

Matthew 22-05-08a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the eighth day of May 2022. It's Mother's Day.

Happy Mother's Day again to all of you to whom the day is dedicated. And we're not doing a Mother's Day special. We have so much to look at in Matthew chapter 24 this morning.

It's very interesting. Our theme this morning is going to be the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Last week we looked at the section of Matthew 24 that talks about because lawlessness, because the lack of truth, the lack of communication of the full truth instead of the partial truth that was being taught by the Pharisees at the time, because of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold.

And we saw the connection between faith in the truth, laying hold of righteousness, sustaining our hope as the foundation and the key to fulfilling the two great commands that sum up and fulfill all of the law and the prophets and indeed all of God's plan and purpose for us, which is to love Him and to love one another. That was our emphasis last week. This morning, we're going to be moving a bit forward and defining some terms that up to this point may have not been sufficiently clear, and it has great traction and practical application for us.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our time together this morning, and we'll get started. Father, it is always such a humbling privilege to come before You, to represent ourselves before Your throne, to gather together to be instructed in Your plans and purposes, to have Your Word implanted in our heart and activated by Your Holy Spirit as we look at the perfect and inspiring example of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. We pray that as we listen to His words, this morning, and look at the witness and the testimony of Your Word about these truths, that the Holy Spirit will make them meaningful and pertinent to us, help us to see how we can put them into practice and more fully conform ourselves to the example that the Lord Jesus set when He was here with His earthly body so that we can represent Him as His body until the day that He returns to take us to Himself and present us before Your throne.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's read our passage, keeping in mind again that the section that begins in the answer to the disciples' three questions, when will these things be? What will be the sign of Your coming? What will be the sign of the end of the age? The verses that we have seen, verses 4 through 14, are not signs of the end of the age.

It's often been misconstrued. I'm sure I've been party to this sort of misemphasis in the past. Hearing of wars and rumors of wars, many affirming that Jesus is the Christ and yet deceiving many, nation rising against nation in verse 7, kingdom against kingdom,

famines and earthquakes in places, these are the beginning of sorrows, but the end is not yet.

There's a very fascinating relationship in many areas of biblical prophecy with the prophecy having an immediate near-term fulfillment, but it resonates and at a certain point, it lifts off the ground and begins to address things that are in the far distant future. We've seen this in Ezekiel, we've seen it in Daniel, we've seen it in Zechariah, we have seen it in many of the Old Testament prophets, major and minor. There were short-term fulfillments, none more famous than in Isaiah 9, with the sign of a virgin conceiving and bearing a son.

Before he had reached a certain age, the confederation in the north would be dispelled and come to naught, and yet it is cited in the New Testament as being fulfilled in the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ to Mary. And over and over again, we see this. It is no less true in this prophecy.

You have the near-term symptoms and fulfillments of no two stones left upon another with the Jerusalem temple, which is the prediction that sparked these questions. And Jesus is going to describe things that pertain directly to that near-term fulfillment, but there are conditions that are going to pertain throughout the time between then and the long-term fulfillment, which is His second coming and the establishment of His kingdom. So all of these things, wars, famines, earthquakes, being delivered up to tribulation, being killed, being hated by all nations, many offended, betraying one another, hating one another, true in the near-term, true in the days of the Romans, whose increasingly oppressive reign, especially when you get to the days of Nero, and then the upheavals and the instability in the Roman government.

If you've studied that period, you know that there were four different Roman emperors in a single year, culminating with Vespasian. And Vespasian sends Titus in and he destroys the city of Jerusalem and the temple. In that same timeframe, I think maybe about nine years later, talking about upheavals and earthquakes and so on, you have Vesuvius erupting and creating all kinds of mayhem and havoc in that entire region of the world.

And people could have easily imagined that if these are the signs of the end, then the end is near. They were certainly signs to the generation that Jesus spoke to when he said, this generation will not pass away until all these are fulfilled. He was speaking, I think, primarily to the generation, many of whom would still be alive to see 70 AD.

They might have been elderly by that time, but that generation, 40 years from the time that Jesus spoke, the initial fulfillment, the immediate near-term fulfillment would take place before that generation passed away. But in the same way that God said the Northern Confederation threatening Judah of Israel and Syria would fall apart and come to naught before the sign child would know to distinguish his right hand from his left and so on, that prophecy was not exhausted just because it was fulfilled in the near-term.

And in the same way, this prophecy is not even partially exhausted before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ occurs.

So this is sort of a context. And this, by the way, is a principle and an observation we make in Scripture that is going to serve us when we come to our primary passage this morning. Delivering up to tribulation and being killed, hated by all nations for my name's sake.

You'll remember that the Roman army was full of conscripts from all around the Roman empire. And there's a sense in which this being hated by all nations was the animosity and bitterness and brutality and destruction that was perpetrated by the Roman army on the nation of Israel, beginning with persecutions under Nero and culminating with the destruction of Jerusalem and the associated rebellions, whether you want to look at Masada or the Bar Kokhba rebellion or the things spoken of by Josephus, there were manifest fulfillments of what Jesus says here in that near-term day. But we saw last time, verse 10, many will be offended and will betray one another, will hate one another.

Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many because lawlessness will abound. The love of many will grow cold. False prophets are taken as real prophets, but they are pseudo-prophets.

I read a fascinating article, one of those things I happened on by accident. I was on an extended rabbit trail and I ended up reading an article that dealt with defining the difference between science and pseudo-science. And the more you think about this and the more you read about it, the more you realize that it is very difficult to draw what they call a bright line between what is actual science and what is pseudo-science.

And it kind of depends on who you talk to. Well, similarly, and I will address that more this coming Wednesday, I'm going to talk about that article and its analogy to what we're seeing in Malachi, because this indication of false prophets, the guy doesn't walk up and say, Hi there, I'm a false prophet. Let me deliver to you my pseudo-prophecy.

He's taken for true. There are people who are not presenting science who are taken as scientists or given the same respect and value as a scientist. There are people who teach the Word of God and are given the same value and respect for the material presented as those who are presenting the truth, but they are not.

Think about the Pharisees in Jesus' day. So the notion of what is false and what is true is very pertinent both to this study and our Malachi study, and we'll dive into that a bit deeper this coming Wednesday. But for now, just notice that because prophets will be credited or teachers will be credited as presenting truth, it isn't true, and it is going to deceive many.

And this lack of truth in the soul, this lack of God's actual law, His real Torah, is going to

cause the love of many to grow cold. So that's what we looked at last time. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

What kind of endurance is this? This is not abandoning faith, not deciding that God is not in control, not deciding that, well, my faith is not valid. We've seen over the years many, many examples of people who have bad experiences come into their life, whether it is the loss of loved ones, whether it is oppression by legalistic or misguided or immature believers, driving them out of the church and out of the fellowship and causing them to deconstruct and then try to reconstruct their faith. Enduring to the end is having our confidence in God and in the integrity of His word no matter what, come what may.

The anchor holds and grips the solid rock. Those who endure, who persevere, who are not daunted, who are not defeated, who are not distracted, who are not driven away and through deceit called away to a false gospel, to another gospel, they will be delivered. They will be vindicated.

We will be saved. We will be vindicated. We will be rewarded.

We will be recognized by God. More about that soon. And here's our verse for the morning.

Verse 14, this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations. Then the end will come. So one of the first signs, and this is an answer to the question, when will these things be in verse 3, what will be the sign of your coming? The first sign, unlike everything that has preceded, when you come to verse 14 you get the first sign of His coming.

The first sign is this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the entire world to all the nations. That was never true until our time in terms of the gospel being preached. But you could make that same claim and in fact it is made in a parallel passage without the qualifier of the kingdom.

Gospel will be preached and then the end will come. When we say gospel, how would you define gospel? What is the gospel? That is a question that about half a semester was devoted to in my seminary career because it is not always a matter of consensus as to what the essentials of the gospel are. Is the deity of Christ essential? Is the virgin birth essential? Is recognizing payment for sin, atoning work of Christ through His death, is that essential? Is His burial essential? Is His literal physical resurrection essential as a part of the gospel? Believing that He will return, believing that there is eternal life, which of those elements does scripture say is essential to the gospel? We have talked about this in the past.

We have seen it in Corinthians. Paul says, I deliver to you as a first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that He was buried and that He

rose the third day according to the scriptures. Those are essential pieces of the gospel according to the apostle Paul.

I feel confident relying on his testimony to that effect. This is slightly different however because Jesus says this gospel of the kingdom will be preached. What does that entail? What is the gospel of the kingdom? We know what good news is.

This is a productive message. It is a beneficial and positive message. It is good news.

But what is the gospel of the kingdom? You really have to kind of know what the kingdom is, right? Is this the gospel of the millennial kingdom? Is it the gospel of the kingdom of the Father? Is it the gospel of the overall kingdom of heaven? What exactly is the gospel of the kingdom? Because if you are watching for the first legitimate sign of the soon return, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory to collect His own, purge the earth, and establish His millennial kingdom, this is the first sign. So it would be helpful to know, is it the gospel of salvation? If it is the gospel of the kingdom, what kingdom is it? Well, this is what we are now going to turn our attention to. And oddly enough, I am going to be looking at an article and relying largely on it because I think it's very well organized and summarized many points that are already had in my notes.

But it never hurts to check sources that seem unlikely. This is largely summarized, and I am indebted to an article published in something called Foundations of Pentecostal Theology. I almost didn't read it, and I thought, you know, you can't judge a book by its cover just because it says Pentecostal Theology.

Good things happen at Pentecost, and Pentecostals have a lot of things right. They, in my view, have some things misaligned or maybe the emphasis isn't where it should be. But I am going to use this summary, and it's called The Church and the Kingdom of God.

And they did a really wonderful job. I couldn't find a single thing I disagreed with in this entire section of this very long presentation. This section, I think, has insights that are not to be found in more traditional or mainstream sources.

So, what is the gospel of the kingdom? This is our quest. To understand it, we need to first understand what does Scripture have to say about the gospel of the kingdom. Well, first of all, let's just survey the passages where it is mentioned.

We saw it first in Matthew 4, verse 24. Let's see what we can gain from the context of our own book study here by turning back to Matthew 4. After he has begun his ministry in Galilee, he hears that John has been put in prison, in verse 12, and he departs to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he dwelt in Capernaum by the sea.

You go down to verses 18 through 22, and you have Peter, Andrew, James, and John, whom he had already met, already traveled with, already gone to Cana of Galilee for the wedding feast, and so on. But they have returned to the northern area beyond the Sea of

Galilee from the Jordan, and he goes by and collects them to move into the active phase of his ministry, and that's recorded in those verses. Then in verse 23, and Jesus went about all Galilee.

Remember where Galilee is. This is not down in the Judea area. It's not in the Jerusalem or Jericho area.

It's up north where Nazareth and Capernaum are. Jesus went about with Peter, Andrew, James, and John through all Galilee teaching in their synagogues. What day of the week would he have been teaching? Saturday.

Preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. His fame went throughout all Syria. Remember Syria is up in that northern realm.

It was the border country in Old Testament times to the northern kingdom. Fame went through all Syria. They brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, paralytics, and he healed them.

Great multitudes followed him from Galilee and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. People traveled up north to Galilee because they heard of his mighty works. But he was preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

What would the gospel of the kingdom be? Let's reserve judgment on that. We just know that this is the opening message that Jesus presents at the beginning of his three plus years of ministry. He begins it in Galilee preaching this gospel.

In Matthew 9, verse 35, we find this same phrase again. In the earlier part of that chapter, we find Matthew the tax collector in verse 9, and he sits at table in a house, and many tax collectors and sinners come and sit down with him and the disciples. The Pharisees are insulted and incensed by this.

There is a ruler that comes in verse 18 and says, my daughter has just died. Come and lay your hands on her and she will live. And then you have that sandwich miracle with a woman with the flow of blood.

He is healed and then he goes and heals Jairus' daughter. He heals the blind men. And coming out from there, he heals a mute man.

And then in verse 35, he went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. He saw the multitudes had compassion. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. The third time in the gospel of Matthew that we find this gospel of the kingdom is our passage. The others that you find in Mark 1.14, after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

That's a parallel to our Matthew 4 passage. In Luke 4, after Jesus heals all who come to him, and they say, stay and remain. But he says in Luke 4.43, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.

So Jesus says it is one of the purposes for which he was sent to preach the gospel of the kingdom. Well, the word kingdom in Greek, we don't really get an idea of the content from those passages, do we? What was Jesus saying specifically? What we see are the sign actions, the miracles that authenticate and give authority to that message. And the miracles that accompany the gospel of the kingdom are healing.

They're not control over nature. They are not parting of seas. They are primarily healing.

And this is the bulk of Jesus' miraculous ministry is various kinds of healing. Heals all kinds of diseases. And this is a clue.

You would think if the gospel of the kingdom had to do with ruling authority in the human domain, Romans would come and try to arrest him and he would speak a word of authority and they would fall back like the arresting party does on the night of his arrest and trial before his crucifixion. He says, I am, and they fall down. And you say, wow, that's some kingly ruling authority right there.

So we have a clue in the kind of authority that Jesus exercises when he a gospel of the kingdom. So the phrases kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God are found more than 80 times in the New Testament. The kingdom of God, therefore, is obviously an important subject.

But what exactly is the kingdom of God? And isn't this a pertinent subject for today where you have people talking about the kingdom, being kingdom people, promoting the kingdom, serving in the kingdom, implementing the kingdom, bringing about the kingdom, being kingdom people, doing kingdom work, preaching a kingdom message. So it would be helpful if we know exactly what this kingdom is and what it isn't. So what is meant by the word kingdom? Is it an inner spiritual reality or is it an outwardly visible rule? Who are the subjects of the kingdom? A knee-jerk reaction might be, well, Christians.

But notice all through Matthew, Jesus is preaching the gospel of the kingdom exclusively to Jews. In fact, he says that he has not been sent anywhere else but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. So who are the subjects of this kingdom? Are the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven identical? What relationship does the church have to the

kingdom of God? Is the kingdom of God present or is it future? And these are the questions put at the beginning of this article on the church and the kingdom of God in this publication by the Pentecostals, which I think is really, really good.

And so first of all, we start with the meaning of the word kingdom. This is the Greek word *basileia*, B-A-S-I-L-E-I-A. If you find somebody named Basil, his name basically means king.

If you say King Basil, that's sort of a redundancy. *Basileia*, it has two principal meanings and this is key. I think if we had paid more attention at the beginning, it would have saved a lot of confusion, whether it's us or anybody else, in terms of what the kingdom is.

Basileia has two meanings. If you go to Vine or any of the William E. Vine dictionary New Testament words or you go to any of the lexicons, you find this. But Vine says *Basileia* is primarily an abstract noun, unlike our English word kingdom, which is a concrete noun.

It is an abstract noun denoting sovereignty, royal power, dominion. For example, Revelation 17, 18, the woman who you see seated on the beast with the seven heads and ten horns is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. Reigns over.

She has *basileia*. It's not even a verb there. She has dominion over the kings of the earth.

Basileia as dominion. Then by metonymy, it becomes a concrete noun. If you exercise authority and if you perpetrate that authority and dominion over something, well, the area where that happens can become a concrete noun and that is your kingdom.

Denoting the territory or people over whom a king rules. So you have this, for example, in Matthew 4, verse 8, where the devil takes Jesus up to an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And you would think, well, these are, you know, literal areas of dominion.

Jesus said in Mark 3, 24, a kingdom that is divided against itself cannot stand. In the Greek Old Testament, this is the Septuagint, *basileia* translate the Hebrew word *malkut*, which likewise has two meanings. That's M-A-L-K-U-T or M-A-L-C-H-U-T, depending on how you want to transliterate it.

It has the same two meanings. It is used for royal reign, such as Daniel 1, verse 1, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. And it is also used for the king's domain.

The word kingdom is used most frequently in the New Testament with the first meaning of reign or royal power. Dr. Ladd, this is, I have a book by Ladd called, that deals with the coming kingdom, is quoted as saying, the primary meaning of the New Testament word

for kingdom is reign rather than realm. A great deal of attention in recent years has been devoted by critical scholars to this subject and there is practically unanimous agreement that regal power or authority is more basic to the word *basileia* than realm or people.

What does this mean? Well, this is not in the article, but this is my suggestion. When we see the phrase kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven or gospel of the kingdom, since the prevailing meaning of the word kingdom, *basileia*, is reigning authority or dominion, and you could separate it this way, the abstract idea of the exercise of power is dominion, where the concrete reference to the area in which that dominion is exercised would be domain. So are we talking about the ruling power, the dominion, or are we talking about the domain, the actual environment that might be established under that rule? So, let's try this out.

I'm going to suggest that we change, as a matter of testing, the word kingdom to kingship. Kingship. Because we're referring, if we're talking about the the realm of God, God's rule, let's change the phrase from kingdom of God, which is fraught with misunderstanding, to kingship of God.

Now, when we saw these instances in Matthew where the term was used, Jesus went about healing all kinds of diseases and casting out demons and preaching the gospel of the kingship of God. This would resonate, would it not? Who was the first king of Israel? The first actual king. I'm not talking about necessarily human kings.

Who was the first king? Israel started out as a theocracy, right? We just saw this quoted in Malachi. God says, where is my respect? I am a great king. King of what? Well, he is king of the universe.

But he has delegated the rule of this earth to Satan. He is the God of this world. But God was the king.

And remember, God is somewhat affronted when the people say, give us a king. And God says, okay, you want a human king like the nations have, instead of a divine king, which is what you have had ever since Sinai, when you entered into covenant. So the kingship of God, the gospel of the kingship of God, and this difference between the dominion, the authority, the ruling presence and power of God is of central importance in understanding the message of Jesus.

Because when he does talk about inheriting the kingdom, that's going to be the domain. The meek will inherit the earth. They will inherit the land, the land of promise, the land that will become a domain that Jesus will physically rule over in the millennial kingdom.

He and the sons of David are going to rule a domain, right? But the good news of the kingdom as kingship has a completely different emphasis. In the one sense, when you talk about the good news of the kingship of God, what is the direction of our focus and

the direction of our gaze? We are looking at God himself. I am looking to him, his character, his promises, his power, his integrity, his control.

When I think about the domain, the kingdom in the sense of an environment, I'm looking laterally. What's the environment like? Is there justice? Am I getting what I want out of the environment in the horizontal realm, right? So this is going to be key. We're going to pause here and take our break, but I would leave you with this thought for the first session.

The gospel of the kingdom, the good news of the kingdom, if you flip over, and we'll see this again in a minute, but just turn over to the book of Acts, to the very last page, just before Romans chapter one, the apostle Paul, long after Jesus has departed, long after the Holy Spirit has descended at Pentecost, verse 30 of Acts 28, Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him, preaching what? Try out our new test phrase, preaching the kingship of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, teaching the kingship of God. He's in Rome. There are Gentiles coming.

Is he preaching the millennial kingdom or is he preaching the creator God as he did on Mars Hill, as he did time and time again throughout his letters, his epistles, and his career as documented by Luke in the book of Acts, part two of the gospel of Luke, preaching the kingship of God. He marks out that altar that's dedicated to the unknown God, and he says, this is the creator God. This is the ruling God.

This is the one and only God, preaching the kingship of God. It puts an entirely new perspective on what Jesus says when he says, this gospel of the kingship will be preached to all nations. Then the end will come.

Fascinating. Well, let's pause here and take our break. I'm looking forward to our special music this morning.

And when we return, we're going to flesh this out. We're going to look at other passages of that deal with the kingdom of God and see how this emphasis, this understanding is going to resonate throughout the scriptures that mentioned this concept.