

Matthew 21-01-10a

Welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is a privilege to join you this morning as we continue our study in the gospel of Matthew resuming in chapter 13 with attention to the ongoing updates in our end times study. I can't seem to leave that behind, so I've just decided to mash the two together in what I hope is a helpful fashion.

But Matthew chapter 13 is where we will be. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and that God, the Holy Spirit will be able to minister these truths to our hearts. Shall we pray? Father, how grateful we are for your grace and your patience and your provision for us as we endeavor to navigate the circumstances that face us day by day, the joys and the blessings, the challenges and the setbacks we know are woven into the fabric of your plan and all worked together for good to those of us who love you and are called according to your purpose.

We want to be those people and we are here this morning to learn from your word and to grow in grace and knowledge of the savior. We pray that as we reflect on the things contained in this particular passage that the Holy Spirit will teach us and impress upon us the things that will thoroughly equip us for every good work, enable us to love one another and to draw closer to the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who for the joy that was set before him endured this life, endured the cross and is now seated at your right hand interceding for us. Representing us, mediating on our behalf.

We pray these things in his name. Amen. In Matthew chapter 13 we've done an extensive look at the parable of the sower and in connection with that, looked at the concept of what the kingdom of God is and isn't.

Matthew almost uniquely uses the phrase kingdom of heaven beginning back in Matthew chapter five and extending through many of these parables. And there has been a debate about whether there is any substantial difference between the phrase kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God. You find some close parallels to Jesus sayings in Matthew in the gospel of Luke and in the gospel of Mark, except that in those cases you will see it phrased as the kingdom of God is like or how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God and so on.

So, uh, one time in seminary I tackled the issue. Is there a difference in the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God? And I began with the assumption that there is otherwise why have a difference in the scriptures? There's not a wasted word in my belief. My humble persuasion is that if the language varies, there's a reason for it.

So I spent many hours, uh, powering through each and every one of the phrases, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God, um, or the kingdom without a modifier. And to summarize those conclusions for you and my paper is not inspired, my work is not

inspired, but this is the short answer to the conclusion that I drew. When you see in the gospels, the phrase kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God coming from the lips of Jesus coming from the lips of John the Baptist, uh, in the early chapters of acts, when the apostles are talking about it, Israel is being addressed and it refers first and foremost, to the millennial kingdom, the millennial kingdom, the kingdom promised to Israel, the kingdom that fulfills the covenant promises of the old Testament.

Both phrases refer to that. So does that mean that they are exact synonyms? I don't think so. I think the reason you have the variation, particularly in Matthew is when you go back to your basics, what is the perspective? This four sided perspective that we get in the four gospels on the Lord Jesus.

You remember that, uh, John presents him as the son of God. Uh, Luke presents him as the son of man. You have Mark presenting him as the suffering servant.

And Matthew presents him as what the conquering King. So you have the King versus the servant, Matthew and Mark, you have son of man, son of God in Luke and John. Why does Matthew almost exclusively use the phrase kingdom of heaven? He is talking about the King and the mistake that the Jews made when he fed them with bread.

And uh, when he came, uh, teaching new things was that they wanted him to create a kingdom on earth. They tried to force him to be a King. They tried to make him a King at one point.

And while Matthew establishes his identity and his coming as the King of this kingdom, he emphasizes that this kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. We're going to see this even more after Jesus arrest and in his words to pilot. But in Matthew, which is, seems to be addressed primarily to the Jews and to those who know the old Testament scriptures and recognize the fulfillment of prophecy and so on.

The difference kingdom of heaven versus kingdom of God kingdom of heaven emphasizes the source as not earth. Kingdom of God emphasizes that it is God's fulfillment of promise. So while both phrases pertain to and talk about the millennial kingdom, one emphasizes it's heavenly roots, it's heavenly source, it's heavenly character.

The other emphasizes God's personal involvement in bringing to pass the fulfillment of his old Testament promises. There is a fulfillment of the earthly promises to Israel kingdom of God. But what is the nature and the character and the kind of law and justice that pertains in this kingdom? It is heavenly kingdom of heaven, emphasizing character kingdom of God, emphasizing author kingdom of heaven, emphasizing source and nature kingdom of God, emphasizing fulfillment of that which was spoken by the prophets in the old Testament.

So that's my two cents on, on the difference in vocabulary. But for our purposes, there are two coming kingdoms. One is earthly.

It is the millennial kingdom, kingdom of heaven slash kingdom of God. The other is the kingdom of the father. And that is the kingdom which follows the Gog Magog rebellion, the annihilation of Satan and his many followers on this earth who attempt to surround the camp of the saints.

When the elements melt with a fervent heat, heavens and the earth are eliminated and there is a new heavens and a new earth, a new Jerusalem coming down out of that heaven onto that earth. That is the kingdom of the father. So hope that's clear as we pick up.

Now in Matthew chapter 13 we've seen the parable of the sower and we've seen that because this word of the kingdom was delivered to Israel, just like so many other things that we study in the old Testament, we observe, we interpret and we apply John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, Jesus disciples came preaching the gospel of the kingdom. This is the good news presented to Israel treated as the people of God, believers for the purposes of illustration, for purposes of instruction, for, for the assumption. I am sure there were some actual unbelievers mixed into Israel, but they are treated as God's people.

They are the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They're not the goats being recruited into a new flock and transformed into sheep. They belong to God.

There is a covenant relationship with God. The picture that Israel represents is the people of God being, called to prepare themselves for the fulfillment of God's promises. So the gospel of the kingdom is not the gospel of salvation.

This is why to enter this kingdom, Jesus says, strive, strive to enter into the narrow gate. Uh, there are other passages that, uh, have additional requirements for entering. When we see the rich young ruler this time through, it's going to be apparent that, uh, inheriting eternal life is not a synonym for salvation.

Um, so with that in mind, having seen the seed parable and the, that the seed representing the word of the kingdom, the gospel of the kingdom, there are people who are believers, but when the opportunity is given to be overcomers, to be those who inherit to those who by faith and patience inherit the promise, things get in the way they don't receive the word at all. It falls on hard pack soil. Well, pretty soon that opportunity isn't even going to be in their minds or in their hearts anymore.

Satan is going to take it away and distract them into thinking, talking and working for some other purpose with some other goal. These are the people who are invited to a wedding feast, but they're too busy. I need to go check on the cattle at the ranch.

I need to go, I've got a business investment. I need to go check on that too much in this world and the various kinds of soil that do not receive the seed are hearts of believers who do not advance, who do not lay hold of righteousness by living faith, do not qualify themselves for blessing and function and opportunity in their promised kingdom. Observe, apply.

We as believers, when we hear the good news of overcoming by faith, the promises that we've seen in revelation chapter two and chapter three, the necessity to not be those who are distracted and deflected in the latter days, men will be, well, we don't want to be any of those following descriptions, lovers of themselves, lovers of money, unthankful, unholy, disobedient, distracted, deflected, uh, caught up in the desires of the flesh and so on. Believers are warned. Believers are called.

Believers are invited and exhorted to be inheritors to be overcomers. The victory that overcomes this world overcomes the thorns and the briars and the branches in this preceding parable is our faith, living faith, walking by faith, not by sight, not as the world gives. Jesus gives peace.

I give you peace. I leave with you not like the world living faith. So as we pick up in verse 24, the parable of the wheat and the tares, another parable he put forth to them saying the kingdom of heaven is like.

So talking to the believers in Israel who are sitting here listening to everything that is being spoken in the red ink in your red letter Bible, this is their opportunity. We look at the opportunity presented to them. We realize that the kingdom presented to us, the opportunity presented to us is obtained in the same way, exploited in the same way, living faith, trusting in God, not being caught up in the world, not being ensnared and tripped up by our fallen nature.

But the kingdom promise to us is not the millennial kingdom for us. It is that future kingdom of the father. We will have a role in overseeing and in as overcomers sitting with Christ on his throne, ruling and reigning with him, uh, kings and priests unto our God, uh, during that thousand year period.

But it is not a physical inheritance. It is not physical possession. It is not physical privilege and blessing in the millennial kingdom.

That's for Israel. We will be with Christ. If we suffer as he did, we will reign with him as he will reign.

But it's an elevated function. It's more reflected in what we see, see the angels doing now. Uh, not earth bound, not for overcomers.

It's unclear about what faithless believers are going to be doing. I don't know if they're going to be it. I say they, I hope it's they and not we are relegated to stadium seats or

are doing janitorial chores or it's much as what do the bulk of the angels do when they're not fighting the Assyrians or, uh, you know, there's only a few messenger angels that have come and spoken to people.

There are angels who are implementing God's plan and purpose among the nations and so on. But there are vast swaths and hordes and truckloads of angels and we don't really know what they're doing. Uh, it has not been revealed to us where they dwell, how they spend their quote unquote day.

Uh, we just don't know. And it's true as well of, of much of what we will be doing during the millennial kingdom. And during may not even be the right word since we will join Christ outside of time as we know it.

So I think it's probably more difficult than God wanted to, uh, tackle to try to explain to us exactly the nature of life beyond the rapture beyond resurrection except to say that while we do not know what we will be like, we will be like him. We will see him as he is and we know that whatever God has promised for us is going to be analogous to what he promises Israel by way of earthly promises. So if there is a separation from danger, if there is a in the millennial kingdom, peace and uh, the lion and the wolf are not a threat.

The snake doesn't threaten children. Um, it's interesting to me. I don't know if I've shared this thought with you before, but new things kind of pop into the empty landscape of my mind from time to time.

But remember when it says that, that uh, you know, the, the lion and the bear and the wolf, a little child will lead them and uh, and that a child will play by the, the, I think of the King James, it says the whole of the asp, the, the, the nest in the ground that the snake lives in. But it says that the child will play next to that nest. But it doesn't say there's going to be a snake because remember Satan has been thrown into the bottomless pit.

And so it doesn't say there are any snakes in the millennial kingdom. It just says there's a hole in the ground where he used to live and the children can play there. There's no threat that the snake is going to come out.

So that's a, that's a bonus thought. No, no charge, no extra charge. But, uh, the analogy we use since we do not have specific scripture to my knowledge, telling us what your average God fearing spirit filled Bible trusting believer in Christ of the church age is going to be doing during the millennium.

All we can do is look at the analogy, what is given to us in terms of fulfillment of promise to Israel. And we know that those people who qualify for being in the land in the kingdom by their faith and by their obedience are going to be in a wonderful environment. They will not hurt nor destroy on all my holy mountain.

Well, there is going to be an equivalent passing under the rod to determine who is in and who is out of the wonderful realm of blessing surrounding the Lord Jesus. Those who walk with him, those who partake of hidden manna who have the white stone and the new name and the other overcomer blessings. There's a limited number of us that are going to receive those because there's a limited number of us who pay attention and seek to lay hold of those wonderful promises by faith, patience and obedience.

The rest are going to be outside. And outside is less great. That's why there can be greater and lesser in the kingdom.

You wouldn't matter. You wouldn't care if you were greater or lesser. If everybody had access to all the same things, but you don't, there's coach and there's first class.

We want to be in first class. If you've ever sat in the very last seat in the plane against the wall of the restroom with a seat that does not recline, we don't want that in our entrance into the eternal future, whether it is during the millennium with Christ or after that in the kingdom of the father for all eternity. Now is the appointed time.

Now is the day to lay hold of your first class ticket to be up there where you are in the inner circle of those who by faith and patience inherit. So keep coming to verse 24 and then I never do read it, but I'm going to read it now. Another parable he put forth to them saying the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, a man who sowed good seed in his field.

Jesus has just told a seed parable in which the seed is the good news of the kingdom, the word of the kingdom. Some people understand it and others do not. Why do some understand and others do not? Jesus says to the disciples, it is given to you to understand Calvinist reform theology.

People immediately say, see God inscrutably gives to some understanding so that they can be saved and others, since we all deserve to go to the lake of fire, we shouldn't ask why doesn't God save everyone? We should just be glad that he saved some, not so a, this is not talking about salvation. We've established that be those who understand and that was a verse 22. After those who are caught up in the cares of this world and the seed full of richness of riches choke the word and are unfruitful.

Verse 23 he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands. I cannot, well I probably can, but I don't feel like I can overemphasize this point. The reason someone understands is they are a seeker.

Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find knock and the door will be opened. Psalm one Proverbs two, if you seek it, if you search for it, then you will understand.

Remember Proverbs to incline your ear, apply your heart, seek it, search for it. Then you will understand the fear of the Lord. Then you will find the knowledge of God.

It's not on a whim. It's not random. It's not inscrutable.

It's not some mysterious predestined for ordained election. People understand because they want to understand. They seek to understand.

They ask to understand. They knock on the door for understanding and God grants it. It is given.

Yes, but it's given for a reason. It is given to those who ask, seek and knock. So either understand or you don't, and it's based on what do you want? People say, well, I don't understand.

God should have made it clearer. No, you don't have sufficient interest desire. You're not really asking and you're not really seeking and you're not really knocking or you would understand it is given to all who ask.

This seed is going to be different. In that parable seed represented the good news of blessing, reward, inheritance, and opportunity. Blessing reward inheritance and opportunity in the coming kingdom for Israel coming millennial kingdom for us, the coming kingdom where Christ dwells and ultimately the kingdom of the father.

So another parable good seed is sowed by a man in his field. Please note in both of these parables, if a sower goes forth to sow, I've got a pasture right outside the church window here. And if I were going to sow some wheat seed, and so I, as the sower go forth to sow, where am I going to? So there's a County road that borders the pasture.

There is land that belongs to other people across that road, down that road, up that road. Where am I going to sow my seed? I'm not Johnny apple seed. I'm not traveling the highways and byways hoping to create apple orchards.

If a sower goes forth to sow, where is he going to sow on his own land, his own field? The field is not the entire world being sown with the gospel of salvation. The field is the world of believers. It is the land of Israel.

Jesus did not go outside Israel during his entire first advent. I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Go not in the way of the Gentiles.

He told his disciples, even in Acts chapter one, he said, you will be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, right? That's who gets the seed. It's God's field. Same thing here.

A man who sowed good seed in what field? Verse 24, circle it, his field. He sows good seed in his field. While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat in his field and went his way while men slept.

Why is it while men slept? This is without observation. Now when the grain had sprouted

and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares? He said to them, an enemy has done this.

The servant said to him, do you want us then to go and gather them up? Verse 29, he says, no less while you gather up the tares, you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. And at the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, pay attention.

Now first gather the tares, bind them in bundles to burn them. Then gather the wheat into my barn. First select the tares, gather the tares, bind the tares, burn the tares.

You got to pick them out from amongst the wheat at the harvest. Not before select them, gather them, bind them, burn them, gather the wheat into my barn. He is then tells the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of leaven hidden in three measures of meal.

Just as with the first seed parable, there is material in between the delivering of the parable and the explanation of the parable. Why is this? Why doesn't he just immediately explain it? There's a good reason for everything the Lord Jesus does. There's a good reason for every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Every word that is contained in our passage here. So we are going to look at this intermediate material and then the interpretation of the parable of wheat and tares in our second session. But think about this.

If we had a period at the end of the chapter and Jesus went on to other things, what could we already observe from this parable without even going forward and looking at its explanation? The world is not perfect. Did you not sow good seed? Yes I did, but there is an enemy at work. The fruit of the enemy's work is the tares.

The tares do not comport with the field owner's wishes, desires, goals, and objectives. It is a hindrance. It is an obstruction.

The enemy is trying to thwart the good purpose, the prosperity, the industry, the result that the owner is trying to achieve. Someone hates him. Someone is trying to damage him.

And the fruit of that sowing of weed seeds into the field is not removed when it is identified. The servants say, there's weeds, a lot of them growing in your field. Didn't you sow good seed? How did this happen? The owner says, A, an enemy has done this.

B, don't do anything about it yet. A point of application is there are going to be fruit. There's going to be results.

There's going to be hardships. There's going to be setbacks. There's going to be friction and enemy work in our lives.

Our lives are not perfect just because we're saved and we are not delivered from every action of the enemy. There's going to be enemy work in our culture, enemy work in our society, enemy work in our spiritual fellowship in denominations and in churches and in Christian conversation and Christian thinking and Christian effort. There is going to be enemy sowed tears in it and through it.

We often think I, this has got to be eliminated. I've got to get rid of this. I've got to purge it out.

I've got to rip it out. I've got to, I've got to purify the situation. I've got to purify the circumstance.

This parable argues otherwise there is a time when God says, let them both grow together for now. I have a greater objective. I'm not looking at the present and crying about tears in my wheat field.

I will take care of that at a future time. If I take care of it now, it is premature and it is going to do more harm than good. Trying to weed out and eliminate every problem, every setback, every negative element isn't biblical.

God leaves us in the world, but not of it. He leaves things that are in the world to challenge us, to set us back, to, to encourage us to discern, to understand and to know the difference between wheat and tears. But at the same time, just because we identify it doesn't mean we can eliminate it.

There are a lot of evils in civilization, in culture, in society, in life, both general and individual. There's a lot of things that shouldn't be there. It's the fruit of the enemy's work.

But our goal is to let the wheat grow anyway. The wheat can grow even if these things are not removed. Notice the wheat is not choked.

The wheat is not prevented from coming to maturity, bearing its fruit and being harvested for the good purposes of the owner. The field, the tears are set back, but they are not an insurmountable obstacle. They do not succeed.

They would have succeeded if the owner had panicked and tried to pull them out and uprooted and disturbed the soil so that his wheat dies because the wheat roots would come up along with the tears. And the only way to get these out, you could not harvest these with a sickle. You couldn't remove the tears by cutting them.

You have to uproot them. You've got to grab them by the stock and uproot them. When

you do that, it is the roots of the wheat that are going to be pulled up and hit by the sun, unable to absorb water and nutrients.

And the wheat will die because of uprooting, which is the only way to remove the tears. You cannot selectively swing a sickle and accomplish the goal. So they have to be left for the sake of the roots of the wheat.

And if the wheat has got good roots, it will grow in spite of the tears and still accomplish the goal for which that seed was planted. This is our application. Don't let the tears in life, the tears in circumstance, the tears of the world uproot us in trying to eliminate every little thing and trying to purify every little thing.

It's not always the time to purify. It's not always the time to purge. It is the time to make sure our roots are secure and that we grow in spite of it and look forward to the harvest when these things will be eliminated by someone who knows more than we do, who has a better strategy and a better power to do so than we.

So it's a good thing to think about that. God leaves tears in his own kingdom field until the right time to remove them. And there is a time to purge out the leaven.

There's a time to touch not the unclean thing. There's a time to recognize that we have been left in the world and challenged by the world and the things of the world and the things of the enemy for a reason. And you can't always deal with them by elimination.

We deal with them by growing in spite of them. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll take a look at the wonderful chiasmic structure of this second parable, just like the first, see what's at the center and at the heart and then look at Jesus explanation and interpretation of the value of each of the elements in this great parable.

Let's pause here and take our break.