

Matthew 22-02-20b

Let's resume our study here in Matthew 23 and in Luke chapter 11. We had a very excellent question on the break. I had made mention of the slight differences that occur from time to time and you see them in the text notes in your New King James, such as at the bottom of the page here in Matthew 23, where text note one says the NU text omits the Christ.

Up in the previous context there, verse 10, do not be called teacher for one is your teacher, the Christ. And the text note that says verse 14 is not in the NU text and so on. In terms of the reliability of our New Testament text, we spent quite a bit of time a few years back going through some of the objections and criticisms from Bart Ehrman in two or three of his books.

Jesus interrupted and the crying foul on the New Testament text using all of his expertise and he is a very knowledgeable textual scholar. But the thing to remember about our text is, and you've got a good example right here in Matthew chapter 23. So it is my firm belief and that of most interpreters that verse 14 does not belong here.

And I've got a big pencil X through it in my Bible so that I don't accidentally blow through and read it. But if you look at that verse and you look at Mark chapter 12, where the identical words are found and from which this was imported, someone probably wrote in the margin of an early manuscript, the parallel out of Mark that is a woe and is it scripture? Did Jesus say it? Yes. It doesn't hurt to read it or to include it.

If all you had was a new King James on a desert island and you were reading along, it is inspired scripture. It is absolutely the words of the Lord Jesus. He just did not deliver them on this occasion.

So nearly all of the textual variations, even when they are marginal insertions are generally valid. There's no difference in the text that introduces a doctrinal problem or a, uh, an error in terms of truth. It is typically just displaced or misplaced.

Um, and, and often it is a cross reference that has been brought in. So in verse 10, do not be called teachers for one is your teacher capital. Oh, well, who is that teacher? It is the Christ.

That's that's, you can hardly say it's someone else. The Jesus hasn't said, I'm going to send you another comforter who will lead you into all truth. At this point, when Jesus speaks, the teacher you have is in fact, Jesus, the Christ.

Uh, so it doesn't introduce an error. It is simply something that Jesus did not say on this occasion. And the, the critical text that there's two terms for these, the M text that you see referred to in the notes.

And I think there's a, there's probably in the front of the Bible somewhere. There's a, uh, explanation of what these are, but in you is Nestle Allen UBS. And what scholars have done is compare all of the manuscripts.

There are thousands of partial witnesses to the text. And then there are some that are more or less complete, uh, codex Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and some of the others. And what new Testament scholars have done is carefully collate and compare all of these, uh, these witnesses to the text and ascertain if there is a difference, what is the most likely explanation for how this difference arose? Uh, and in some cases there is homo teleton where someone's I skipped from a word as they were looking back and forth from their original to the copy they were making.

They glance over and look at their own work. When they glance back, they see the same word, but it's a verse later or two verses later, and they skip the intervening material in their copy. Later on, someone might come and correct that copy by writing something in the margin, but up above on the page, there's something else written in the margin that was a note that somebody made.

My Bible is just full of notes. And the next copyist who copied the copy incorporated both the correction and the marginal note that was not a correction, but was a reminder or something to a scribe who used it for his study. So by comparing and looking at the tree of manuscripts, these are 3rd century or 4th century.

These are 5th and 6th century. These are 10th or 11th century and looking at their date and seeing that, well, this, this copy has reproduced an error that we find in an earlier ancestor and looking at text families and by copious, copious amounts of study, their estimate is this is likely to have been the original. The addition of the Christ is much more easily explained that someone would add the Christ into the text than that the original said you have one teacher, the Christ, and someone left it out or took it out.

That's much harder to explain. When you see Christ in a text, it's never leaving the text. My famous example, I've given you over and over again, over in Peter, where he says, he says, taste and see that the Lord is Christos, C-H-R-E-S-T-O-S, that the Lord is good, taste and see that the Lord is good.

Well, in an early copy, somebody glanced at that and thought it was Christos and put Christ in their copy. And ever after there are now many descendant manuscripts that say, taste and see that the Lord is Christ. Well, nobody's ever going to correct that back and say, oh, wait, that's, I will, but nobody else will.

And you'll find Bibles that say, taste and see that the Lord is Christ because they're following a majority text. So there is a healthy amount of, of analysis and scholarship done to try to ascertain what is the best text. But even if you are following the majority text and Zane Hodges made an excellent case that the majority text ought to be

followed.

And I've got a copy of the majority text, Greek text alongside my Nestle Allen UBS. And I will occasionally check them both. That there is no serious problem introduced by these variations.

The thing to remember is, and this goes to the recent hue and cry about bibliolatry, and are we worshiping the text? And do we have to have a pristine text? You don't need a pristine text. The text is good enough in the same way that your windshield does not have to be perfectly spotless for you to drive. Driving around Northeast Oklahoma, I get bug splats and bird deposits and things large and small on my windshield.

It does not interfere in any meaningful way with my ability to go everywhere I need to go, see everything I need to see. Because as I go down the road, what might be hidden by a large bug splat becomes visible as I move down the road. And my mind will subtract those imperfections and chips and whatnot.

The presence of my rear view mirror does not seriously obstruct. When we used to have inspection stickers and change your oil at the next mileage or date, the structure that surrounds your side windows and your windshield and the rest of it, we have a perfectly good awareness of what is around us despite minor obstructions and imperfections. You have to think of the text this way because even if our Greek texts were perfect, rendering into English produces a level of mist, a level of standard definition instead of high definition.

If you want the 4K UHD version of scripture, you have to begin with Hebrew and Aramaic in the Old Testament, and you have to begin with the Greek in the New Testament. But guess what? God didn't decide that we would all speak a common language all through human history. He confounded the languages at Babel and most people over the last 20 centuries have come to scripture in a translation.

And that translation is further either elucidated or clouded by expositors and explainers and teachers who are going to pick out what they feel is important, what they understand to be important, and try to emphasize that. So we have several layers between ourselves and the inspired truth from the very mind and lips of God by the time it gets to us. But here's the thing.

It is more than sufficient for our faith and practice. Minor inelegancies, minor imperfections, minor mistranslations. Is self-indulgence really the best word for the Greek original here? Is wickedness a one-for-one correspondence with the Greek? We know that because of the multiplicity of copies of New Testament texts, we used to say there's over 6,000.

But if you read Dan Wallace, go to his website. Dan is the past master of all things Greek

textual down in Dallas. And there's closer, I think it may be in excess of 10,000 separate witnesses now, partial or complete to the Greek text of the New Testament.

And he has collated them and recorded them and photographed them and visited to see them at firsthand and so on. Whether it is Old Testament or new, a perfect text isn't required in the same way that when someone is telling you a story, they may or may not use a contraction. They may or may not get the elements of the story in exact chronological sequence.

Eyewitnesses will tell the story from their perspective. The text that we have before us in English is more than sufficient to equip us for faith and practice. Why? Because our faith does not depend on the integrity of the text.

It depends on the power, presence, and witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. You can be reading along in Scripture, and if you hit a mistranslation or an inclusion that shouldn't be there, just like a cow knows the difference between good, green, nutritious hay and strawy, unhelpful inclusions, the witness of the Holy Spirit will cause us to just nose that aside. The Holy Spirit, Jesus said, will lead you into all truth.

We don't need a perfect text any more than we need a perfectly clear windshield. I've driven with windshields that were cracked. I drove with a windshield that got smashed because my daughter's airbag went off and broke the windshield, and I had to drive the car home with the airbag hanging out of the middle of the steering wheel.

You know how those windshields do. They got the plastic inside, but they wanted to not have sharp edges, so it turns into a crackle fest. I drove through that windshield all the way home.

Now, did I have to lean out the driver's window once in a while to make sure I could see? Yes, but it's doable. I think this is the mistake that is sometimes made, and I wanted to talk about this because it's a really excellent question. Obviously, I want to try to work with the best text that I can, and I think it is helpful, especially when you're looking at other ways the text communicates, which is thematically, which is structurally.

It's a beautiful thing that Jesus delivered seven woes on this occasion and not eight. If you count in Luke, he's going to give six, and there are reasons for this, thematic reasons, but our faith doesn't live and die based on whether or not we deduce the structure and whether we can glean additional benefit from it. The core of the truth is present, and you can have a translation of a translation.

Many of the third world country translations are translations from the English. They didn't go back to Greek or Hebrew, but it is good enough. Do you understand, do unto others as you would have others do unto you? Do you understand, love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, all your mind? Love your neighbor

as yourself.

Do you understand the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in substitutionary atonement? Do you understand the promise of eternal life? Do you understand that Christ died according to the scriptures and that he was buried and that he was raised again the third day according to the scriptures? The essentials are there, and what we need is not nearly so reliant on how pristine the text is as how active the Holy Spirit is, how sensitive and attuned we are in asking and seeking and knocking. If we've seen something in scripture that causes us to stumble, such as the longer ending of Mark, you go to Mark chapter 16 and you get to, you know, those who are doing right are going to be able to play with snakes and drink poison and it won't harm them. That needs correction.

That's dangerous. But if you are asking and seeking and knocking, and if this turns out to be something that starts to occur as a practice in your local church, they want to start playing with snakes and drinking poison or whatever, we go to God, we ask, we seek, we knock. God will get the truth to us, either through looking at other scripture and deciding, you know, I just don't think that's right.

Somebody's going to make a casual remark. You're going to pick up a book that says, well, you know, those last verses are not there in the original. That's a much later edition.

And it's been demonstrably provably falsified as not scripture, not inspired, not pertinent. What surprised me is I had an evangelism class where my evangelism professor went to Mark 16 and was doing an entire class on go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And I went to him on the break.

I didn't bring it up in class. I went to him in the break and I said, are you seriously giving us this knowing as you do being yourself a graduate of this institution that that's not scripture? And he said, well, but the principle is true that we should, and I can go to Matthew. I said, well, if you're going to go to Matthew 28, let's go to Matthew 28.

But why incorporate what you know to be false scripture as support for what you're teaching that that just confuses you've confused half of this class because we, we've all taken Greek and we all know that the ending of Mark is fake. And I don't know if it had any effect, but I would hope that in subsequent classes, he would ditch that. But you know, when you start reading about drinking poison and such that at best, even if that were somehow not, uh, exposed as, as false that someone would decide, well, at best, that must've been something in the early miraculous days of the church where miracles were taking place and tongues were being spoken.

And perhaps like Paul being bit by the, by the Viper that comes out of the firewood, uh, in Acts and it doesn't kill him that this would have been a miraculous sign in the early days of miracles, but I can't expect to claim that today. But I say all that to say this, uh,

ideally we want the best text in general, the best text based on the efforts of very good scholars. They're not grinding axes.

They don't have an agenda. They're not pushing a system or a tradition or a particular theology, but strictly working with the text, um, the Nestle Allen UBS, uh, I agree with it 98, 99% of the time. Uh, because when you go and research, and I've done this countless times, um, go look at the manuscripts and look at how or why this might have changed.

The rationale makes sense. Generally speaking, the earlier reading is to be preferred. Generally speaking, the more difficult reading is to be preferred because scribes did not take a clear passage and mess it up to make it more difficult.

They would tend to take a difficult passage and say, well, if I just add a word here, this will be real clear. And when you find one that does have the added word and one that doesn't, you figure, you know, somebody was trying to be helpful here, but they've actually perhaps been unhelpful. So as I say, when you see NU down below, generally, that is going to be a good guide to the best, uh, translation, looking at the best Greek text.

So, uh, having said that, I want to quickly look now at, uh, oh, and by the way, the same is true. If you look at the Old Testament and we have looked, you remember first Samuel when we went through first Samuel, that is one of the most, uh, as they say, it is a vexed Hebrew manuscript. There are a lot of problems that first Samuel suffered.

I don't know if it got mildewed on the trip to Babylon and back or what, but there are many textual difficulties in first Samuel. And yet of the narrative books of the Bible, if I could only take one with me to a desert island, I would probably take the book of Samuel first and second Samuel. It is just so rich and replete and the text problems don't interfere with the wonderful truths in that narrative.

Starting with the early days after the judges and, and, uh, Eli and Hoffman and Phineas and Hannah and the young Samuel and moving on to the days of Saul and David and the transition, uh, when you get to second Samuel to the monarchy under David and all of the adventures that take place. Uh, what a rich text. It has got more textual problems than perhaps any other book in the Bible, but it doesn't interfere.

And if you remember, if you went with that first Samuel study, oh my goodness, just so much meat on the bone there. And if you don't know exactly how long it was that Saul reigned, uh, you know, at the beginning of a chapter, Saul reigned blank years and it's not filled in. It doesn't interfere in any serious way with the story and with the benefit.

And, uh, as was pointed out, uh, there was a lot of rocks thrown and a lot of critical, um, looking askance at the book of Daniel. They said, well, that had to have been written late

because look at how accurately it depicts Alexander and the Greek empire and the coming of the Romans and the rest of it. So there's no way that was prophecy that was written after the fact and, and, uh, dressed up with lipstick and a wig to look like prophecy, but it really wasn't.

And then they found the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Dead Sea Scrolls preceded the dates that they had assigned to Daniel. And there were copies of the book of Daniel in there. They found the great Isaiah scroll.

And before that, the, the earliest copy of Isaiah that we had in complete form was like the 11th century of the modern era. And this copy, the Isaiah scroll was a thousand years older and people that had said, well, there's no way the book of Isaiah can be reliable. Um, you know, that it's just been copied and copied and copied so many times they found a copy that is a thousand years older in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

That's the one that is wrapped around that circular shrine of the book, uh, there near Jerusalem. And you can see that entire scroll. It is photographically available online.

You can look at it and read each page. You can compare the Hebrew of the great Isaiah scroll, uh, to modern printed texts. And it is amazing the fidelity with which the scribes copied.

And in later centuries, the Masoretes copied that Isaiah scroll counting the letters, um, carefully noting without changing what they thought might be an error. Um, in the Masora, the Masoretic notes, uh, it is astonishing how faithfully those manuscripts were copied. So we can have great confidence that we've got what we need of the word of God reflected in our English translation of these ancient manuscripts and where there are inelegancies or slight differences.

Um, there is no doctrine, there's no fundamental, there is no foundational essential truth related to the work of Jesus Christ, to which all of the old Testament looks forward and to which all of the new Testament looks back both in his first coming and then looking forward to his second coming. There is no serious truth that is in question, uh, based on a textual difference. And when I say serious truth, I mean almost anything that is useful for faith and application.

Did Jesus say, uh, the Christ or did he not say the Christ here? Does that in any way change how I intend to live my life today? What informs me in terms of my goals and my priorities and my values, everything we need is here. And the Holy Spirit will lead us not into an accurate text, but into all truth. And if someone is misusing a text, if they're misinterpreting it, if they're going to the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction and overemphasizing sovereignty, we look at the balance of scripture.

Let your moderation, let your balance, let your taking of all things into account, uh, be

known unto all, uh, we don't pin our hope or our faith or our practice on any one scripture. We look at it all. And overall, in the same way that you could quibble about what did the law say about this particular practice, this particular ritual, this particular offense and what its punishment should be.

What did Jesus say? You can sum up the law, love the Lord, your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets is summed up. So how should our understandings be checked? Does it reinforce, does it align? Does it conform and comport with love for God? If someone says the God of the old Testament is a volcano God and he's, he's in love with blood and he demands worship and sacrifice and he's, he's arrogant and impetuous and misogynistic and patriarchal.

Does that comport with loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength with finding him to be the highest and the best expression of truth and love and mercy and grace? It does not comport. So is that understanding accurate? All I need to understand is what Jesus said the law and the prophets claim. God is the highest object of faith, worship, and love that there is.

And our image of God, our conscience that has been built into us by God tells us that misogyny is wicked. That needless violence that is not a part of righteous judgment from God is wrong. That I should not raise my hand against a neighbor.

I should not seek to harm or destroy or otherwise take vengeance into my own hands. The word of God is consistent on all of these points that women are not something to be trivialized or demeaned or oppressed. And anyone who thinks they find that in the word of God has looked at the minors, they're tithing spices, and they have missed the weightier matters of Scripture, the weightier matters of the law.

We're going back through the Song of the Shulamite to clean up our listing in the archives and provide references and titles and so on. And you want to talk about a book that elevates women, elevates women of faith as the story of Rahab, as the story of Esther, as the story of Ruth, as the story of Deborah, as the story of Sarah and Rebecca and Leah and Rachel and Mrs. Manoa and Hannah and so many wonderful women in the Old Testament. To miss that is to miss the weightier matters of the law.

Justice, mercy, these you ought to have done without leaving the others done. Justice and mercy and faithfulness, faithfulness. Well, it's an important point and I appreciate the question being asked because there are those who would distract us from the weightier matters of Scripture by majoring in the minors.

And some of these textual issues raised by the likes of Bart Ehrman and others who go even further to say we should dismiss whole books of the Bible, whole testaments of the Bible because they find things in them with which they don't agree is pharisaical. It is the

error made by the scribes who were themselves text experts and who distorted it and abused it and brought themselves under intense condemnation from the Lord Jesus himself. We're interested in the weightier matters.

And if there's a particular saying I don't understand, what do you mean that a woman who's suspected of infidelity in the dust of the floor and the tongue test and what about the proof of virginity? Is this anything I need to know today to love God and love one another? Have I got to figure out the meaning and as fun as it is and as helpful and informative as it is to decipher the code and the symbolism of the rituals that God gave Israel? They are rich. They are branches laden with fruit that is wonderful. But I don't have to eat every one of those grapes to be enriched.

I don't have to know the answer to every question and the solution to every puzzle to live my life to please God. God will give me what I need. And those who want to distract and deflect by saying, well, but you don't know the answer to this question and you can't solve this puzzle and you can't tell me what this means.

And I think it means this and I think it means that. Our first question should be, I am here for faith and practice. I am here to exhibit, manifest and reflect the love of God, the righteousness of God, the grace, peace and mercy that are intrinsic to the fruit of the spirit.

Does this particular issue you are raising, does this discussion you want to drag me into in any way contribute to the reflecting of the glory of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation? If it does, then let's talk. But if it doesn't, this is blind guides and I'm not going to let you make me twofold the child of hell that you are by majoring in the minor, tithing the spices and missing the weightier matters. We can agree to disagree about this, that or the other.

And as we've seen in the past, there is a big difference between the essentials and the non-essentials. And we need the wisdom to know the difference. The weightier matters are what count.

Well, I want us to show something right quick here as we move toward the conclusion of our study this morning. Back, you should have your fingers in Matthew 23 and in Luke 11. And Jesus says, again, in verse 42 of Luke 11, justice and the love of God that you have passed by.

These you ought to have done without leaving the details of the law undone. Yes. Observe the details of the law.

There are people out abroad today who are saying you need to check the whole law. It's not useful. It's not helpful.

This was just somebody's idea. They were groping their way toward God and they got it

wrong. Jesus himself, red ink in the gospels, both Matthew and Luke says these provisions, these exhortations, these instructions, these ritual requirements of the law.

Jesus said these you ought to have done you Israelites. There's nothing wrong with the law for Israel. These you ought to have done, but not at the expense of the weightier matters, justice and the love of God.

Notice justice is mentioned in both of them. This is treating others rightly. Good judgment affects others.

Good judgment affects what I decide to do or what I refrain from doing. Judgment, good judgment, just behavior. And this is generally an outward looking manifestation of character and integrity.

What I do reflects what is just, what is righteous, what is fair, what is sacrificial to self and beneficial toward others. This is just, this is proper. Justice mentioned in both contexts and the love of God paralleled by mercy and faithfulness.

If we love God, we will be notable. When people think of us, they will think of mercy and they will think of faithfulness. Faithfulness, let your yea be yea, your nay be nay.

You don't need to give a bunch of oaths. Faithful, I am faithful. He that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is much.

Faithfulness, faithfulness and mercy reflects love for God because we do what we do for others because we love God, not because the object is particularly lovable, noteworthy or even deserving. Notice the parallel. Love of God in Luke maps to faithfulness and mercy in Matthew.

Keep reading and rather give alms of such things as you have in verse 41 of Luke 11. This is what you have inside. He's been talking about the outside of the dish and the inside of the dish and what he says here and I don't have time to explicate the Greek, but he's talking about your alms, your charity, your generosity should be sourced in what is inside the dish.

What you have inside the dish is what is implicated here and if all you've got is corruption and greed, your charity is hypocrisy. Your alms should come from good things that are inside the dish. Verse 42, you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs.

Rue is different than the cumin and the dill that Jesus mentions and this tells us he did this on more than one occasion and the particular spice is not as important. We don't need to find an allegorical interpretation of mint or rue or cumin or dill or whatever. All manner of herbs passing by justice and the love of God, these you ought to have done.

Verse 43, woe to you Pharisees, you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings

in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. Notice scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites in your text notes is not in the Nessel Allen UBS text.

I think it has been imported from Matthew and what that does is sort of confuse the issue that this is a different occasion that Jesus' words are recorded from in Luke 11. You are like graves, verse 44, which are not seen and the men who walk over them are not aware of them. Verse 46, woe to you lawyers, you load men with burdens hard to bear.

You yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Remember that, that's from earlier on in Matthew 23. Woe to you, you build the tombs of the prophets and your fathers killed them.

In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers. Verse 48, they indeed killed them and you build their tombs. Therefore, the wisdom of God also said, I will send them prophets and apostles.

Some of them they will kill and persecute that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation. And that is our seventh woe. The comparison of these two occasions and these two times that Jesus delivers these truths is very instructive.

What is emphasized? The hypocrisy of honoring the messengers, building their tombs, memorializing them, and touting them saying, oh, that Jeremiah, what a great prophet. When Jeremiah was thrown into the cistern of celebrating the prophets who when in their day were sawn in two. And this is what's going to happen to Jesus, to the apostles, to the new Testament prophets that deliver truth.

They are going to suffer at the hands of those who reject the message, reject the message, shoot the messenger. And this comparison anticipates because a greater than Jonah is here, a greater communicator than any of the prophets, a more fulsome revelation of God in his grace and in his saving mercy and in his fulfillment of promise to Israel is standing in their midst and they're going to do to him what they did to previous messengers. The application for us, how should we then live? We have to look at ourselves because blindness is hard to cure.

Blindness is difficult to fix. We cannot unblind ourselves. It has to come from the outside.

You read John chapter nine, the formerly blind man talking to the authorities. You got to know this man's from God. Whoever could, could cure the blind.

Only God can cure blindness. You can be unaware of blindness. We can be blind to our blindness and we have to go to God and pray Psalm 51.

Show me my hidden faults. And when they are exposed, when they are revealed, it is time for confession. And there is a parallel, as I said, at the before God and asking for

cleansing and claiming God's forgiveness.

That has a horizontal parallel. It takes humility to admit that we were wrong. It is a hard thing to swallow, to go and say, I screwed that up and I'm sorry.

I have sinned against you. You have a legitimate ought against me. And I am here to tell you that that's, that's a fair charge.

I failed. I have wronged you and I acknowledge that. And by God's grace, I hope to do better.

Pray for me. It's one thing we can do for each other is we can help pull ourselves, each other out of the fire, hating the garment spotted by the flesh on some have compassion, making a distinction between those who will respond to compassion, save with fear, pulling them out of the flames. Well, much more to see here, but we're moving rapidly toward chapter 24 and 25.

We will be able to move through this fairly rapidly because we've seen it in the past, but the anticipation of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to Israel has many elements that are paralleled in our anticipation of his return for us at the rapture. Wonderful reminder that the time is short. And if we're going to get these things fixed and not fall under condemnation, such as the Pharisees did at the first coming of Jesus, we want to be ready when he comes for us.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the encouragement that we have from the Lord Jesus, that these things are fixable. If we have the humility and the recognition to claim your grace, your power, your forgiveness, and your cleansing, we pray that as we reflect on these truths, your Holy Spirit will lead us into truth and that we can not only be improved in ourselves, we can not only present ourselves a living sacrifice before you, but we can make a difference in the world around us.

We can reflect your glory and shine as lights to show the way to relationship to you through the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.