to pray to the Lord of the harvest, and this is God the Father, that he will send laborers, that there will be, the kingdom is not going to be able to come in if there are not enough laborers to bring in this harvest of righteousness. If there's not a balance

of righteousness, and there isn't, that's a second class if, and it's not true, if there were enough laborers pulling in this harvest of righteousness, but there's not, the kingdom would have appeared.

We'd be looking at it as history at this point. Pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers. Well, those workers don't come.

That harvest is not reaped. There isn't a balance of righteousness. How tragic would it be, and remember Jesus is going to say in another place, when the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth? When he returns in the sky, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, how many laborers will have been reaping that harvest? That needs to be us.

We understand, we see clearly, what the nearness of the kingdom connotes, and it connotes time to saddle up and get moving, time to make progress in the direction of the straight gate that leads to life. So pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Then you start chapter 10, when he had called his 12 disciples to him, he gave them authority.

This power word here is authority. Authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. What did we see in 423 and in 935? What was Jesus himself doing? Healing every sickness, every disease among the people.

So he is going to give them the same authority to do what he has done in these preceding nine miracles. And look at what he says. Power over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

Sickness and disease. Here's the names. They're given in pairs.

Simon and Andrew, James and John. Interesting that James is listed first. He was probably older than John.

Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, and Labaius called Thaddeus. This is another real interesting text problem. Some of them only say Labaius, some of them only say Thaddeus.

The later ones combine the two. I think somebody had two copies and said, well, I don't know what his name was. I'll just put them both in here and let readers figure it out.

Simon, the Canaanite. This is not Canaan like Moloch worshipers. This is probably Cana, from Cana.

He's a Canaite. You can almost leave that second N out. And Judas of Kerioth, K-E-R-I-O-T-H, was evidently his village.

Judas of Kerioth, who also betrayed him. Never see Judas mentioned without the

betrayal. It's the permanent stain, the permanent scar.

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying, Do not go in the way of the Gentiles and do not enter the city of the Samaritans. Fascinating limitation. This is the gospel of the kingdom.

The kingdom is only for national Israel. The Samaritans may have some intermarriage way back in their past, but they have rejected the law of Moses and they have their own Samaritan Pentateuch. It's kind of like the New Testament version of the Book of Mormon.

It's got a lot of the same things in it, but it's not the same. And so they're not to go to the Samaritans. Later on, Jesus is going to talk to the woman at the well, right? But don't go to the Samaritans.

Go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Lost sheep of the house of Israel. He doesn't say, go out with your sickle and reap the white harvest.

We're back to the sheep who have no shepherd. Jesus has compassion on them and he is sending his disciples to the lost sheep. Now, a sheep can't be lost unless you own it.

Have you ever lost your phone? Have you ever lost your keys? Ever lost your glasses? The reason they're lost is you once had them and then they were gone. The lost sheep of the house of Israel are believers and the gospel of the kingdom is being preached to them because they are eligible for it. They believe in the God of Israel.

As you go preach saying, this is the gospel of the kingdom, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Now, here's where we're going to conclude this morning, but I encourage you to think about it between now and next Sunday. Look at what Jesus tells them to do.

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Four things. Raise the dead.

Can you imagine the first time a couple of disciples go to a village and hear somebody that is manifestly deceased? How much faith would it take, with your experience, to say, well, you know, Jesus said raise the dead, so let's raise this dead person. It's just fascinating to me that the authority that Jesus granted them is of this magnitude. It's difficult to think of a more astounding, miraculous event than Lazarus.

Died four days ago. You talk, you say, come forth, call his name, and out he comes. It's just stunning.

But Jesus gave the 12 disciples the authority to raise the dead. That's just stunning to me. And what's particularly stunning is, remember, all of these things have a spiritual analog for us.

We are called to be representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the same way that they were able to materially, physically raise the dead, what is the interpretation and application for us? You had life, and then you lost it, and you're going to find it again. There are people in this world who are believers. Maybe they came to faith as a child.

Maybe they don't even remember it was so long ago. And for all intents and purposes, as believers, they are essentially dead, spiritually fruitless. The branches are dry.

There is no fruit. So, what do you think? Raise the dead. I would say with the proper faith and the proper application, it is within our grasp to benefit our fellow believers who have died.

If you can think of another application of this, I would love to hear it. But in the spiritual realm, what is it to be dead? You were once alive, and then you were dead. And if you are going to raise the dead as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, it's within our power through speaking the truth in love, through prayer, through the opportunities that God the Holy Spirit orchestrates in His time.

They didn't do this throughout Jesus' ministry. This is a specific time, and it is a sign that the kingdom is at hand. It accompanies preaching that the kingdom is at hand.

If you think that the kingdom is at hand at this time, we think, well, that's exciting. We're having some great discussions, both on and offline, about how near the rapture of the church might be. And it's very exciting.

But if you want to think in terms of application, if that's true, so what? Well, of course, I need to keep short accounts and try to sprint for the tape and finish strong. But what else? Well, when the kingdom was at hand the first time, what instructions did Jesus give? That is going to pertain to us. That is going to apply to us.

So be thinking about that this coming week, and we'll explore it a little bit further next week. But there is authority given to those who are close to the Lord Jesus to do extraordinary things in His name and for His sake. Don't underestimate.

Don't fail to exploit the gift of the Lord Jesus when it comes to extraordinary witness to His identity, His power, and His kingdom. We have that opportunity in the spiritual realm. So we'll think more about that next time, but let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank You for the truth of Your Word, its transcendent ability to enliven us and enable us and empower us to cleanse us, to, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, guide us and direct us to work powerful works and accomplish powerful things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray that as we reflect on this that God, the Holy Spirit, will help us to see clearly, to understand in our own circumstances where the application is pertinent and profitable, and most of all, that our lives will reflect Your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His name.

Amen.