

Matthew 22-03-27a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 27th day of March, 2022. We're in Matthew chapter 24, and we have much to see, much to take in and benefit from in these, some of the final words of the Lord Jesus on this earth, and so pertinent both for his people Israel and his people, the church.

Let's take a moment to pause and focus our concentration, clear the decks and cultivate the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that our Bible study will be useful and beneficial. Shall we pray? Father, it is a great privilege to wake up and realize that you've given us another day, another opportunity to lay hold of righteousness by faith, to advance our understanding and our service as those who are in Christ and who represent him on this earth. We know that our lives are brief, the grass withers and the flower fades.

It is your word that abides forever, and as we look at it together this morning, we ask that your Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts in a meaningful and effective way to convict us, to illuminate us and give us the opportunity to redeem the time, to grow in grace, to abide in the vine and bear much fruit. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Matthew chapter 24, let's read this and refresh our minds.

Then after delivering the woes to the Pharisees and the great lament over Jerusalem, we begin in verse 37. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together as a bird gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing.

See, your house is left to you desolate, for I say to you, you shall see me no more till you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, which is a quotation from Psalm 118. Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple and his disciples came up to show him the buildings of the temple. Jesus said to them, do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not a stone shall be left here upon another that shall not be thrown down.

Then as he sat on the Mount of Olives, his disciples came to him privately saying, tell us when will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and at the end of the age. We have reached this point and a little bit further last time. I just want to quickly review and expand a couple of things.

Jesus addresses Jerusalem personified as a woman who has children and she and her children are not willing to be gathered, are not willing to be assembled. And Jesus begins by saying, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. The verb stone, I think I covered this before, but this is a combination of two words.

The word verb, balo, B-A-L-L-O, we get the word ball for baseball, football, basketball,

comes from the Greek balo and this means to throw. All of those balls are thrown at some point. So balo, but attached to this and preceding it is lithos, L-I-T-H-O-S.

You're most familiar with this maybe from lithography and this is where they used to take a stone and engrave it and then use it to print. And so a lithograph, graph, graphos, a picture, is a stone picture, lithograph, and stone printing, lithography. I actually saw actual stones that had been used for printing when I was taking my bookbinding classes down in Dallas.

It's really fascinating the process by which those are etched with acid, applying a picture with something like wax that prevents the acid from touching. And so where you don't have the wax, it gets etched and so on. Lithos, stone.

Now you think, why do I need to know that stoning is litho, balo, throw stones? It's because of what Jesus says. He says this on purpose. There is no wasted word in scripture.

So you circle that, you stone those who are sent to you. She stones those lithos, balos, thrown stones at those who are sent. Those who come delivering the message of God.

Your house is left to you desolate, verse 38. You will not see me until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. There is a verbal pictorial chiasm here.

And it begins with this, those who are sent being stoned. When you get to chapter 24, Jesus went out and departed from the temple. He just got through saying, you're not going to see me again.

I'm not going to come back to you again. And the symbolic value of Jesus walking out of the temple, he is never gonna teach in the temple again. He's never going to present himself or be heard or seen at the temple again.

His trials don't take place at the temple. They are in the precincts of the high priest and Sanhedrin and Herod and various places, but he will not be back at the temple. Two days earlier, he rode in on a donkey to the city of Jerusalem and went to the temple.

And then he looked around and went out. He has come back and this is Tuesday. And when he leaves, he will not be at the temple.

And as he stands on the Mount of Olives and looks at the city and looks at the temple through the Eastern gate, he says, you're not going to see me until you welcome me as one who comes in the name of the Lord and bless the one who comes in that manner. So as he goes out, his disciples came up to show him the buildings of the temple. Herod's temple, the refurbishment of the second temple that was started in the days of Haggai and Zechariah, that refurbishment had begun under Herod 50 years earlier.

For five decades, they had been working on this thing. And it's not finished when Jesus is there. They are going to work on this temple for another 36 years.

This temple will not be complete until AD 64. They're only just as they get it finished. And they say, we're finally done.

It's been almost 90 years at building. And before it reaches its centennial, Jesus' prophecy will be fulfilled. Remember the prophetic warning that God gave? We've seen it in the blessings and curses from Ebal and Gerizim.

We've seen it in Zechariah talking about Edom. Edom may build, but I will scatter. Well, everything the Jews and the Romans could collaborate together to build is going to get knocked down.

And Jesus' prophetic words here will be literally fulfilled 40 years hence from when He says them. Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, see the word *one* is in italics there? That's because it doesn't say *one*. Not a stone.

Lithos, lithos, lithos, epi, lithos. Those, they're tied together. Lithos, epi, lithos.

Not a stone upon a stone that will not be *balo* thrown down. You see the connection? God sends you His word, sends you His messengers, and you *balo* lithoi at them. You throw stones at them.

This temple that you're building in the place of genuine worship of God, genuine faith and obedience, you throw stones at the messengers. There will not be one stone upon a stone that will not be thrown down. Of all the different ways he could have talked about the destruction of the temple, he talks about its stones being thrown.

Interesting, no? And you think about the difference between what God is trying to tell us through His word in the hands of His messengers, what we build in its place, and the very rejection of God's messengers bringing God's word is gonna be pictured in the destruction of what gets built in its place. And you remember, as we looked at Haggai and Zechariah, that God says, yes, I want you to build my house, but what I really want is for this to be representative and be an external metaphorical expression of building a place where God is at home in your heart and in your life, and as a reflection of love for God that is a visible external, but it's not really about the external, it's about the internal. And in the same way, this temple represents the misguided efforts of man to please God, to honor God.

They acknowledge Him as God, but they're not thankful, and their imaginations are empty, and their foolish hearts are darkened. The only difference between this and Romans 1 is they do acknowledge Him as God. And this ties into what Jesus quotes in our context a bit later, when He says that many in verse five of chapter 24 will come saying, I myself am the Christ.

They're gonna acknowledge Him as Christ in the same way that Israel acknowledged God as their covenant creator, but everything after that is twisted. And many are gonna come and say that Jesus is the Christ, but they're gonna deceive and deceive many. Well, we've got an interesting, come to pass a little bit further down in the chapter related to this idea of, are there gonna be actual false Christ? Just take a quick glance down at 24, 23.

If anyone says to you, look, here is the Christ or there, do not believe it, for false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive. This is the reason that they put the single quotes up in verse five. They think that these two things match, but they don't.

And I'll explain why as we get a little further along. If you have false Christs and people are pointing to Him in verse 26, look, He's in the desert or look, He's in the inner rooms to not believe it, that there are people who say that the Christ is here, don't believe it. There's gonna be a lot of talk about the Christ as a precursor to the final activities and final events that Jesus is gonna describe, but we'll work our way down to that.

But I am convinced and I am, you know, at the end of a virtual single set of tracks here into the snow that Jesus is affirming that there will be those who affirm Him as the Christ, but then they are gonna say that He has come back. They are gonna say that He is present. They're not going to, there will be false Christs, but that's a separate and different thing.

We'll see it when we get there. But think about this little emphasis because what is at the middle? You have stoning the prophets, stoning those who are sent to her and the stones of the temple being thrown down. You throw stones, God's gonna throw your stones.

You throw stones at His messengers, He's gonna throw your artificial worship down to the ground. But right in the center of that is verse 39. You shall see me no more until you say, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, until they are looking for Jesus Himself as a people and as a nation.

That of course has not yet happened. And of course they are not going to see Him in the second coming. Jesus went out and departed from the temple.

His disciples came up to show Him the buildings and there's some scaffolding, there's some new construction there, and they're marveling at this ongoing construction effort. And He says, do you not see all these things? Why does He put the negative in there? Wouldn't you expect Him to say, do you see all these things? You see them now, they're gonna be gone. But He says, do you not see? This is a great question.

You see the building, but do you not really see it? Do you not see it for what it is? Do you

not see that this is a Roman financed construction to pacify and to keep you happy and subservient to the Roman government, to bend to their will, to collect their taxes? Do you not recognize that this is being built by your captors? How was the first temple built? How was the tabernacle built? Who financed it? Who financed the tabernacle? It's a little bit of a trick question. Who financed the tabernacle? Egypt. Egypt financed the tabernacle, remember? Remember? Sort of indirectly, but this was the fruit of God's victory over the Egyptian.

It was the spoils of conquest. God defeated Pharaoh, his armies, and the entire Egyptian nation to deliver his people. And the spoils of that victory were what were used to build the tabernacle, right? Now, what about the temple? Solomon's temple.

Where did that money come from? Who provided it? Where did Solomon, let's just trace it back. Solomon had the cash. He sends it to Hiram, King of Tyre, and all these other masons and artificers.

And he's got a lot of gold and silver in the treasury that he's gonna use to adorn this thing. Did Solomon do this by his great wisdom in financial investments and stocks and bonds and NFTs? Where did Solomon get it? Got it from his dad, right? Got it from David. Where did David get it? Did David invest and amass capital by interest and reinvesting and all that? Where did David get his wealth that he passes onto Solomon to build the temple? Well, spoils of victory granted by God over the enemies of Israel.

It is the spoils of victory that built the tabernacle. It is the spoils of victory that built the temple. What's building this temple? The spoils of Roman victories that have nothing to do with God.

How can the Romans finance this? Well, they've got burdensome taxes they're collecting from the Israelites because the Israelites are subject people. They're a defeated people. They are a judged people.

That's what's building this temple. So Jesus says, do you not see this temple for what it is? Do you not see this construction for what it is? Seeing they see and do not perceive. Hearing they hear and do not understand the heart of this people.

Even Jesus' disciples needs a lot of work. Point of application. As we look at the world around us, we need to appeal to our heavenly father to give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand.

Be not deceived. How many times does the scripture tell us? Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. You sow stones on top of the prophets. Every one of your stones is gonna be knocked to the ground.

Be not deceived. And that's what we have as we move forward now in verse four. Take heed that no one deceives you.

Take heed that no one deceives you. This is how I know that verse five is talking about those who affirm Jesus. How could you possibly fool one of these disciples that somebody else is Jesus? They know him.

They've been traveling with him for over three years. They can't be deceived about his identity. They could be deceived by someone who affirms that Jesus is the Christ and then goes on to say he was a vision, he was an apparition, he was a collective hallucination.

This is the Gnostic view. This is the idea that there's a separation between the physical and the spiritual and Jesus wasn't really here. You can do what you want with your body.

It doesn't matter. It's all in the mind. It's all in the heart.

There are people in the modern day that have been essentially Gnostic in the sense that they don't think faith and obedience is important in personal conduct. As long as my heart's right, as long as I claim first John 1.9, I can get drunk and carouse and abuse people and oppress my family and all the rest of it because I'm free in Christ. All things are lawful.

And diminishing the importance of physical obedience that comes from the heart. Obedience that doesn't come from the heart is hypocrisy, superficiality. That's what Jesus just got through condemning in chapter 23.

This is a different thing. Many will come, take heed that no one deceives you. And here, and it's important to distinguish this.

There are times when Jesus says you to his disciples and he is talking about you 12 or you 11 disciples and it is unique and exclusive to them. There are other times when Jesus talks to the disciples and they are representative of believers who will be in subsequent generations. Is he talking to subsequent Jewish believers, Israelite believers, Old Testament saints who will prevail up through the end of the Lord's earthly ministry and then again in the last seven years of the age of Israel? Or is he talking universally to believers? An example of all believers, regardless of age or regardless of covenant relationship to God, whether it's Old Testament covenant, New Testament covenant, Testament and covenant or that's sort of redundant.

Covenant and Testament are the same. But an example of where blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you for my name's sake. Blessed are the meek, blessed are the, we're talking about the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching on the hill.

This cannot be relegated simply to Israel. These principles of, if someone asks you to go

a mile, go within two, this heart attitude is not only for Israel. It's not only in the kingdom or only during the lifetime of the Lord.

These teachings as goes the Old Testament believer, as goes Old Testament Israel, so goes the individual in the New Testament. And we are to take those to heart. You remember how much time we spent in Matthew chapter five, chapter six and chapter seven, because every single one of those sayings of the Lord applies to you and it applies to me.

And no wonder the person says, well, that's kingdom, that's for Israel when they come back in the millennium. We have never taken that view, but it is somewhat prevalent and it is rightly condemned where it appears. So here, when Jesus says, take heed that no one deceives you, can we say, well, it's okay for me to be deceived.

He was only talking to the 11 disciples. I mean, that's kind of absurd, right? But it becomes important because these following signs also are for everyone. We don't have to say, well, I don't need to worry about that because the rapture is gonna happen.

This is a you in the universal sense, much as it is in the Sermon on the Mount. By the way, what we're launching into here, beginning in verse three, as he sat on the Mount of Olives, you may have heard this or seen it, or it might be a heading in your Bible. This is called the Olivet Discourse.

Why? He's sitting on the Mount of Olives and it's a discourse. It's a long teaching section. You're gonna have this and you're gonna have the Upper Room Discourse.

And that's pretty much gonna be the end of any long teaching sections from the Lord Jesus. So this is the penultimate. You have this one, you have what John records for us in 14, 15, 16, last half of chapter 13 and so on.

But this is one of the last great sets of teaching and woe unto the person who says that's for somebody else. It would be equally bad to take one of his first great teaching sections in Matthew 5 and following and miss the value of that. So we're entering into the Olivet Discourse as it has come to be known.

Take heed that no one deceives you for many will come in my name. Many will come in my name saying, ego, I myself, it's emphatic. If Jesus had wanted to say, they will come saying they are the Christ.

He would have put it in the third person plural. And that would have been very clear or saying that they are the Christ. But this is first person because they're going to affirm him and this is the basis of the deception.

Satan masquerading as an angel of light, if you accept the messenger as an angel of light then whatever he says, you're gonna give credence to. And it is important that if

someone comes in Jesus' name, you don't automatically say, well, whatever he says must be good because he affirms that Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Christ. So he's a good messenger.

No, not necessarily. You have to analyze the message. And that's true of any messenger, any teacher, any pastor, any ministry, any commentary.

Just because somebody has gotten things right in the past doesn't mean they're getting the current thing right. Have to examine these things and see how they fit with the rest of the word. They will deceive many.

Take heed that no one deceives you because many are going to be deceived. If you look around the world today, you can say there are many who are deceived and they believe Jesus is the Christ. Mormons will tell you Jesus is the Christ.

Jehovah's Witnesses will tell you Jesus is the Christ. And both of those are cults. And it's a rare thing that there is an understanding sufficient for there to be salvation in those groups.

It's not impossible. I think there may actually be some people who have saving faith in those groups, but they are wildly deceived and wildly misled because there has been a violation of the closing exhortation of the New Testament that says, do not add to the words of this book. And in both, you either, you write yourself a whole new Bible or you write yourself a whole new translation and deny the deity of Christ and so on.

Many are deceived. Within the realms of evangelical Christianity, many are deceived. Within the realms of progressive Christianity, many are deceived.

All of us may initially have understandings where we've been deceived. You can start out believing what you're told when Calvinists teach or when Catholics teach or other, somebody who puts Mary in the wrong spot, nobody's more horrified by that than Mary herself. Can misconstrue the attributes of God in all kinds of ways.

I will point out one current deception that in my view, in my opinion, is rampant and spreading. And it has to do with the Christocentric push. And you can get flayed alive for even bringing this subject up.

There are many subjects in our modern social discourse. If you even bring it up, if you point out that there's a man in the pool swimming, you can be hustled off the public platforms in short order. But we have to be careful about the exclusive focus on Jesus in Christianity.

And you think, well, but isn't it Christianity? Isn't it named after Christ? How could you possibly emphasize Jesus too much? Here's how. And you've heard me say this before, but within the realms of Christianity decades ago, there suddenly became a huge

emphasis on the Holy Spirit. And you had getting the ghost and a holy rollerism and a holy laughter and speaking in tongues and healing and manifestations of the spirit.

And is the Holy Spirit an equal and equally important, equally honored, equally divine, equally to be loved and appreciated as the other members of the Trinity? Of course, the Holy Spirit is God and should be honored and should be respected and should be properly understood in his function and in his role. The Lord Jesus, equally so and more so as our personal savior, as our Lord, as head of all things to the church. You can't say too many wonderful things about the Lord Jesus.

What you can do is stop there and fail to recognize his mission and his function. What is the mission and function of the Holy Spirit? He is our connection to God. He takes our prayers.

We do not know how to pray as we ought, Paul says, but the Holy Spirit takes them and refashions them, purges them, cleanses them, sanctifies them and brings them before who? God the Father. Lord, teach us to pray. When you pray, say what? Our Father.

Do we pray to the Holy Spirit? No. Do we pray to Jesus? No. Jesus never said, pray to me and I will grant your request.

He said, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask what you will and it shall be done for you. He never says not to pray to the Father and just to pray to him. Never, ever.

Look at the prayers of Paul. The epistles are replete with the prayers of Paul. And he says, I bow my knee to the Father.

I pray to the Father. Prayer is to the Father because the Father is at the top of the divine hierarchy. And we come to him in and through the Holy Spirit and we come to him in and through Jesus Christ.

Nothing wrong with appreciating the Holy Spirit as long as you don't stop there or as long as you don't misconstrue who he is and what he does. There is nothing wrong with celebrating the Lord Jesus Christ, far from it. But you can't stop there.

John 14, six, how many dozens of times have I quoted this? Jesus says, I am the way. I am a path. I am the truth and I am the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me because the goal is to come to the Father. The flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ, pictured as the veil into the Holy of Holies. And we enter into the holiest place by a new and living way.

We come before the throne of grace through that way. We don't stop at the doorway and say, this is such a wonderful doorway. I'm so appreciative that this veil was rent on my

behalf.

This is just the greatest. I mean, how would you like it if you invited people over for a visit and you had a wonderfully beautiful door and they just stopped there and were admiring the cut glass and the lending and the doorknob and the paint and the texture of the wood. And this is just such a great door.

I just love this door. I'm just gonna sit down here in the doorway because this door is just the best thing. The door itself would say, get in there, move.

I'm here for a purpose. Don't stop here. Many are gonna come and say that Jesus is the Christ and they're gonna deceive many because they're gonna stop people from entering.

They're gonna stop them right at the door and get them fascinated with the door in the same way that Pentecostals got people fascinated with the Holy Spirit and never got them through to the Father. Do not be deceived. Caution, caution, caution.

If people start promoting a Jesus hermeneutic and well, you don't have to go any further. If you've seen Jesus, you've seen the Father. Haven't you read John 1 18? And Jesus says several times, I and my Father are one.

If you look at me, Thomas, when you say show us the Father and we'll be happy, how long have you been with me? And you don't know the Father because Jesus is the door. He is the means. I am the door of the sheep.

They're gonna enter into a place. They don't stop in the doorway. You don't pile all the sheep in the doorway of the fold.

You've got to go in. There's a destination. Jesus himself didn't make his own plan for salvation.

If it had been up to him, his will was let the cup pass. It was the will of the Father. I almost wish that we were patreons instead of Christians just to make this point.

Christian is a made up word. It's not in the Bible. Jesus came to earth not to establish a kingdom and run humanity.

He came to reconcile us to the Father and to bring us to the Father and to share in the glory and the joy and the blessings of the Father. The deceit in my view here is so important to identify. Saying that Jesus is the Christ and making an issue out of his messiahship in terms of Israel, in terms of his anointed coming in the power of the Holy Spirit is good, but you can't stop there.

Deceit is so often a half truth, isn't it? Hath God not said? You can eat of every tree. Yes, that's true, but it's a half truth. He also said, except this one, do not be deceived.

You do not be deceived. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. Oh, if I got something to say about wars and rumors of wars when we come back from the break.

But as we pause here to take our break, it is so essential that we have a seeking heart. God the Father says, you will seek me and you will find me when you search for me with all your heart. There's three me's in there.

You noticed? You will seek me, you will find me when you search for me wholeheartedly. I would not undo a single word of appreciation, love, respect, joy in and for the Lord Jesus Christ. But he himself is the first to tell us you can't stop with him.

If we reflect on that, if we look for the heart of the Father, if we look to please the Father, we will qualify to dwell in his presence. And he will come and make his presence felt and known with us. Jesus doesn't say, if you have my words to keep them, I will come to you and make my home with you.

What does he say? I and my Father will come. Oh boy. That's something to think about.

To have the presence of the Father, not just the indwelling of the Spirit, not just the two or three gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of the Lord Jesus, but the presence of God, the Father. This is what Jesus himself craved. This is what he had to give up to come and save us when he emptied himself and took on the form of a servant and came.

That emptying was a separation from his Father. And greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life and his life was with the Father. He says so.

We've studied it in John extensively. So if Jesus prizes the presence and the love and the approval of the Father, how much should we recognize how important that is in our own lives? Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're gonna pick up here with wars and rumors of wars.

One of the most famous phrases in the Bible. We'll see it when we come back.