

Matthew 22-05-22a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew this morning and chapter 24. We're going to conclude our look at some of the rather unique features and concepts that are in this chapter as we work our way toward chapter 25.

Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer to express our gratitude and our need for his grace and the presence of his Holy Spirit to enable and empower us for the opportunities that we have this morning. Shall we pray? Father, it is such a wonderful opportunity that we have to spend this time together to be built up and encouraged by our fellowship to enjoy the benefits that come from the spiritual gifts that you've placed in our midst and that function for our edification and our blessing. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together this morning that the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts, help us to not only understand it and see it in its context and in its application for your people, Israel, but also the reflection that it has in our own lives and the opportunities that we have to be given a perspective on the events that surround us, on the challenges that face us, and then the opportunities that are presented to us to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in his name. Amen. Our passage in Matthew 24, of course, as we've seen over the past many weeks, is the Lord Jesus' answer to the question, when will these things be? The destruction of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, the coming that Jesus has mentioned many times previously.

What will be the sign of that coming? What will be the sign of the end of the age? And so we have looked at his answer in verses four through 14, beginning with, take heed that no one deceives you, concluding with, this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, all the nations. And if you look at the progress in that regard just over the last 50 to 100 years, where there were Bibles and only a few hundred languages, now the scriptures have been translated into literally thousands of languages. The gospel of the kingdom is being preached throughout the world.

We slowed down a few weeks ago to take a look at what is the gospel of the kingdom. To understand that, we need to understand the kingdom itself. To understand what the good news of the kingdom is, it helps to know what the kingdom is.

And we noted that when you look at kingdom, there is a tendency to only emphasize the aspect of the millennial kingdom, the future coming kingdom, and to miss the equal, if not greater emphasis on what it means in terms of presence. The presence of the Lord is something that we can pay attention to now. We don't have to just say, well, these teachings about the millennial kingdom and the coming of the kingdom, that's all future, that's for Israel.

I've got my own problems, so I'm not too worried about that. We, looking at the kingdom in terms of kingship and the presence of the coming king in our lives now, he isn't primarily our king. He is the head of all things to the church.

It's a more intimate relationship. King is a notion of governance and ruling authority, but our head, our savior, he who directs all of the activities and focuses the energies of the body, is more immediate, more pertinent, more personal, and more direct. And the Lord pictured as the firstborn among many brethren, we being pictured as citizens of heaven and members of the royal family of God, as priests under our high priest.

There are so many features and factors that draw us as church age believers closer to the Lord Jesus than merely being subjects of the king. And the recent emphasis on kingdom and King Jesus and so on, in some ways, I think is unfortunate. I think people feel that that is an advance, that it is a new and better understanding.

But in some ways, to me, it's a falling away from understanding because it puts sort of a safe distance. I can focus on the kingdom and not pay too much attention to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ that is supposed to be evident in my life. I was working this past week on the Galatians study that we did.

It was the first study we did as a church, Grace and Truth Bible Church, back in 1995 and into early 1996. And I'm not necessarily recommending that you go listen to it. I think I was still learning how to teach and present without putting everyone to sleep.

And I had not yet mastered that skill. The information is good, but the presentation, I may have to redo Galatians. I'm sorry, but listening through it, it almost put me to sleep.

And I love that book. In any case, as I was looking at it, part of the message in Galatians is the difference between the energetic adherence to laws that defined God's kingdom of Israel. You know, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Why are you falling back into the ways of the law instead of growing in grace and learning that it's not a matter of meats and days and so on? It's a matter of peace and joy and love in the Holy Spirit.

Don't let someone seduce you or deceive you, as Jesus says here in verse four, with another gospel. A gospel, a piece of good news that says, you Gentiles, you just need to become Israelites and start that you'll be righteous and spiritual if you adhere to the law. That's another gospel.

And Paul says, don't listen to that kind of a gospel. You were running well. Who tripped you from grace? Well, in some ways, this return to the kingdom, although they're quick to eschew the law and the Old Testament in many ways, is a deception in the sense that it can, if you're not careful, distance Christians from Christ and distance the body from the head.

Because you're back to looking at it as an environment with governance instead of a

presence with power and fellowship and intimate relationship. Kingdom doesn't speak of the same kind of intimacy that the New Testament invites us to share with Jesus. So we've looked at that in detail.

When you see gospel of the kingship of Jesus, that's wonderful new information for us. So we looked at that. The second thing that we've looked at to clarify in this chapter was the coming of the Lord Jesus as Parousia.

Once again, in the same way that looking at kingdom takes nothing away from the king and the coming millennial kingdom and the importance of his rule with a rod of iron and distributing that rule via the sons of David and others who will rule and reign with him because they have proved faithful in a few things and they are made rulers over many things, taking nothing away from that, we don't want to miss the opportunity for Jesus' presence. In the same way, when we come to the second idea that we've examined, which is the Parousia, P-A-R-O-U-S-I-A, Parousia, Parousia is from Amy, it means to be, and para is alongside. And once again, we have this idea of presence.

And it's one thing to look at the coming of the Lord Jesus as an event. What will be the sign of your coming, the sign of your appearance? Okay, that's an event. How will we know that this event is about to take place? But we don't want to stop there, taking nothing away from the event and the eruption of the Lord Jesus Christ into human history for the second time with his personal presence.

It is his presence that we enjoy. It is his presence that we anticipate and we don't want to miss because Parousia, there are other words for coming. Erkamai means to come, and there's plenty of Erkamai words that talk about someone has come, someone is coming, someone came or will come.

But Parousia is appearing with an emphasis on appearing and remaining. So we have spent some time looking at that, not just as an event, but as a presence, and we looked up scriptures in that regard. In fact, there's a passage I didn't, I should have written the reference down that talks about the farmer who plants his seed and cultivates and he's waiting for the, he waits patiently for the appearance of the fruit of his labors.

Well, it's a wonderful thing when the sprouts come up and you see the green stems and the stalks and the leaves, and then pretty soon you see the flower and the fruit and it becomes time for harvest. But you don't just say, wow, that actually came up, it has appeared, that's great, and then walk away. It's the presence of the fruit.

It's the presence of the crop. It's the future that is established by that substantial and physical appearance and its ongoing presence that is the difference. So that's a summary of our Parousia study.

The third thing we want to look at that is somewhat unique here in this presentation, we

find it mentioned also in Mark, is in verse 15. Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, standing in the holy place, whoever reads, let him understand. This has been the subject of endless investigation, inquiry, debate, discussion, article writing, head scratching, giving up with a shrug of the shoulders and a hopeless, I just can't really figure this out.

Various interpretations and so on. This is the third thing we're going to look at because it is more than just something that happened in the past or something that will happen in the future. For us as church age believers who won't be here during the tribulation and who were not here in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, what is the meaning, purpose, definition, and application of this passage for you and me? I am intrigued and our attention is drawn to it by a very unique feature of this verse.

Do you see that in the middle of this red ink we have some black ink? Let the reader understand. Why on earth is that there? What do you think? First of all, this is a two part question. Why is it there? Is there some part of scripture that the reader shouldn't understand? But this particular one we should.

And why this? It is one of the less scrutable passages there are. Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess. Let the reader understand.

Touch not the unclean thing. Let the reader understand. Pray without ceasing.

Let the reader understand. Let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus. Couldn't you attach this to any applicable, beneficial, pertinent command of scripture, or observation of scripture, or encouragement in scripture? So why here? And it's not just here.

When you go to the parallel in Mark 13, the very same thing is there, which is a powerful clue. In Mark and in Matthew, the identical exhortation stands. So what is going on with this? Could you scratch this out and nobody would miss it? So why is it there? This is my question.

Well, let me begin by first of all, suggesting that as much as I love red letter editions, and I do love them, I think they goofed here. In my humble yet confident opinion, this should be in red, and I'll tell you why. The belief is that this is an aside by Matthew, that Matthew has inserted this into the words of the Lord.

The problem is it's inserted in exactly the same place with exactly the same words in Mark. So Matthew very often changes Mark's wording. He leaves out phrases.

He will change words. He will emphasize certain things. Even in this verse where it says, standing in the holy place, in other versions of this, when you look at Mark and Luke, it says, standing where it should not.

I think standing where it should not is in Mark. And in Luke, it doesn't even say

abomination and desolation. It says, when you see Jerusalem compassed about by armies, I believe that's Luke 21, 20.

When you see Jerusalem compassed by armies, surrounded by armies, then do these things, flee to the hills and so on. So Matthew is not slavishly following Mark. And if he thought Mark or Peter, by extension, would say, let the reader understand, why would he put it in here? I think the reason that both Mark and Matthew include this comment is it is a quote from the Lord Jesus.

So let the reader understand. Well, the reader of what? That's the next question. Because the assumption that Mark and Matthew, and I mean, there have been books written on this phrase, and this is their title.

There is a website called letthereaderunderstand.com. I mean, this is a bigger deal than you might expect. Is it let the reader of what I am currently writing understand? I don't think so. And here's why.

When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, Daniel the prophet, let the reader of Daniel the prophet understand. When I reference Daniel, you need to pay particular attention. There is more going on in Daniel than meets the eye.

And when I remind you that this abomination of desolation was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, the reader of Daniel needs to pay particular attention to get it right. That makes sense to me. This is how I understand it.

Let the reader of Daniel the prophet understand what he says about the abomination of desolation. So how do we do that? When someone in the New Testament references something in the Old Testament, what do we do? We've got to go back and get the text in its context. Isn't context a great word? Con means with, text means text.

What's with the text? Let's go back and look at what's with the text. So I've got a ribbon in Matthew 24 here. I'm going to go back to Daniel chapter 9. This is mentioned, the abomination of desolation is mentioned multiple times in Daniel.

But let's start in Daniel chapter 11. Daniel chapter 11. You have two of these references in the footnote of your New King James.

Daniel 11, 31. Let's begin in verse 29. We've been through Daniel.

There is a detailed description of what is going to happen after the Babylonians, after the Medes and Persians. You have the Greeks and there are interactions between the Persians and the Greeks and the division of the Greek empire under Alexander into four kingdoms. Then you have the king of the north and so on.

So we're in the middle of that. And your New King James has this preface with a subtitle,

the northern king's blasphemies. This is someone who is coming in from the north.

We have seen in our studies of what will take place in the end times that the armies under the beast are going to come in from the north. So these earlier adumbrations, these earlier events, prefigure, presage, anticipate, in some ways are an advance echo, not a following echo, but they precede and in many ways prefigure a larger and greater fulfillment of this prophecy. So without going back through all of Daniel, verse 29, at the appointed time, he shall return at the appointed time.

Right away, just diving into the middle of Daniel chapter 11 here. These events are under God's purview. God appoints the times.

God determines the seasons. God will restrain. God will allow.

Right? When you think about Jerusalem encompassed by armies, when you think about Jerusalem with the abomination of desolation set up and there is an instruction for people to flee, why is that? Why doesn't God step in and slaughter these guys before they come in and destroy his holy city? There is an appointed time for these disastrous incursions to take place in the territory of God's people. God has his reasons for allowing foreign invading armies to desecrate and destroy things that he has ordained for, with, by, and among his people. Right? There is a time to build up.

There is a time to tear down. There is a time to preserve, protect, and defend. And there is a time to flee a coming incursion that is a part of what God has appointed at that time.

We look around in our culture, our society, our, you know, endless flow of yammering heads, and it's discouraging. And we think, what has the country come to? What happened to the good old days of flag-waving patriotism, of Judeo-Christian values, of a strong moral fabric and fiber that characterized our country? It wasn't ubiquitous. It wasn't 100 percent, but it was the vast majority.

You didn't have to lock your doors. You didn't have to worry about your kids being taken. You didn't have the presence of drugs and addiction everywhere.

These problems existed, but they were minor. There was racism. It existed, but it was minor.

There was a large avenue of peace and prosperity for most people in most places. Now, everything seems to be coming unglued. Everything is, like Merle Haggard said in a great song.

If you haven't heard that song lately, I've suggested it to you in years past. Merle has a song called, I Wish a Buck Was Still Silver. And the chorus of that song is, are we rolling downhill like a snowball headed for hell? Whatever happened to the flag and the Liberty Bell and so on? It's a good song.

Mighty Merle. I was pumping gas the other day, and somebody pulled up in a pump adjacent, and Merle Haggard was coming out of the cab of his truck. And I thought, boy, those were the good old days.

You don't get music like that anymore. In any case, it's an appointed time. I am saying this, and I'm belaboring it because right now in our country, in our society, in our news media, in our politics, in our economy, in our international relationships, this is an appointed time.

God has allowed this. God is permitting it. God is orchestrating it.

God is regulating it. God is mediating it. Do not be distressed.

Do not be alarmed. This is woven into the fabric of God's plan for a reason and a purpose. This time, these conditions are part of God's appointed time.

There's no need to be unsettled. We have this over and over again. We're going to see it in our passage upcoming before this morning is over.

So at the appointed time, it shall not be like the former or the latter. This is a double entendre, in my opinion. It shall not be like the former, and it shall not be like the latter.

There is a former and there is a latter. So there's three of these, right? There's a former, there's this one, and there's a latter. Or there could be a former, a latter, and then this one, depending on how you parse it.

But there are three of these. Suddenly, there is a big incursion from the north. Because this time, ships from Cyprus will come and do damage.

He will return, shall we say, to God so that he will forsake the holy covenant. As we have seen in Malachi, the emphasis on the covenant is meaningful. It's mentioned twice in this verse.

Covenant is mentioned extensively in Malachi, as we have seen. And arms shall be mustered by him. They shall defile the sanctuary fortress.

They shall take away the daily. Notice sacrifices is in italics. And place there the abomination of desolation.

They shall take away the daily. This is the Hebrew word tamid, T-A-M-I-D. And it means perpetual.

If you click on this in Bible Hub or one of the other deals and pull up with Strong's and look at where this is used, it means perpetual, ongoing, continuous. And usually, the word offering is with it. It's not with it here.

And that's significant. It does imply, it does suggest that it's talking about sacrifice because you are looking at the sanctuary. And when they take away the continuous, this is the continuous functions in the sanctuary.

The continual functions that would take place at the temple. But the word offerings or sacrifices is not there. And there is a notion of discontinuity, something that has been taken for granted, something that has been regular and predictable and has survived all kinds of previous storms is going to be stopped.

The perpetual, the continual, it doesn't actually mean daily. There's no form of yom here. Tamid means ongoing, continuous, perpetual.

And place, notice there is in italics. There are some assumptions made here that are not really in the text. We're going to take away what has previously, ongoingly existed or been practiced, perhaps.

And they're going to impose the abomination of desolation. This is a combination of two interesting words in Hebrew. And without doing a word study, abomination is almost universally associated with idolatry.

It is something that is detestable, that is abhorrent. And these are lexical definitions, detestable, abhorrent, vis-a-vis worship. This is as far opposite of honoring and worshiping God as you can imagine.

So this abomination is just, it actually comes from a word that means to have an awful smell, a stench, just so off-putting that it makes your eyes water and makes you wince and cringe and want to get away. That's how bad this is. Something completely abhorrent to worship of God is going to be placed.

And it is an abhorrence, a detestation, a completely awful thing that causes desolation. The word for desolation means two things. It means desolate or desolation.

And it also means uninhabited. It means to be completely forsaken. And it comes to have an idea of attitude, of being greatly saddened or it is your response to that desolation.

And we'll take a look at this after our break. But what I want to focus on right now is we are reading Daniel. And the reader of Daniel is encouraged, I think, by the Lord Jesus himself in both Matthew and Mark to pay attention here.

So what should we glean? Jesus is speaking about this and he says, you need to understand. Well, if this was historically fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanes came in, attacked Jerusalem, broke into the temple and set up a pagan idol on the altar and in the holy place and he desecrated the temple. Jesus says Daniel's prophecy is not just history.

The reader of Daniel needs to understand that it is a multiple fulfillment prophecy, as

with so much of prophecy as we've seen. It has ripples and it has application to more than one circumstance and more than one event. So it's not going to be like the former or the latter, he says in verse 29.

So there are some specifics that are different each time. Antiochus Epiphanes, there were Jewish zealots that broke in and slew priests and spilled their blood in the temple precincts at the time of 70 AD, the destruction of Jerusalem. There were zealots came in and you had Antiochus, you have the destruction of Jerusalem under the legions of Titus, some decades hence from when Jesus is speaking.

But Jesus says, let the reader understand this prophecy has traction. It has pertinence. It is talking about events from multiple times.

Antiochus does fulfill this prophecy. The false Christs and false prophets that Josephus speaks of that were operating in the days shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD are a fulfillment of his words and are a fulfillment of some of the Old Testament prophecies. But they do not exhaust it.

They do not reach to its ultimate and most forceful application, which is yet future. So we are readers. We are supposed to understand it was in the Jewish past, days of Antiochus, it was in the Jewish past, days of the destruction in 70 AD.

It's going to be future in the days of the tribulation. And so why should we as readers understand? Let me offer you this thought. You look at parallel in 1211, from the time that the daily, notice once again, sacrifices in italics, from the time that the perpetual into something to do with worship, something that has been a given, something that has been a constant practice, something that has been taken for granted would always be there from the time that the perpetual is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up.

Notice the word there wasn't inserted into 1211. There's going to be a set period of time. Blessed is he who waits in both chapter 11, verse 31 and in chapter 12, verse 11, a defining form of worship, temple worship defined Israel from the days of the tabernacle when they were without it in captivity.

They pined when they got back to the land. God said, you need to set that back up. Where is my house? Where is my altar in Malachi? He says, where is my worship? Where are these sacrifices? These define you.

These are what make you and mark you as my unique chosen people. They're definitional. But this defining aspect of worship is taken away and something else is set up that is so abominably opposite, so desolatingly different that it's unique.

Can that happen in our Christian world? What is definitional for us as believers? The Galatians study and you find it echoed in Colossians, Christ in you, the hope of glory. I

labor until Christ be formed in you. If you have my words and keep them, I and my father will come to you and make our home with you.

The indwelling presence of Jesus Christ in individual believers and his presence where two or three are gathered in his name. This should be perpetual. We have seen the kingdom in terms of kingship and the personal authority of the Lord Jesus.

We've seen parousia in terms of the presence of the Lord Jesus that is available now. You don't have to wait for the millennium. Matthew 5-7, the teaching on the hill, the sermon on the mount pertains because it speaks of the presence and how we should act in the presence.

Let your moderation be known unto all. The Lord is near, the Lord is at hand, the Lord is in our midst. When that presence is taken away from the definition of Christianity and it is no longer about Christ and his presence, it is about concepts.

It is about philosophy. It is about social issues. It is about justice.

It is about ethics. It is about aphorisms. It is about some form of secularly acceptable morality.

And the presence of Jesus leaves. It is all the same as the glory of God departing the temple and something else is set up in its place. Something else is now an object of worship and it is established.

It is in place. It is done on purpose to eliminate and to set aside what has been perpetual up to that point. And we see this happening today.

There have been many attacks on Christianity over the centuries. There have been many aberrations. There have been many corruptions, many ways in which it has been distorted.

But replacing Christianity completely, replacing Christ completely with man by man's efforts achieving righteousness, a Christless world, a godless ethic, a naturalistic explanation, a scientific religion is new. We haven't had this level of secular intrusion and replacement since the Tower of Babel. And we need to watch for it ourselves now and speak the truth to one another in love about it.

It is dangerous and it is a harbinger of that which is appallingly abominable and that which will desolate and destroy. When that is present, desolation and destruction inevitably follow. And the individual believer who misses out on the presence of Jesus Christ and doesn't understand how that presence is enjoyed, doesn't appreciate it, doesn't cultivate it, doesn't value it, is going to suffer the same fate as those who fail to heed the warnings of the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 24, about which we will see much more when we come back from our break.

