

Matthew 21-06-20a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. Today is the 20th day of June 2021 and we continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew. We're in chapter 17 and finding some fascinating things here in the wake of the transfiguration.

What happened down at the bottom of the mountain is almost as significant as what happened up at the top and we've seen in these past few weeks that we want to endeavor to be those who qualify to be up on the mountain and not those who are demonstrated to have a lack of faith down at the bottom. So we'll pick up our study there in a moment. Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our studies and then we'll begin.

Shall we pray? Father, how grateful we are for another opportunity to spend this time in fellowship, in the study of your word and in enjoying the benefits that come through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst as he energizes and activates and directs our gifts so that we can be a channel of blessing for others even as we find ourselves enriched by that presence and by the power of your word. We pray that as we look at this episode in the life of the Lord Jesus that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, that we will come to a better understanding and a more real belief that defines how we think and how we act in investing the time that you give us in this life. We pray it in Jesus' name, Amen.

As we saw in Matthew chapter 17, there is this revelation of the Lord Jesus that is at the top of the mountain. This is in partial fulfillment of the last verse of chapter 16. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

That prediction has been understood in various ways, partly because of the word coming in his kingdom. So if you look at this, in what sense do Peter, James, and John see the Lord Jesus coming in his kingdom? You could say, well, he's standing in his kingdom. He's visiting with Moses and Elijah.

We looked at that in detail last time, what they represent and what is really going on in this tableau that is presented. But coming in his kingdom seems to be an action word, not standing in his kingdom, ruling in his kingdom, represented in his kingdom, but coming. So this is the attempt to solve this in various ways.

And I commend all of these ideas to your attention. Knowledge isn't going to live and die with me or interpretation. And as we're going to see in our Zechariah study on Thursday night, as we progress in our own understanding, there are times when we look at a passage and we say, well, this is what it appears to mean.

And there's wonderful application and everything you observe is true. But you can revisit a passage as we are revisiting our Zechariah study and see new things that enhance and bring more out of these divinely inspired words and scenes. And we're going to be seeing some new things in Zechariah that build on what we saw four years ago when we looked at it in our Kings and Prophets study.

Same thing here. When you see the sequence given exactly the same way in Mark, in Matthew and in Luke, beginning with the material we find here in our chapter 16 and moving through 17, this seems to be the immediate fulfillment of Jesus' words. And I think it is.

But there are those who look at this word coming and say, well, there's no movement here. The only thing that seems to come to the top of the mountain is the glory cloud of God the Father and the words that he speaks to those three disciples. So I just wanted to quickly address this because if you appeal to other interpretations or commentaries, you may see some of these.

One example is the book I mentioned, I think, Thursday night, Gleason Archer's Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties takes a different view of this. And he believes that since there is no movement on the top of the mountain, it must have been fulfilled somewhere else. And so he goes to Pentecost and there is scriptural support for this.

I think it's not untrue or invalid to look at the scriptures where Jesus says, I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. I will come to you, Erkomai, meaning after I leave, I will come to you in some sense.

And of course, this is in the person and power of the Holy Spirit. I will not leave you as orphans. I will send you another comforter.

You well remember in John 14, the promise, the one who has my words and keeps them. He is the one who loves me. I and my father will come to him and make our home with him.

So in both of those, I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. And if you have my words and keep them as a response to your love for me, I will come to you, I and my father, and we will dwell with you.

And these are fulfilled in our understanding by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, because God is triune, meaning he is a unity. And when you have one element there, there is a sense in which you have them all. So the difficulty, and so Gleason Archer, and believe me, he's forgotten more than I will ever know.

His understanding is that this was fulfilled at Pentecost. There are some standing here who will not taste death until they have seen the man, the son of man, seen the man, seen the son of man coming in his kingdom. The difficulty comes with in his kingdom.

And this is where our understanding of kingdom, and I've belabored this in preceding weeks and months. It's really important for us to understand our relationship to this kingdom, because this is clearly and manifestly the millennial kingdom, the glory of the millennial kingdom, the kingdom of the Son, the 1,000-year reign of Christ in Jerusalem on the throne of David with the sons of David as co-rulers and sub-rulers and alternate rulers. Old Testament prophecy says David himself will sit on his throne, the son of David will sit on his throne, and the sons of David.

And we've seen this in passages from Ezekiel and Jeremiah and the Old Testament prophets major and minor. All of these things will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom. So the way this is typically handled in the church among many interpreters is, well, we have a mystery form of the kingdom.

We're enjoying the millennial kingdom now in a spiritual sense. Well, okay, but it's not really the millennial kingdom. There's no throne in Jerusalem.

You don't have a Levitical priesthood functioning in the Ezekiel 40 through 48 temple. There's not a rod of iron. Nations are not being subjugated.

You don't have a growing counter-revolution brewing that's going to culminate in the Gog Magog rebellion. I mean, you could say that this is a mystery form of the kingdom, but it's really mysterious because it's got none of the features of the millennial kingdom. And they say, well, the right hand of the father, this is the throne.

Jesus is already on the throne. Well, the right hand of the father is not the throne of David. His enemies have not yet been made his footstool and so on.

There's just so many things to say, well, this is a kingdom and that's a kingdom. Therefore, this is a version of that is a stretch that I personally have difficulty making. So let's get back on solid footing here.

Jesus says, some of you standing here shall not taste death till they see the son of man coming in his kingdom, his kingdom. So a, the church is never called his kingdom, never referred to as his kingdom. Jesus is never presented to us or taught to us or represented to us by Peter, Paul, James or John as the king.

Doesn't mean that the kingdom is not preached. We looked at the last verse of the book of Acts. Paul preaches the kingdom for two years while he's under house arrest in Rome.

There is plenty to say about the kingdom. He could have been preaching the law for two years in Rome. He could have been preaching the prophets for two years.

He could have been preaching any biblical subject. The kingdom is replete in the old Testament scriptures, which during the time that Paul was preaching and teaching in Rome was all the written scripture there was. The new Testament had not yet been

collected or presented.

A few of the letters were circulating, but they weren't considered canon until very late in the apostolic period. Peter refers to Paul's letters as scriptures when he says there are people who twist them as they do the other scriptures to their own destruction, the other writings. Peter was already recognizing that the letters of Paul were inspired writings that should be paid attention to by the church.

But back to our point. Was Pentecost the fulfillment of Jesus' words in 1628 here? Some standing here will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. So my first point is the church is never represented to us as his kingdom.

Number two, in my view, which I've suggested to you, this is not without problems or it isn't that there aren't alternate understandings. But my understanding is when Jesus said taste death, experience the pain of death, it is his death that he is speaking of. In the context before and after he is telling the disciples, I'm going to go to Jerusalem and die.

But some of you are going to see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom before you taste that bitter experience of death. I would suggest, I would offer for your approval, the notion that the death of our loved ones is harder on us than our own death, especially as believers where we don't really harbor a fear of death. We're not leaving fingernail marks on the door frames as where the angels attempt to carry us to glory.

And tasting death as a negative experience, it's usually the death of those we love. And there was no more traumatic experience for the apostles than the death of the Lord Jesus. I would submit that his death was far more painful and traumatic to them than their own.

So Pentecost coming after the death of the Lord Jesus, they have all tasted death, his death 50 days before Pentecost, right? So that's a second reason why I don't think Pentecost is the fulfillment of 1628. And thirdly, it greatly confuses the potential application of this picture on the Mount of Transfiguration because if our understanding is correct, and of course I think it is or I wouldn't present it to you, what does the separation of the three and the nine tell us about viewing the glory of the Son of Man in his kingdom? Not everyone is going to see it. Some standing here.

How many of the apostles experienced Pentecost? All of them. Even James was not slain until after Pentecost, right? So Jesus could have just said, you will not taste death before you see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom to all of the disciples. I guess he could have left out Judas.

Judas is the only one that doesn't see it, right? So the reason I'm belaboring this a little bit is details matter. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, studying topically and following the threads of Scripture and finding everything that we know about a particular thing

makes a difference and enhances our understanding. And this is part of the mining process.

Some of these treasures are not laying on the top of the ground, and it takes a little bit of digging. And I think when we look at this and spend a little time looking at it, we discover that the transfiguration experience for Peter and James and John, his brother, is in fact seeing the Son of Man. So what do we do with this word coming in his kingdom? Well, if you remember in the experience here, and we're going to see how important these details are this coming Thursday in Zechariah, this experience has details that give us wonderful clues about this idea of coming in his kingdom.

When you look at chapter 17 again, Jesus, in verse 1, led them up on a high mountain by themselves. By themselves is significant because only some are going to see this coming in his kingdom by themselves. It makes sense of that.

Why would Jesus leave some disciples down at the bottom? Because he said, some of you. And there's a reason why those some are chosen. We've seen that.

And then verse 2, and he was transfigured before them. He was metamorphosed before them. They saw the process of change.

When they climbed the mountain, when they got to the top of the mountain, Jesus still looked like he did on a daily basis. But they witnessed the change. They witnessed the transfiguration.

And this change from his normal human, earthly, non-glorified form into this form where his face shines like the sun and his clothes become as white as the light. Peter, James, and John saw this happen. They watched him suddenly transform.

That, in my view, is coming in his kingdom. Why is that important? Because you have to be awake and aware to see this transformation. Who is at the inception of the millennial kingdom going to see this transformation? Who is going to see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom? We say, well, Israel is going to be resurrected, right? The rapture has happened seven years previous.

You've got the 70th week of Daniel. And then after Armageddon, you have the resurrection of Old Testament saints. Daniel 12, verses 1 and 2. Then you sleep and the dust of the earth shall awake, some to glory and some not to glory.

Keep your finger here in Matthew 17 and just flip back to Daniel right quick. Ezekiel, Daniel. Daniel chapter 12.

Some standing here will not taste death. Daniel 12. At that time, and this is at the end of the 70th week.

At that time, Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people. There shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time, your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.

All saved Israelites will be delivered. Delivered from what? Some will be delivered from the time of Jacob's trouble, from the oppression and the opening of the seals and the plagues and the antichrist and the beast and the false prophet and persecution and affliction and so on. Others are going to be delivered from Sheol, delivered from death, brought back, resuscitated.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life. These are those who pass under the rod and are granted entrance and residence in the kingdom proper.

Those allocations we saw in Ezekiel to the 12 tribes, the tribal allocations are different. Remember when we did the book of Ezekiel, if you can remember that far back, the borders of the tribal allocations are defined by sort of lines of latitude. It's like a layer cake.

They are stripes from east to west. And that's not the way it was divided under the conquest with Joshua. It was patchwork.

But it's going to be stripes. And in the center is going to be where the Levites dwell in and around Jerusalem and so on. Some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Some to everlasting life, some to everlasting shame and contempt. And contempt, this light esteem is loss of residence, loss of possession, loss of reward in the millennial kingdom. Some to the abundant life.

Life is put for all of the, you know, you can be alive and be just utterly miserable. There are people who take their lives because they are so miserable. Life stands for the abundant life.

Everlasting life, eternal life is life in its fullness, life with its fulfilled potential. These others have been raised. They sleep in the dust of the earth and they awake, but they awake to lasting shame and contempt.

It lasts to an indefinite future, right? Three on the top of the mountain, nine at the bottom. Three see the coming of the glory of the son of man in his kingdom. This is his kingdom, power and glory confirmed by the presence of Moses and Elijah.

It's the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the fulfillment of Old Testament anticipation and shadows and ritual symbolism. All of these things are fulfilled. Some

shame and contempt.

What's happening down at the base of the mountain? Shame should be able to cast out the demon in the little boy and cannot contempt. We're going to see that when we go to the parallel in Mark this morning. So this is an anticipation and it is rich with meaning when we understand the transfiguration to be the fulfillment of Matthew 16, 28.

So I just point that out as we leave and move forward now that there are other understandings of Jesus prediction there. But given three repetitions in Mark and Matthew and Luke, and I give them in that order because I do believe in the priority of Mark. I think Mark wrote down Peter's preaching first.

I think the gospel of Matthew came a bit later. And I think Luke wrote in the days of the apostle Paul almost simultaneous with Matthew. I think they drew on the same sources and may have even compared notes at some point.

Luke, we know from the introduction of both his gospel and elsewhere that he interviewed people. You look at the content of the gospel of Luke and he's got details that came from talking to Mary, the mother of the Lord, and talking to the various disciples. And his is a wonderful job of research and reporting.

So where are we now? Back in Matthew chapter 17, coming down from the mountain when they had come to the multitude, a man came to him, kneeling down to him and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son for he is moonstruck, cross out epileptic. This is not epilepsy and you just grieve for people who suffer from it. Epilepsy is not demon possession.

Demon possession is not epilepsy. What we know from this is that demons in possessing people, and this has happened down through history in places where the gospel is sparse or non-existent, there are not people there asking and seeking and knocking. The response to the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit has been entirely negative.

Up to that point, their demons have continued to possess people long after the time of Christ. And they can produce similar symptoms. And what that tells me is that the causes of many of our diseases that are rooted in the physical plant, the nervous system, many of the other symptoms, whether circulatory or lymphatic or nervous or digestive, demons inhabiting a human body can get control of these and start twisting them to the person's destruction.

And it resembles naturally occurring maladies, but it is caused in this case in particular by a demon. I do not believe believers can be so afflicted. So don't think if you've got some kind of physical issue that it's demon initiated.

There is only room for one presence in our lives. And when we are saved, it is the Holy Spirit, not demons. You can't have a house divided, right? And one of the securities for

believers is unless you stray very, very far and consciously run from the light into darkness, can believers be demon oppressed? Can they be demon influenced? Yes, they can.

It is a result of their decisions. It's not this nature. This child, I doubt he's responsible enough to drive himself into the darkness.

Why is he afflicted with demon possession? The same reason the man that was born blind. Jesus said it wasn't any sin. It wasn't any wrongdoing on the part of him or his parents.

He's blind for the glory of God. And it is in his deliverance. He can't be delivered if he doesn't have a problem.

His problem is put for the problem of all Israel. And in coming to Jesus with positive response, that problem is eliminated. Same thing here.

Uh, I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him. The verb there in verse 16 is *dunamis*. You'll remember from other studies, Ephesians in particular, uh, Ephesians chapter one, all five Greek words for power or ability are used in Ephesians one.

And, uh, this one is *dunamis* from which we get dynamite. And just like dynamite, uh, *dunamis* emphasizes ability in terms of its resident potential. You go about and you have the ability to do a thing, whether you do it or not.

Depends on other factors, but you can do it. If you need to, if dynamite needs to explode, somebody can ensure that it gets set off, but it's got the power to blast whether you set it off or not. It's, it's inherent resident power, its potential ability.

And so when it's used here, the man says, your disciples did not have the ability to cast it out. Now, this is both true and not true at the same time. Does any human being have the ability to tell demons where to go? We don't.

So in the energy of the flesh and our natural abilities, we don't. Um, this has been demonstrated with almost comic effect over in the book of Acts when you think about the sons of Sceva, but we do not have that ability. However, he's wrong in the sense that Jesus has already commissioned his disciples and given them the ability.

He has given them the ability. So if they do, in fact, have the *dunamis* to cast out demons, and we saw this in the descending out of the 12, a couple of chapters back, you remember that go don't take an extra staff and, and so on, uh, cast out demons, heal the sick and so on. They're there to spread the good news.

So they have the ability and yet they don't. Both things are true. They have it, but they

don't have it.

What's the problem from our previous studies in this passage? When they say, why could we not cast it out? What does Jesus say? Because of your oligo pistia oligos, the easy way to remember oligos is oligarchy. Oligarchy is rule of the many by the few oligos means little, very small. And pistia, of course, is from pistis, which is faith because of your little faith or a your faith lessness.

It's altogether lacking because of your unbelief. We saw that in verse 19. So what does this tell us? What is a good point of application for us in this observation? The man on the outside looks at these who are at the base of the mountain representing those in the future kingdom of the sun, the millennial kingdom, those Israelites who have the potential to serve the potential to overcome the potential to reflect the glory of God and the power of God.

But it fails not because they don't have it, but because their faith does not activate it. The power of God, the dunamis to, in this case, cast this demon out is only active and effective by faith. Without faith, Hebrews 11, 6, what do we know? What happens when you don't have faith? It is impossible to please God.

Impossible without faith, even if you are given ability. This has all kinds of ramifications, not the least of which is when you encounter people of the reformed persuasion and they say, well, you don't have the ability to choose God unless he comes with pervenient grace and gives you the ability. Here is an example of men who have been given an ability, but the ability fails because of no faith.

You have the ability to choose God. You have the ability to come to God for salvation through Christ, but because you choose not to believe that potential is unfulfilled. This is, in my view, the biblical understanding of choice.

Everyone has the dunamis, but not everyone has the pistis, the pistia, the faith. Without faith, it's impossible to please him. Hebrews 11, 6, he who comes to God must believe, right? Romans 1, they are condemned because they suppress the truth in unrighteousness instead of responding to the truth in faith.

What may be known of God is manifest. We've been over this many times, but here in this context, it's particularly pertinent when we turn over to the Gospel of Mark. As we're fixing to go to our break here, I want you to turn real quickly to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 9. Mark 9. You remember that we had to get rid of verse 21 in Matthew 17.

This kind comes out only by prayer and fasting. Mark it out. It's not in the text.

That idea comes from Mark chapter 9. In Mark chapter 9, verse 14, when Jesus came to the disciples, he saw a great multitude around them and scribes disputing with them. Immediately when they saw him, all the people were greatly amazed and running,

greeted him. And he asked the scribes, why are you discussing with my disciples? Pay close attention here.

We haven't looked at the Gospel of Mark in quite some time. Look again at verse 14, right above this is the transfiguration. When he came to the other disciples, the nine at the foot of the mountain, he saw a great multitude around them.

There is a crowd and the crowd is listening to the scribes and the nine disciples disputing. There's a loud conversation here and the multitude is looking on. Immediately when they saw Jesus, all the people were greatly amazed and running, greeted him.

There he is. There he is. All we saw was his disciples.

We knew he must be somewhere. There he is. But they've been listening to this dispute.

So Jesus asks the scribes, you could do a whole wonderful study. On the questions of Jesus, this is one of them. What are you discussing with the nine disciples? So one of the crowd answered and said, teacher, I brought you my son who has a mute spirit.

Whenever it seizes him, it throws him down. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. So I spoke to your disciples that they should cast it out, but they could not.

When you look at this in Mark, the word is skew. Oh, is another one of the Greek words for power and ability is skew. Oh, and is skew Ross has the idea of strength.

The, the muscle, the capacity. This is in terms of this, this one is stronger than that one. Um, I was at a swap meet and got a great deal on a Weller soldering iron, uh, a couple of weeks ago, maybe it was last week.

Time flies, but I've had Weller soldering irons. I've got two of them already. I've got one I've had for decades.

I've got one I bought brand new, but it's, it's a hundred watt soldering iron and it's adequate for almost all normal electrical soldering. But recently I was trying to do something else and melt solder that was applied at a factory. And it's a much harder solder that melts at a much hotter temperature.

And I had real trouble even with my Weller on maximum. I couldn't get it to melt just barely. I finally had to go to a butane powered soldering iron to get the stuff to melt.

So at the swap meet, here's a Weller that's 300 Watts. This is, this is a lot of heat. It's it's bigger.

It's beefier. It's got a bigger tip and it's 300 Watts. I thought, this is great.

This is Escuo. Not only does it have potential because it's built to take and use 300 Watts instead of 100, but when you are using it, it is hotter. It is more effective.

It's got more strength and Escuo looks at the point of application. How strong is this power that you're using? Not whether or not it's got the resident capacity. So the wattage that it's built for, that's Dunamis.

That's Dunameo, but the application of it, the actual, this can get hotter than this. This is more effective than that. This is strength, muscle.

And that's what he says here. They didn't have the muscle. The demon was too strong for them.

Comparing strength, demons stronger than disciples. Different idea. And of course, all of these things are true.

The man said both things. He said everything that's in Matthew and he said everything that's in Mark. We have summaries and distillations of longer conversations, but notice Jesus asks the scribes, what are you arguing about with my disciples? And this man speaks up.

We don't know what else might've been said, but this is what's recorded by Mark. So Jesus says exactly what we have in Mark. Oh, faithless generation.

How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me. And the word bring is plural. It is you all bring him.

And you get the idea that Jesus has turned to his nine disciples and said, you all bring him. He doesn't tell the father single bring him. He says to the disciples, you all bring him to me.

They brought him. And when the boy sees Jesus immediately, the spirit convulsed him, fell on the ground and wallowed foaming at the mouth. This is a lot more detailed than Matthew gives us in summary.

So he asked his father, how long has this been happening to him? And he said, from childhood. And when you study this in Mark, you find out that this boy, as with the woman with the issue of blood, as with Jairus's daughter is a picture of Israel. Israel has had a problem from the inception of the nation with not being able to overcome the influence from the outside, the influence of evil from the outside, from childhood.

And Israel as a nation, Israel as a people has had bad effects. Often he has thrown him into the fire and into the water to destroy him. And you get the idea that that it's a review of the history of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament after the monarchy begins in particular from the time of Egypt forward.

Really, you've got various outside entities trying to destroy Israel. And the reason they are vulnerable to destruction is because they don't have the presence and power of God in their midst. Instead, there is another presence and another power at work in their midst.

So then he says, if you can do anything, if you, Dunamis, if you can, if you can potentially do anything, have compassion on us and help us. And us here is the family, the father, the son, by extension, all of those that have been suffering along with this poor child. Help us, help me, help him.

Jesus said to him, and in your New King James, you need to scratch out, believe if you haven't done so already in the Mark study, believe is not there. It's if you can, question mark, look at the preceding verse. If you can have compassion and help us, it's actually reversed.

The order is reversed. I'll talk about this a little bit more after the break. But if you can, Jesus says, Jesus is quoting him.

If you can, he says, all things can, if you believe in the presence of pistis, in the presence of pistia, in the presence of faith. If you can help us have compassion, Jesus says, if you can, it's not so much compassion as faith. Faith is what activates the, if you can.

The disciples at the foot of the mountain cannot. Jesus can. The can happens with faith.

God honors faith with his power, with his intervention and is able to have compassion on those who fear him. Compassion on those who direct their faith toward him. Now, this is really important for that reason alone.

And we're going to pause here and take our break. But when we come back, we're going to see that there is an expression of this faith that is critical. It is the outworking and it is another failure on the part of the disciples at the foot of the mountain.

It is another one of the reasons why they fail, why they are going to represent those who at the resurrection of Old Testament saints are going to rise to enduring shame and content. It's a serious thing to fail in this area. We want to know what it is because as goes the nation of Israel and the people of Israel in the Old Testament.

This is reflective for pertinence and application for the individual believer now. And that's us. That is we.

We have met the enemy and it is us. So we want to learn from this example and benefit from it. So we'll pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see comparing Matthew and Mark exactly what this tableau at the top of the mountain and the tableau at the base of the mountain teaches

us.