

Matthew 21-02-04a

Good evening. Welcome to the Thursday Night Bible Study here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're grateful that you were able to join us as we continue our study in Matthew chapter 13 and interweaving it with our look at the end times.

They are symbiotic, so to speak. They dwell well together. And in light of what the Lord Jesus has to say in this passage, we're going to be looking at things both new and old from the New Testament and the Old Testament this evening.

So it's going to be a fun chance to investigate the Word of God and update our understanding of a few things. We're going to be picking up in the vicinity of verse 47, the parable of the dragnet, which we began last Sunday, but we'll continue. Was I here Sunday? No, we began it a week ago, Thursday.

My hamster is catching up with me. I'm running ahead of him at the moment. But what we began a week ago last Thursday in the parable of the dragnet, we will continue tonight.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and we'll begin. Father, we are grateful for this time of fellowship and investigation of the truth of your Word. We thank you for your Holy Spirit and pray that as we review these truths together that he will be our teacher, help us to understand and see the pertinence and applicability of the portion of your Word that we look at this evening.

We pray that in all things, the Lord Jesus will be glorified and we ask it in his name. Amen. Let's begin by reading our passage, starting at verse 47 and extending through to verse 52.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which when it was full, they drew to shore and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age, the angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus said to them, have you understood all these things? They said to him, yes, Lord. Then he said to them, therefore, every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old. I'm going to begin with a little bit of the old.

We began our end time study, oh, 15, 16 months ago in the fall of 2019 and looked at the timing. We reviewed the prophecy of Daniel in Daniel chapter nine of the 70 weeks. We reviewed the fact that 69 of those weeks have transpired.

The 70th week is yet to come, and we're not going to revisit very much of that except to

give a bit of perspective. There is an article on Wikipedia. I don't often send you into the evil arms of the internet, but there is an article that I would encourage you to look at.

You can do it now or later. I'm going to just mention a little bit of it. The name of it is List of Dates Predicted for Apocalyptic Events.

List of Dates Predicted for Apocalyptic Events. This is a long article. I, even with my vast experience in wide reading, was surprised.

There are so many of these that they have to break them down by century. So in the first millennium, they've got a list of those. Then from the 11th through the 15th centuries.

But there were a double handful of people who thought the world was going to end back in, oh, say, 27th of May of 482, AD 482. Hydaeus, the Bishop of Aquia Flavia. If I ever get to be a bishop, I want to be the Bishop of Aquia Flavia.

I just think that would be a cool way to sign your name. This is in Portugal today. But he wrote a chronicle in the firm belief that humanity was living in the end times, marching toward a certain doom on 27 May 482, when Jesus would come back and the world would end.

So this notion has been going on a while. But Gregory of Tours, a fairly famous guy, French Bishop, he figured the end would occur between 799 and 806 in our common era here. And Odomene, somewhere in the vicinity of 800, 806, and so on.

You will see this in the 15th century. There's seven predictions in the 15th century. There are nearly a dozen in the 16th century.

There are more than a dozen in the 17th century. There's more than a dozen in the 18th century. By the time you get to the 19th century, it's pretty much an entire page there.

When you get to the 20th century, it is more than a full page. You've got everybody from the Catholic Apostolic Church, the International Bible Students Association, thought for sure it was all going to go in 1920. The JW's thought it was going to happen in 1941.

Herbert W. Armstrong thought it was going to happen in 1936. He's the founder of the Worldwide Church of God, used to have a very widely listened to radio broadcast on the, what was it, the Church of Tomorrow, something like that. But of course, it didn't happen in 1936, and so Herbert came back later and said it was going to happen in 1972.

He had made a prediction in 1936. Then when it didn't happen, he changed it to 1943. When that didn't happen, then he said it was going to happen in 1972.

And then when that didn't happen, he said it was going to happen in 1975. And the Jehovah's Witnesses, who had also missed a couple of previous dates, they thought it was going to happen in 1975. Chuck Smith thought it would happen in 1981.

I'm just picking them at random. Pat Robertson thought it would happen in 1982. Lester Sumrall, some of you all from this part of the country remember old Lester, and he published a book called I Predict 1985.

There was a man named David Berg who published two or three different dates. He thought the Tribulation would start in 1989, the Second Coming would take place in 1993. Harold Camping, I've mentioned him before because I bought his book back in the early 90s, predicting he had like 94 reasons it was going to happen in 1994.

Big, thick paperback book. I've got it in a box somewhere. He thought it was going to happen on the 6th of September 1994.

I read that book. He had calculations, cross-references, triangulations like you can't believe. He could have convinced the angels it was going to happen in 1994 on the 6th of September.

It didn't happen, so he went back and checked his math and said, oops, it's going to be the 29th, not the 6th. Well, it didn't happen then, and he said, oh, one more little fudge here. It's going to be the 2nd of October.

Well, as you may remember, it didn't happen on any of those three dates. So then he revised it to be the 31st of March of 1995, which was his fourth date. Well, that didn't happen either, and so he gave up predicting the rapture until 2011 when he offered another prediction.

In the meantime, Nostradamus, everybody thought he had it predicted at 1999, you know, party like it's 1999. Philip Berg, who had predicted David Berg up above. Berg was dean of the Worldwide Kabbalah Center, said that on the 11th of September 1999, of course, the 11th of September, you remember, that's before 9-11 that we all remember, but he missed it by a couple of years, but he said a ball of fire would descend, destroying almost all of mankind, all vegetation, and all forms of life on 9-11 of 1999.

Any number of other people, I mean, this thing is so long, it's discouraging to look at, and it ought to be discouraging. Nobody ought to be setting dates. But to jump forward to 2011, I've got a soft spot for Harold Camping since I've got his book.

So after several unsuccessful predictions 1994-95, Camping predicted the rapture and devastating earthquakes would occur on 21 May 2011, with God taking approximately 3% of the world's population into heaven, and the end of the world would occur five months later on October 21. Well, when that didn't come about, he revised it and said on May 21, a spiritual judgment took place and both the physical rapture and the end of the world would occur on the 21st of October. Of course, that didn't happen.

Harold gave up. John Hagee, you may have seen him, he was in this blood moon prophecy that they had back in 2014 and 2015. Christian ministers claimed that the

tetrad in 2014 and 2015 might represent the beginning of the messianic end times.

There were some Mormons that got onto the blood moon bandwagon around that time. A fellow named David Mead predicted it 2015, 2017, 2018. Gene Dixon, who allegedly predicted the assassination of President Kennedy, had made a prediction that Armageddon would take place in 2020.

We safely exited that year a few weeks ago. Armageddon, to my knowledge, has not taken place. We might've had a political Armageddon, but maybe a social Armageddon and that's debatable.

There are future predictions. There's a fellow named F. Kenton Beshor, who bases his prediction on the prior suggesting that Jesus would return in 1988 within one biblical generation at the founding of Israel in 1948. There were many that believed that, including Pastor Pack.

We used to hear in Tulsa, listen to him every Sunday as we're getting ready for church. Pastor Pack, all through the seventies, was convinced that, you know, get saved now because everybody that's saved is leaving. Well, this Beshor, I wonder if he's in relation to the Bouchers.

He argues that the prediction was correct, but the definition of a biblical generation was incorrect. And it was actually 70 to 80 years, placing the second coming of Jesus between 2018 and 2028 and the rapture during 2021 at the latest. So Beshor still got money riding on the table.

The, you know, the roulette ball has not fallen yet on red or black or his number. Kent Hovine, you might've heard of him, speculated in 2015 that 2028 was the most likely date for the rapture. Their Orthodox Judaism thinks it's going to happen in the year 2239.

And that's based on their calculations of the year of the world and so on. There are, you know, many future predictions that go 300,000 years into the future, million years into the future, 500 to 600 million years. These are mostly scientific predictions of when the sun consumes the earth and so on.

But this is a long list. You need to look at this list, read it. If you're interested, research why people thought it was going to happen at these various times.

Many of these were reasonable when that date was future, especially, you know, 1948, Israel comes back. Jerusalem's no longer trodden underfoot and so on 40 years, 70 years, 80 years. A lot of these seem to make sense.

Now I'm about to give you some information. And the reason I prefaced it with this long and unbiblical introduction is do not take what I'm saying as a prediction that Jesus is just around the corner in terms of the rapture. Of course, he is just around the corner.

He is as near as our last heartbeat. We've emphasized this over and over and over again. We should live our lives as though each day is our last because each day could be our last, but not because of the timing of the actual rapture.

It is my firm belief that our last waking thought in this life is followed by our first waking thought at the rapture. I don't believe there is any time, any sleep, any unconsciousness. I think you go directly from absent from the body to face-to-face with the Lord.

The Bible says we are face-to-face with the Lord at the rapture. So that's how close the rapture is. So please don't think that I'm suggesting, watch out, sell your assets, cut a hole in a sheet, jump up and down on your porch.

However, let me say this, just because it's interesting. I saw somebody on a chat board talking about the, what were they talking about? I don't know how I got onto this, but it got me to, oh, I know what it was. This is an interesting idea and I've run across it, but I didn't really stop and think about it.

How long was Jesus' earthly ministry? Now we're back to the Bible now. We're going to talk about Jesus. He's here in his ministry here in Matthew 13.

How long did that last? How old was he when he began his ministry? About 30 years of age. How long did his earthly ministry last? As near as we can calculate from he went up to the feast and so on. Three and a half years.

Three and a half years. This is based on counting feasts and so on. Three and a half years.

Coincidentally, how long is the tribulation? Now be careful. It's a trick question. It's a tricky question.

It's not a trick question. How long is the great tribulation? Three and a half years, right? It is the last half of the 70th week. Keep your finger in Matthew.

Turn back to Daniel 9. I've got a real nice crease in my Bible there. It's easy to find. Daniel chapter 9, verse 24, 70 weeks are determined for your people, your holy city, finish transgression, make an end of sins, make a reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision of prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the anointed prince, Messiah the prince, there shall be seven weeks and 62 weeks. We talked about the seven weeks. We talked about the removal of that protection of the Medo-Persian empire.

At the end of that seven weeks, it hits exactly in that year. Then 62 weeks later, the street shall be built again on the wall, even in troublous times. After the 62 weeks,

Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself after the 62 weeks.

So his coming is seven plus 62, 69 weeks. That's 483 years, right? Now I have suggested to you that I've got big problems taking the decree of Artaxerxes in 458 BC and using that as the decree by taking the number of years, converting it to days, going to 365 and one fourth, doing a whole bunch of math and coming out at 33 AD. That's the standard view.

I don't buy that. And if you don't do that multiplication, you wind up short. So here's what's interesting to me.

The idea was broached and I'm not saying it's good or bad, but just for the sake of getting your mental wheels turning, suppose that of that 70th week, half of it had already expired because the first half of the week, which is still age of Israel, remember? But in Daniel, it says after the 62 weeks, Messiah will be cut off. Jesus was cut off from the time of his coming to the time of his crucifixion. If you take his coming as his baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit and his three and a half year ministry, just play with the idea.

I don't want to mess anybody up, but you don't want to be too wedded to tradition. And our understanding of a lot of things is based on what we think the Bible says, but we're not always right. And tradition thinks the Bible says a lot of things that it really doesn't say, but just here's an interesting thought and that's all it is.

It's an interesting thought. If it messes you up, just put your fingers in your ears for the next couple of minutes. But it's interesting to me that until the coming of Messiah, the Prince, suppose for the sake of argument, that that is the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, his introduction at the Jordan by John the Baptist, behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Here he is. He has come, right? Three and a half years later, Messiah is cut off, but not for himself. Based on John Nelson Darby and a lot of other things, we've always pretty much just gone to the fact that the whole 70th week is future.

And I'm just sharing with you what I'm kind of working on in my spare time. It might be that half of that 70th week has already run. And that was the public ministry of the Lord Jesus.

It's just odd to me that it was exactly three and a half years, not two, not five, not four, not one, three and a half. And then he is cut off, but not for himself, which means that the great tribulation could begin immediately upon the departure of the New Testament saints that are alive on the planet at whatever time that may be. Now, what's interesting to me, and I still find it very fascinating that if you go back and look at the decree of Xerxes during the days of Esther that we studied in the book of Esther and come

forward, those 483 years, you wind up at the year, given the birth year of Jesus, circa seven to eight BC, you come forward to like 85 or so, and that's Jesus at the temple.

And there's a beautiful symmetry there because that is 69 weeks of years, because that's 483. Anyway, you can do the math and you come out there, but the traditional date of the traditional decree, the decree that most people go by and then do all of that 365 and one fourth and all that really mind boggling math, that decree is firmly dated to 458 BC. Now, if you kind of fuzzed out on everything else I was saying, here's what I'm leading up to.

458 BC, if you come forward, standard years of normal days, years in Israel, I argue are feast cycles. How many Passovers, how many days of atonement and so on, right? Well, if you come forward, 483 years, that's 69 times seven from the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem that Artaxerxes put out in 458, you come out at AD 26, AD 26. And the 2000th anniversary of that's coming up here in a few years.

And so I believe that Jesus was not crucified in 33. I think he was crucified earlier than that because the Herod that tried to kill all of the children, two years old and under in the environments where Jesus was born, died in 4 BC. And he killed all the children two years old and under, which makes me think that Jesus was born in six or seven BC.

Well, do the math. And if you come 30 years forward, let's say it's seven BC. It's complicated because there's no year zero.

So you have to, you have to subtract or add a year depending on which way you're going. But if Jesus is born in seven BC, you come down to one AD, that's seven years, right? Then you come to, to 26 and you're back with Jesus being 33 years old when he's crucified. So if the crucifixion is in 26 and that's Messiah being cut off, but not for himself, anywhere in that, in that timeframe, you have that 69 weeks until the anointed prince, the coming of Messiah, the prince and him being cut off.

And it's inviting to think about the 2000th anniversary, whatever else you want to say, this is the decade you can, you can do math various ways, you know, but that, that Artaxerxes decree is pretty firmly dated at 458. And if you come forward 483 years from that date, you hit 26 AD. And that's when I think the Lord Jesus was, was crucified.

So you can, you can then allow the full 70th week to follow that, which would be from, you know, from that year forward to, to 2031 or, or the year 31. Anyway, I just wanted to run that by you, two ideas. One, because of the crucifixion being earlier than the traditional date, which I'm sure that it is because the birth of the Lord Jesus is earlier than the traditional date.

This decade is an inviting time. It's an exciting time to watch. It could easily be that God is going to extend history and all of us could expire and, and life is going to go on.

But I'm certainly going to be watching and praying. I want to be alert so that that day does not overtake me as a thief. Our death almost always overtakes us as a and we don't want to end up waking up with a loss.

The problem with the day overtaking you as a thief is there's always a loss involved. We are not of the night or of the darkness that that day should overtake us as a thief. So just by way of a little bit of addition to our end time study.

And, and I offer this by way of encouragement. There are a lot of discouraging things in the There's a lot of discouraging directions and developments and events. And there are many things that could kind of get us prone to be depressed as we look around and think, well, we're, there is loss happening.

The day is overtaking us as a thief in terms of freedoms, opportunities, Christian values in culture, society. You know, the world is becoming an increasingly hostile place toward faith in general, but I offer you this as an encouragement. It's fun to watch a lot of these people that set dates.

I don't think they were necessarily selling all they had and standing on their porch waiting to go upwards. They just thought, you know, this could be a symmetrical time when the Lord might return 40 years after Jerusalem being established and Israel becoming a state. Wouldn't it be great if the Lord came in 1988? Well, it would have been, but I think a lot of people just kind of kept an eye on that and went on about their business.

I know a lot of us did that. Well, you know, it's a, it's, it's an encouragement. It's a, it's kind of like a refrigerator magnet.

You've got verses in your Bible, but you can put them on a sign or a cross stitch or a magnet or a card and be reminded by them of these timeless truths of scripture. Well, this is a reminder. The days may be very short for the world in general.

We know that they are short for us. You can be hit by a beer truck and be in the presence of the Lord before you know it. So we should live every day as though it is our last.

And that doesn't mean to do panicky things. It means to do fruitful things. So with that as an introduction, let's turn back to Matthew chapter 13 now, because Jesus is talking about the end of an age.

And he's talking to people who didn't realize that their age was very close to coming to an end. They were insensate. They weren't watching.

They weren't alert and their age ended and overtook them like a thief. We want to be ready for the end of our age, whenever it may come. It could be soon in the

chronological sense.

It could be soon just in terms of the last heartbeat sense. But as we look at this now, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind. When it was full, this is verse 48 of Matthew 13, they drew it to shore and they sat down.

It's so easy to overlook details in a passage. These that drew the net to shore, that's an energy expending activity. That's work.

One of these great big nets that's too big to pull into a boat, guys would drag this thing to shore. And once you've got the fish on shore, they sat down. They didn't run over there and start throwing good fish in one direction and bad in another.

It says they sat down. They've got some time. They can be deliberate.

And it's a combination of rest because the hard work of pulling that net ashore is done. And now comes the benefit. These fish are going to be sorted.

So they sat down. There's a time to work and there is a time to sit down and take stock and do evaluation. So they sit down, gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.

The word for good just means good. It's like kalos. And you would expect, well, kalos is good and kakos is bad.

That's the Greek normal symmetry. But the word for bad here is not a is not kalos. It's a different word.

And it means rotten. It means putrid. It means past it's not just its sell by date past its best before date.

And it means something that that has corrupted. You know, when you say, oh, that milk has gone bad. That's what this kind of bad is.

It's not morally bad. It's quality bad. The quality of it is unusable because it is rotting.

Putrid is the word they use in the lexicon for this word. So you get the idea that they pulled this net ashore and some of these fish are very perishable. And when they sat down and start pulling the fish out, the sun has very quickly exposed the perishability and the non-usability of these creatures.

They just don't last out of their native element. What is their native element? The sea. Pull them out of the sea.

They don't survive. They quickly rot. They only exist in the troubled sea.

The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt and bad fish. These other fish, the good develop their quality and maintain their quality when they were in the sea. But when you pull them out, they stay good.

Remember at the end of Revelation, let him who is worthy, be worthy. Still, let him who is evil, be evil. Still quality is developed in the sea, but the bad can do okay in the sea until you pull them out.

And when you separate them out of that environment, it is the symmetrical opposite of life. Connection with God imparts life. Connection with God's righteousness makes us righteous.

Connection with God's peace makes us peaceful. Connection with God's character gives us character. Connection with God's love enables us to love.

We love because he first loved us. Well, there is an anti-matter universe much larger than the material universe. Science tells us there's dark matter and dark energy and it's bigger.

Well, the sea with its badness, that bad stuff can only exist in connection with that troubled sea. And when you pull it out, it's got to be dealt with because it is going to corrupt. It is going to get putrid.

It is going to rot. So that's what they are separating. So it will be at the end of the age.

This is the millennial age. This is the kingdom which could have come in at this point in Jesus' ministry. If he had been accepted, there would have been an entirely different outcome after the 70th week.

But there wasn't. The angels will come forth. Come forth from where? They're going to come forth from the realms where angels dwell, operate, are visible, ascend and descend on the ladder that Jacob saw.

They are going to come forth. They are not currently doing this. Angels are not engaged in a judgment process for the church.

You can go from the beginning to the end of the New Testament and you do not find angels involved in the judgment of the body of Christ. This is something the Lord Jesus handles personally. Not so with the nations, not so with Israel.

Angels are involved in the judgment of the world. Angels are involved as you see throughout the book of Revelation in the tribulation period and in the pouring out of the judgments of God on the nations, including those 144,000 servants of God who have the seal in their forehead. They are sealed so that the angels don't harm them in the judgment.

This is not talking about the rapture because angels are involved. This is talking about the end of the age of Israel's kingdom. This is a parable of the kingdom.

So the angels come forth, separate the wicked from among the just. This goes back to the pulling the tares out from the midst of the wheat. The angels do this.

The reapers are the angels. The sorters here are the angels. They pull them out and cast them into the furnace of fire.

And separating the wicked, now you do have the word for wickedness and you have the word for righteousness. This is moral evil compared to spiritual righteousness. This is a judgment of unbelievers pulled from the midst of believers at the end of the millennial age.

And they are cast into the fire. Interesting, they are pulled out of the water and they are cast into the fire because otherwise they rot and the stench and the spread of that corruption will only do harm. And in that day, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Now this wailing and gnashing of teeth, I think is temporary. It doesn't say there will be endless wailing and gnashing of teeth or perpetual or eternal. But in the day when they are being pulled and being led and being cast in, those who see their predecessors going in, there's going to be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Notice there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. What is there not? Repentance. Genuine change of mind is not there.

And him who is wicked, be wicked still. They're going to have a lot of complaints, but they're not going to have a change of mind. This is what happens when political parties lose.

They can wail, they can gnash their teeth, but they don't change and join the winning side and convert to the opposite philosophy, wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus said, have you understood all these things? When they say yes, he's going to base an application on it in verse 52. And that's what we're going to look at when we come back from the break.

But as a point of application for us, it is manifest to the angels who is good and who is bad, who is good and who is corrupt. The angels have no trouble. Just like fishermen have no trouble sorting the fish and not like, well, is this one a maybe I can't really tell.

It's obvious spiritual judgment in heaven, whether it is the Lord Jesus, whether it is the angels, whether it is God, the father, all things are clear and open in the sight of him with whom we have to do. We can fool each other. We can fool ourselves.

There is no fooling the righteous judgment of God and those that God delegates judgment to. If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. Whatever the timing of the return of the Lord Jesus may be for us today is a day of judgment.

This is the day that we should take a hard look at ourselves in the light of the word of God and proactively and proveniently judge ourselves. We're going to be much more merciful to ourselves than that judgment. We can stop.

We can change. We can touch not the unclean thing. We can separate from that which offends.

We can pluck out the eye and cut off the hand that causes us to sin. Now is the time to do that. There is still time left.

We don't want to wait until the judgment is going to be done by others. We can do it to and for ourselves now in the light of the word of God and thank the Lord. We are still in a day of grace.

We're still in a day of opportunity with the word of God and the spirit of God, giving us the strength, the power, the objectivity, the understanding. We can cleanse ourselves and be vessels of honor. Remember what Paul tells Timothy, don't have to be a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction.

These things that are unseemly, these things that are evil and sinful, we can cleanse ourselves and become vessels of honor fitted for every good use. Let's pause here and take a break. When we come back, we're going to pick up in verse 51 and complete this section of our study.