

Matthew 21-01-07a

Good evening, welcome to Thursday night class at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're going to continue and combine two of our studies tonight in what may appear to be a haphazard fashion, but it's actually carefully planned and calculated to interleave and fold itself upon itself in a wonderful and beneficial fashion. So despite appearances, there really is a plan, but you can begin tonight.

We're going to be in Matthew chapter 13. We're going to be looking at the kingdom and the gospel of the kingdom. But because when things happen in current events and everybody wants to talk about current events, the perverse side of my nature wants to completely ignore it and pretend like nothing is happening, but that's probably not helpful.

So I'm going to give a quick nod to the status of things as it has developed through this past week and over the last few weeks. Just a quick biblical perspective, hopefully. And then we're going to continue our study from Sunday morning because the nature of God's kingdom, the nature of the kingdom of heaven is critical in times like these.

Remember that song in times like these? You need a savior in times like these, you need an anchor. Be very sure your anchor holds and grips the solid rock. So that's our goal.

And so we're going to conflate and combine our studies a bit tonight and hopefully advance both of them forward. I also had a few questions from the end time study that I never fully addressed, and all of these things relate and connect. And so I'll try to do a hat trick here and get all three of them in before the evening is over.

Let's begin by asking God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study. Ensure that we have cultivated in our personal soul the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, without which we can do nothing. The Lord Jesus enables and empowers us through that spirit.

And that's what we need tonight in particular. Shall we pray? Father, what a comfort it is to remember that it is not by our might, it is not by our power, but it is by your spirit that we live the life to which we have been called. We invest and redeem the time that you have granted to us in this life, at this time, and in this place.

We thank you for the wonderful enablement and spiritual resource that we have in your word, in the hands and presence of your Holy Spirit. We pray that as we reflect on our circumstances, on our opportunities, and on our challenges, that God the Holy Spirit will minister the truth of your word to each of our hearts. May our fellowship be beneficial and upbuilding and enlightening.

May all of us grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, through the things that we see tonight. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

First of all, what is our favorite thing in terms of structure and format in the whole Bible? What is it we like better than anything else? It's a letter of the Greek alphabet. It's a chiasm. We like to see symmetry.

God uses symmetry. His ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

So He simplifies and He uses the beauty of symmetry to help us see what's going on. We've talked about chiasms, large and small. The entire book of Isaiah is a beautiful chiasm.

We've seen chiasms in the Psalms. We've seen double chiasms. We've seen inverted chiasms.

We've seen these wonderful things that help us see what's going on. I want to talk about one chiasm right now, and that is the symmetry of human history. Jesus suggests this to us when He talks about the last days of the age of Israel, and He says, as it was in the days of Noah.

That's how it's going to be in those days, the days of Noah. Let's think about the days of Noah, and you can be turning in your Bible to Genesis chapter 11. Noah begins in chapter 6 and extends through chapter 7 and chapter 8. In chapter 9 of Genesis, you have the introduction of a new paradigm.

God is no longer going to directly judge mankind as He did Cain. Have you ever thought about this, by the way? You've got a genealogy. These are the generations of Cain.

You've got Cain and Seth. Where are the descendants of Cain today? There aren't any. It seems likely, probable, and a virtual certainty that all of them perished in the flood.

The only chance that Cain could have had a potential descendant beyond the flood is if one of Noah's sons married one of his great, great, great granddaughters. We don't know where those ladies came from. There are eight souls on the ark, but Noah is a descendant of Seth, right? You find this in Genesis chapter 10.

And we're going to find that in verse 18, the sons of Noah, this is actually Genesis chapter 9. The sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Cain. These three were the sons of Noah, and from these, the whole earth was populated.

So you go to chapter 10. This is the genealogy of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood.

The sons of Japheth, these are most of your Indo-European peoples. Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshach, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer are given.

Sons of Javan are given. From these, the coast land peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language. Now, nobody's been separated by their language in the narrative as of yet, but remember the Hebrew method of storytelling.

You have Genesis chapter 2 that gives the summary account of creation, including male and female created he them. Then in Genesis chapter 3, the perspective shifts backward to give detail of how Adam and Eve were created. Actually, I think I'm talking about chapter 1 and chapter 2. At the end of chapter 1, you have the creation of man on the and in chapter 2, you have the detail given.

Chapter 3 is the story of the fall, right? But you have a general story that moves to a certain point, then it backs up and gives you more detail about one particular aspect. The same thing happens here. We are told that these descendants are separated into their lands according to language.

Well, we find out in Genesis 11 that everybody's got the same language and they're not separated into nations. So, we're backing up as we go to chapter 11. And I'm laying background because we're going to be looking at something in chapter 11 real quick.

You have the sons of Ham, Cush, Mitsrayim, Put and Canaan. Mitsrayim, this is the Hebrew name for what nation? Egypt. Egypt.

You go to real old writings and it's one of those A.E. things like encyclopedia and it's Egypt. But Mitsrayim, this is the Hebrew word for Egypt. But I want to note in particular that one of Ham's sons was Cush.

His firstborn son seems to be Cush. The sons of Cush are Sheba, Havilah. Remember the land of Havilah? Sabtar, Ra'amah and Sabtechah.

And the sons of Ra'amah were Sheba and Dedan. Cush, the firstborn son, begot Nimrod. He began to be a mighty one on the earth.

He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, like Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord. In the days when this account was set down, this was a phrase.

My dad had a lot of phrases. If he saw something that was really lengthy, he would say, well, that thing's longer than a well rope. Well, one of the sayings in the days when I think Moses collated the clay tablets out of the libraries of Egypt and put the book of Genesis into writing for his people, Israel, this was a phrase that was still in use.

Hundreds and hundreds of years after the flood, this phrase was still in use. He's like Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord. Look at verse 10.

Pay particular attention to Genesis chapter 10, verse 10, 10, 10. And the beginning of his

kingdom, who's he? It's his name, Nimrod. And he's a mighty one in the earth, right? This has not been said about anybody to this point.

Nimrod, he's perhaps the mightiest guy in the earth. And what is the beginning of his kingdom? Babel. Babel, about which we will soon be reading in chapter 11.

Babel originates with and is controlled by and is a reflection of the might of Nimrod, mighty before the Lord, a mighty hunter. He goes out and gets things and brings them back to the ranch, right? Much more we could say about this. I could spend all day on 10, but now look at chapter 11.

Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. I invite you to briefly stop here and just read current events into one half of your brain. We're going to put two things on the table here.

Everything that's happening right now, particularly in our country, but not only in our country, just turn on the burner under current events in your memory and in your mind. As we read these next verses, the whole earth had one language and one speech. I ask myself, did this one language and one speech have gendered pronouns or had they taken them all out? We're all going to speak the same way.

We're all going to use the same terms, refer to things in the same vocabulary, avoid saying some things, emphasize other things. We're all one. Don't want to hurt anybody's feelings.

One language and one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed from the East, they found a plane in the land of Shinar and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.

They had brick for stone and they had asphalt for mortar. When's the last time you saw asphalt or pitch? A couple of chapters ago. What was the arc made of? And I'll give you a clue.

Not stone, not mortar. What was the arc made of? Wood. Wood has a lot of symbolism in the Bible.

It is a living thing. It starts out as something which is alive. And it is a means of salvation, whether it is the wooden arc, whether it is the wooden staff that Aaron carried, whether it is the wooden box overlaid with gold that contains the tablets of the law and is underneath the mercy seat as the arc of the covenant.

It is ultimately going to be that which raises Jesus Christ so that he can draw all men to himself. Wood is what burns on the altar before God. They didn't have coal fired altars.

You ever think about that? Every sacrificial fire that was ever lit in Israel was wood. It

was the consumption of something that had been alive and had died so that man could be reconciled to God, brought near to God. Well, this is not a wooden structure.

This is made from stuff that comes directly from the ground which has been cursed for man's sake. Mortar comes from the ground, stone comes from the ground. So let's make bricks and bake them.

Let's bake the mud. We'll transform the mud. Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.

But we're going to take the dust from which we are made and we're going to make something else, something new, something of our own design and our own manufacture. If they'd had DNA in those days, they'd have probably been messing with it. But they're using the component from which God made Adam to make something else.

There is no record of any stone, brick, mud dwellings prior to this time. This is a first. So they had brick for stone and they had asphalt for mortar.

Everything is coming out of the ground. And they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top is in the heavens. Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.

We don't want to be divided. We want to be unified. What was the charge that God gave to mankind right after He created Him? Be fruitful and multiply and gather in one place around a tower of your own manufacture.

Isn't it? Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. They don't want to follow God's exhortation, God's command. Instead, they're going to try to unify around this tower.

We'll make a name for ourselves. What is the thing about a name? There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. In the genealogies, you can read that at a certain point, it was the time when men began to call upon the name of the Lord.

Remember that? We're going to make a name for ourselves. We're not going to be calling on the name of the Lord. We're going to call on our own name.

So, the Lord comes down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. Notice, He did not interdict this effort. He didn't stop it.

He didn't blast them with whether they were not swallowed up by a great rift in the ground. They built it. God allows them to.

But look at verse 6. And the Lord said, Indeed, the people are one, and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do. Now that they have all the branches of the government, nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Nothing that

they propose to do will be withheld from them.

You still got your pot full of current events on simmer over here, right? Nothing they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let us go down in there, confuse their language that they may not understand one another's speech. There's another service on the web that will translate foreign languages for you.

There's Google Translate, but probably the second most popular is called Babelfish. So, in the mirror image, in the symmetry, in the chiastic structure of human history, if you have the flood and the tribulation at the outside and after the flood, you have man unifying himself and refusing to fill the earth as God commanded and making a name for himself, making a tower for himself, making a city for himself. By the way, what is said about Abraham in Hebrews chapter 11 with regard to a city? Why did Abraham dwell in tents? Because he could never finish the city that they started in the plain of Shinar, right? No.

Abraham waited for a city whose founder and builder is God. So, inside the flood and inside the tribulation, you have Babel and Nimrod, the tower, and nothing they plan to do will be withheld from them. And inside the tribulation, you have the man of sin, the Antichrist, the latter-day Nimrod, who is going to establish his Babel and seek to build his city and his tower and unify everyone around his agenda and will prevail for a short time in the same way that God let them build the city and the tower.

God is going to let the Antichrist work his will for the first three and a half years of that 70th week of Daniel. So, how close are we to conditions where that can take place? Can you think of any time in history before now where this was not just possible but likely and being talked about and spoken of and technology and the will and the political impetus is present to do it? Is the time short? Yes. Is it important for us to be prepared for the coming kingdoms of God? It has always been important, but you can certainly see and feel the importance of not being invested in this world but paying attention to preparing for the next.

What was it that Satan offered to Jesus when he wouldn't turn the stones into bread and he wouldn't jump off the temple? What was the other thing Satan offered? He took him to a high mountain and showed him what? All the kingdoms of the world and said, I will let you unify all of these kingdoms under your sovereign rule if you will fall down and worship me. If you will be Nimrod, if you will be the Antichrist instead of the Christ, all of the kingdoms of the world will be yours. What is the kingdom that Jesus preached? What is the kingdom that John the Baptist announced? It's the kingdom of heaven.

It's the kingdom of God. It's the kingdom not made with hands, not made of mortar and brick. That's the one we're talking about in the Matthew 13 study and that's where we will now direct our attention.

So I think we're having a Genesis 11-6 moment and I find it very exciting. Look up brother, your redemption draweth nigh. That's my take on current events and I am blissfully unconcerned about what happens several states away.

It'll impact me when I have to fill out my taxes at the end of this coming year and when they're prying my cold dead finger off of the various triggers of my weapons and etc. I will say this much. The potential for the preaching and teaching of the Word of God to be declared hate speech is higher than it has ever been anywhere at any time.

And be prepared. Keep an archive that does not rely on the internet. Keep your notebooks handy.

If you've got a way to store recordings that you are particularly blessed by and would like to review, make a local copy now. Be like the go-to-the-aunt-thou-sluggard. You know, lay things away while you can because when the winter time comes, Jesus said, walk while you have the light, work while you have the light, because the hour is coming when it's going to be dark and no one can work.

The opportunity to share the teaching of the Word of God is a blessing and a gracious privilege and I don't know how much longer it is going to last, but be sure that you've got something stocked in the larder so that if and when people who can take the President of the United States off of communication media come for the littler fish, you're not caught without resources. As long as you've got your Bible. You know, it would take them a long time to ever get rid of all the Bibles.

As long as you've got a Bible in the Holy Spirit, you've got enough. But anyway, I just take that as a suggestion. Get you some USB sticks and a laptop that doesn't connect to the Internet and see if the speakers still work, etc.

Turn now to Matthew chapter 13, where we have been looking at Jesus and listening to Jesus begin to give these parables that begin with the kingdom of heaven is like. We need to know what the kingdom of heaven is so that when we are told what it is like, we understand what it is that's being spoken of. There is a ginormous swath of Christianity people who are Christians who think that the kingdom of heaven is synonymous with salvation and going to heaven when you die.

There are compelling reasons to recognize that that is a faulty understanding. And I'm going to give you some of those tonight just by way of introduction. The kingdom of heaven was at hand in John the Baptist day and in Jesus day.

Both of them said it is at hand. It is in your midst. The gospel of the kingdom was preached in synagogues.

It wasn't preached to the Gentiles. It wasn't broadcast outside the borders of Israel. It wasn't really even preached in Samaria.

It was preached to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And we saw this in Matthew. I gave you quite a number of these passages when Jesus is presented in chapter one, verse one of Matthew as son of Abraham, son of David.

That's the kingdom. It is for Israel descended from Shem, from Seth, through Shem, through Peleg. You may recall that there are two sons of Shem.

One of them, his genealogy is given right before the flood. I was going to show you that, but I don't want to ruin myself out of time. But you can look at it.

In Genesis chapter 10, notice that the genealogy from Shem is given through Heber. And after the tower of Babel, his genealogy is given again. I think I said flood, I meant tower of Babel.

It's given before the tower of Babel from Heber. And it's given after the tower of Babel through Peleg. And Peleg is the ancestor of Abraham, not Heber.

Pretty sure I have that right. But it's just interesting that the two sons are traced, one before and one after. And the tower of Babel actually divides even the sons of Shem in that regard.

But Abraham is the line of promise. And there are a lot of Shemites. Abraham had what? 18 other sons besides Isaac.

But in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Anyway, you get back to Matthew and it is predicted in Matthew 1.21 that Jesus will save his people from their sins. And the only way to understand that is his people are the people of Israel.

Call his name Jesus. He will save his people from their sins. Doesn't say he will save all people from all sins or all people from their sins.

He will save his people. And anyone hearing that pronouncement would have understood those people to be Israel and Israel only. He will save his people from their sins.

Doesn't mean that other people won't be saved, but that pronouncement applies to Israel exclusively. In chapter two, verse two, the wise men say, where is he that is born king of the world? Where is he that is born king of salvation? No. Where is he that is born king of the Jews? We've seen his star.

We've come to worship. In chapter three, repent. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This is John in the wilderness. Where does John preach this message? It is the wilderness of Judea. He doesn't even go to Jerusalem.

He goes to Judea. The call is to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. Change of mind is required to be ready for the kingdom.

They are sons of Abraham. They are Israelites. They are under the covenant, the Mosaic covenant.

They're in a relationship with God through that covenant, but they need to change their mind if they are going to see and enter that kingdom. This is chapter three, verse two, repent. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

They are baptized in verse six, confessing their sins, not confessing a future savior as Lord, not believing in their heart that God's going to raise him from the dead. They're acknowledging their sins. What sins? Sins that are defined in the law of Moses.

By the law comes the knowledge of sin. They're confessing their sins. They compare themselves to the law, which is their covenant relationship with God and recognizing their sinfulness.

They are, many of them, changing their minds in anticipation of this kingdom, which is at hand. This is the old Testament promise of the millennial kingdom, the kingdom overseen by David's throne, David's son and sons. It is kingdom of Israel.

It is for Israel promised to Israel under the covenant with Israel. That's the kingdom being preached. That's the kingdom being preached.

Trees are either going to bear fruit and be preserved, or they're going to be cut down and burned. Chaff is going to be burned. Wheat is going to be gathered into the barn.

This is the preaching of John the Baptist in chapter three. The chaff and the wheat are separated where? On the Lord's threshing floor. His threshing floor is not the world.

His threshing floor is Israel. He is judging Israel. Israel is being evaluated.

The axe is laid at the root of the tree. That's the olive tree. That's the tree that is going to be withered.

That's Israel. You come to chapter four. Once again, repent for the kingdom of heaven is in hand.

That chapter starts the same way that chapter three does. In chapter five, six and seven, as you remember, Sermon on the Mount, teaching on the hill. Those who are poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom.

Those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, theirs is the kingdom. Those who are persecuted, those who are humble, not those who express saving faith in Jesus Christ, his work of redemption, prospectively or retrospectively, humbleness and endurance in persecution results in possession of this kingdom. You do not possess salvation by surviving persecution.

You do not obtain salvation simply by being humble. Philippians says to Paul, what must I do to be saved? Well, humble yourself. It's not what Acts 16:31 says.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you're saved. Paul in Romans 10, 9 and 10, confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. You will be saved.

Being poor in spirit and being persecuted for righteousness sake is not a means of salvation, but Jesus says that is the way to inherit the kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. So what is the kingdom of heaven? Not salvation. You don't get salvation that way.

Wonderful thing to be humble, wonderful thing to endure persecution for righteousness sake, but you don't get saved that way. So possessing the kingdom, entering the kingdom, seeing the kingdom is not synonymous with salvation. We can draw this conclusion firmly and confidently at this point.

So what we're doing is painting out all of the things that the kingdom is not. It's not salvation and it's not for everyone. It is something promised to Israel and it is obtained by confession of sin, change of mind and faith and obedience.

That's what we've seen in these first five chapters of Matthew. In chapter six, verse 33, Jesus says, seek this kingdom. Chapter six is in the middle of chapter five through seven, right? Sermon on the Mount.

Is this an evangelistic tent meeting? Is he saying, all of you on the roads, come up here. I'm going to tell you how to be saved. These are people who have been sitting for hours, listening to the teaching of truth from the son of God, giving the word of God.

And he says in chapter six, verse 33, seek the kingdom. Do not worry about what you will eat or what you will drink or what you will wear. Do not worry about tomorrow.

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Salvation does not come by seeking. I'm in an animated discussion right now with a couple of people who think you have to seek to be saved.

The son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. God has made himself visible and has put the evidence of himself in nature and in the heart of man. So that he can be sought.

You read this in the, I think it's the 13th chapter of Acts that God calls all men everywhere to repent, but he's not far from any of them. He has organized people into nations and kindreds that happily they might seek after him, feel after him, and that he might be found by them. He's not far from anyone, but the seeking is not what it takes to be saved.

It is once you have sought and found, you believe salvation is by grace through faith, not for by grace. You have been saved through seeking, seeking the hidden treasure in Proverbs chapter two is not the same as possessing that treasure and leveraging that treasure into righteousness by faith. Going to Bible class is not the same as applying what we learn in Bible class.

Do you see the difference? Jesus came not only to seek, but to save that which was lost. And if it was lost, the lost sheep of the house of Israel, if something was lost, what do you know about it? I told you the story of the lady's \$30,000 wedding ring I found inside a piano had been gone for seven years and they had sought it and never found it. I thought, wow, this piano sure has a rattle down here.

And there it was. But to seek a thing is not the same as to find it and to rescue it and to, but, but if you, if you, if something is lost, that means you originally owned it. That was that lady's ring.

She owned it. And then it was lost. The sheep belong to God and they are lost sheep.

The 99 that safely lay in the shelter of the lost on the hill far away. So the shepherd goes out hill and dale and rejoices. I have found a sheep.

I have recruited a sheep. I've added to the flock. This goat that was out on the hillside.

I have found my sheep. It was my sheep before it left. It was my sheep while it was lost.

And it's my sheep now that I have found it and brought it back to the fold where it originated. So my sheep hear my voice. This is not the saved people hear my voice.

This is those who were already looking for God's deliverance. Like Simeon, like Anna that we Christmas time. People want to say, it is given to you.

You know, all those, all those who come to me, the father has given it to them to come. You don't come to me. It's not been given to you.

It's been given to you. You come to me. Why is it given? Calvinists don't want to answer that question, but there's a reason why God gives anything that God gives.

Look at the gifts of God all through the old Testament. When Jesus said, no one can come to me, except it were given him of my father. What is he saying? Only those who are already looking and waiting and are looking to the father are going to be given the recognition that this is the real Messiah.

And those are going to be the sheep that hear his voice, recognize it as that of the true shepherd and follow him. You are not of my sheep. You don't hear my voice.

Why are you not of my sheep? Why is it not given to you to come to me? Because you

haven't been looking to the father. If you'd been looking to the father, you'd recognize me. That's pretty unique to Israel.

Gentiles are going to have a different paradigm. Why? They don't have the law and the prophets. They're not stewards of the, of all of the things that Paul describes in Romans chapter nine, verse one and two.

So the kingdom, just remember this. We are looking forward to a kingdom and we are already saved. We need to be prepared for a kingdom, just like Israel.

Those people were already in a relationship with God. The kingdom is something different. You leave Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb.

That is a picture of salvation. But when you cross the Red Sea, you are not in the promised land. You cross the Jordan to enter the promised land.

And that's the difference between saving faith, blood of the Passover lamb and victorious faith, living faith, walking by faith, Caleb and Joshua crossing the Jordan and the second generation of Israelites into the land of promise. That is not salvation. That is fulfillment of the purpose of God in saving us.

So more about that when we come back from the break, but we'll pause here for refreshment and conversation and be back in about, and some wonderful special music. And we'll be back in about 10.