

## **Matthew 22-06-05a**

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. I appreciate everyone joining us on this stormy morning. We're continuing our study in Matthew chapter 24 and we will pick up at that point in the 24th chapter after we ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study.

Shall we begin? Father, thank You for this day. Thank You for the rain that replenishes and refreshes the land and enables us to prosper. We thank You for the spiritual rain that descends upon us through the ministry of Your Spirit and the power of Your Word.

We pray that we will be able to absorb that divine provision this morning and from it bear fruit in keeping with righteousness to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we pray these things in His name. Amen.

The 24th chapter of Matthew is fascinating because it is a prophecy from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself giving us the future as it relates to the nation of Israel. But as with all things related to Israel, it has direct application for us as well. He is answering those three questions we saw at the beginning of the chapter.

Tell us when will these things be? What will be the sign of Your coming? What will be the sign of the end of the age? He opens again as we have reviewed many times with the reminder, let no one deceive you. Do not be deceived. And this is critically important to remember.

We're going to see this theme come up again this morning. Many will come in my name saying I am He and will deceive many. Take heed that no one deceives you.

If someone says this is the Christ, be suspicious. Watch out. It is easy to be fooled by someone thinking that they have been pointed to the Christ when it is a false Christ.

It is another gospel. We've seen the signs that will characterize the intervening period that are not signs of the end. These were the nations rising against nation in verse 7, kingdom against kingdom, famines, pestilences, earthquakes in various places.

These are the beginnings of sorrows. This new age is going to have sorrow at a new and accelerating pace throughout its duration. This is what we saw in verses 7 and 8. These are not signs of the end.

These are signs that you're in a different age from the age of Israel. Why has sorrow increased? Why is there an accelerating pace? Because the population of the earth is radically increasing. And just as in the early chapters of Genesis when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, wickedness multiplies with it.

It has always reminded me, you've heard me use this comparison many times, it's just

like fissionable nuclear material. It's one thing to have U-235 in the ground or permeating some ore someplace, but when you extract that and when you accrete it, when you collect it and you start to gain mass with uranium, you can reach critical mass where its pent-up energy is released in a very destructive fashion, unless it is somehow carefully controlled. This is where you get nuclear reactors.

It is controlled fission. But the aggregation of something that has potentially malignant energy is the concept. So people are multiplying.

There were scattered relatively small people groups in the ancient Near East and beyond. You think about China, you think about the other unknown at that time continents and populations. But after the time of Christ, with the connection of much of the European world and even the Asian world through Roman roads and through trade and exploration and the widening of the horizons, these nation against nation wars can only multiply.

You've got more nations, more borders, more issues, more jealousy, more power grabs. And so these characterize the new age coming after Jesus leaves, following the resurrection. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you.

You will be hated by all nations for my namesake. Many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. You look at the history of this time and our church age is not directly in view.

This is the early days of the tribulation that Jesus is specifically speaking of. But there is an anticipation. There is a blending.

Both things are true. You think about the persecutions that have taken place of the Jews. You think about the Inquisition.

You think about the awful massacres that have taken place many times in the name of Christ under the auspices and authority of the church, particularly the Catholic church. There have been vast quantities of blood spilled supposedly in the name of righteousness and in the name of God. Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

This is the third time we are told to watch out for deception. So easy to be deceived. How can we not be deceived? The common illustration, which I've mentioned earlier in our study some weeks back, is the best way to detect counterfeit money is to study the characteristics of genuine U.S. Treasury-issued currency, to know what the truth is, to have it completely familiar to us, resonant in our souls, resonant in our souls, permeating our thought life.

When we know the truth, the truth sets us free. One of the things we are free from is deception. There have been any number of conceits, stories, movies, whatever, where

someone takes on someone else's identity.

I first saw this as a child when I was watching Mission Impossible and Martin Landau or Peter Graves or one of these guys would put on a rubber mask and become somebody to enter into a problem and try to solve it. You've had more recent attempts at this. I think it was a John Travolta and somebody that face off.

Maybe it was old head on fire. Yeah, Nicolas Cage. He was the motorcycle guy with the flaming head.

Anyway, you have these face off. Somebody is going to impersonate or become someone else. Twin brother comes back, but you can never pull it off because anyone who knows the real individual well is going to instantly spot an imposter.

This is the secret to not being deceived is to be soaked in the truth. So familiar with it, so entrenched in it that anything false just rings false. It's off.

Sometimes you may not even know exactly why it just doesn't comport. It doesn't fit. This, by the way, is also an aid to Bible interpretation.

If someone comes to a passage and says it says a certain thing, interpret it a certain way. Our confidence comes from familiarity with the rest of scripture, and it just doesn't match. It's like a bad patch on a piece of plaid.

The lines and colors just don't add up. So do not be deceived. Many will be deceived.

False prophets will arise and deceive many and lawlessness will abound and the love of many will grow cold. We looked at the revelation where Jesus charges the church with having lost its first love. He who endures to the end shall be delivered.

This, of course, is not eternal salvation. This is deliverance from deception. This is maintaining fidelity and faithfulness and obedience to the truth, regardless of the consequences, regardless of the pressures.

There is deliverance. This is the motivation of hope. Why would we endure? Because of the same reason that Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame.

Why did he do that? What does scripture say? Who, for the joy that was set before him, the hope of that future joy, motivated the Lord Jesus to endure the cross. He could see to the other side that he would be the firstborn among many brethren, that his body would be forever his unique and personal gift from the Father, that we as believers, sanctified, cleansed, with the washing of water by the word, qualified and suited to walk with him in white, to rule with him, to reign with him, to serve the Father with him, to dwell in the new Jerusalem. He looked forward to those things and it enabled him to endure unspeakable abuse and suffering.

We can do the same. We are his presence on this earth in this age. He who endures to the end shall be saved.

And this good news of the kingdom, remember we spent a couple of weeks looking at what is the kingdom. That helps us understand what is the good news. And the kingdom is, in this context, primarily the kingship.

Kingship. The gospel of Jesus' presence, his authority, his identity, his name will be preached. Along with this comes the future literal millennial kingdom and his presence in the kingdom of the Father that will follow.

But the primary message in this age has been the availability of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone will hear my sound, open the door, I will come in and fellowship with him at the meal table.

The one who has my words and keeps them, my Father and I will come to him and make our home with him. The presence of Christ in us is the hope of glory according to the Apostle Paul. This gospel of the kingdom.

Again, you can see the intermingling here, the coexistence of truth with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ bodily to this earth at the second advent and his presence in the millennial kingdom is a wonderful promise to the Jews, to Old Testament Israel, to the nation of Israel to whom God made all of those promises. But it is represented fully in our experience of the presence of the Lord Jesus with us now. So gospel of the kingship of the Lord Jesus, his presence, his power, his ruling authority, fellowship with him, the availability of contact and communication is for us the gospel of the kingdom.

And all of those things plus his personal presence and his rule with the rod of iron along with the sons of David in the literal earthly millennial kingdom is also a part of that gospel. But the part that pertains to us is in the here and now. It's not just pie on the earth by and by.

Then the end will come. All of these things will pertain in the period from the ascension and Pentecost until the close of the tribulation and the return of the Lord Jesus. But when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, once again we're maintaining our view of both truths.

What is the literal abomination of desolation we saw historically? The first time this occurred was Antiochus Epiphanes or as the Jews like to call him Antiochus Epiphanes, sacrificing the priests, sacrificing pigs, smearing blood in the holy place, defiling it, corrupting it, and setting up an idol in the sanctuary precincts. This was the first iteration of the abomination of desolation. There is going to be a similar and even more egregious defiling of the worship of God by the beast who we call the Antichrist.

It's interesting that he's not actually called that in Revelation. But the beast, supported

by the false prophet, inspired by Satan, the unholy trinity, is going to set up a defiling image and demand worship of it by everyone. You will not be able to buy and sell.

When I say you, I'm talking about those who are in the tribulation period. We will be gone. But this worship will be a requirement.

We have seen early signs, early adumbrations, early anticipations of the ability of government to control worship. We saw the first and worst one yet last year when nobody went to church on Easter Sunday at the government's behest. That is unique and unheard of in the history of this country, in the history of Europe, in the history of mankind.

There's never been a day when worldwide they told all Christians to not assemble in worship and there was compliance. You want to talk about a wake-up call? Smell the coffee. If they can do it once and succeed, they're going to do it again.

I don't know how soon. I don't know how much longer we have to operate in freedom. But if they can cancel people for addressing certain topics online, they can pick other topics and cancel and take offline their ability to communicate.

You take away freedom of assembly. You take away freedom of speech. You take away freedom of self-defense.

You take away freedoms one by one. You claim it's an emergency. You do it in the name of some short-term crisis.

The problem is when that crisis passes, the freedom does not return. It is exactly like cinching up a ratchet strap. You get a little bit of slack, tighten it up.

Get a little bit more slack, tighten it up. It doesn't untighten unless you control the ratchet. Those who have gained control are very loathe to give it up.

They'll deceive themselves into thinking that this isn't a good cause. The sheeple don't know enough to govern themselves. We who are smart, we who are intellectual, we who have been to university and have several degrees, we who are experts, we who have a higher, grander moral sense, we who have the grand view from atop the Tower of Babel, we will tell the huddled masses below what's best for them because they just don't know.

This has been tried 28 times. How many different socialist governments have there been? I heard somebody quote the other day, I think there's been 28 formal implementations of socialist government. Every single one has ended in disaster, bloodshed, massacre, violence, and destruction.

None of them survived. None of them have accomplished the good they promised. They

have all gone down the great commode of history.

So when you see the abomination of desolation set up, now this is going to be an actual event, an actual image. I think personally, it could be a combination of the physical and the virtual. I think given the technology that we have now and with the metaverse coming and everybody living in an avatar world that all commerce will be online, we are nearly there now.

Your credit card is sort of a formality. It doesn't do what it used to do where you rake the carbon paper roller and the slip gets submitted to the company. Everything is digital.

Everything is online. The card has no value of its own. It grants them access to deduct money from you in some fashion.

But with commerce going almost completely digital, it will soon be a cashless society. They're having a harder and harder time keeping people from counterfeiting no matter what they do. Paper money is just too easy to duplicate given the technology.

For every better lock, there's a better key. For every level of security, there is a way to defeat it. Even blockchain and cryptocurrency and digital currencies, bitcoin and the rest of it, they said, this is impossible to steal.

It's impossible to counterfeit. Do some research. It's been counterfeited.

There's been billions of dollars of value stolen by people manipulating and finding ways around this. But it will all be digital, and this is coming during the final seven years of the age of Israel that will follow our departure, our apostasia. However, as with everything else in this prophecy, it has pertinence and it has echoes.

It has traction in our time. And when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, we looked at Daniel a couple of weeks ago, right? And what did we see about that abomination? It is an alternative object of worship and respect, honor. Even if you don't actually believe that it's got mystical divine properties, you are going to render obeisance.

You are going to comply. You're going to give overt recognition to this because it's more than your life is worth to resist. It is literally more than your life is worth for the vast, vast majority of people to resist it.

It costs too much to reject it. Do we see that happening today in the Christian world? If you want to believe in the biblical God and the biblical Christ and biblical values that condemn lifestyles, that condemn ways of thinking, that support. There are those who support my independence.

I am sovereign. I am captain of my ship, master of my fate. It doesn't matter if I was born

a certain gender, I can change it.

I will get others to help me change it and I will make everybody else recognize that it has been changed. If I feel like something inside, I'm not just going to enjoy that feeling myself. I'm going to force everyone around me to comply, to acknowledge, and to bow down to this new identity that I have made for myself.

It's here, it's now, and it's new. You look back over the centuries, our country's relatively young, but you look back, you think of all of the decadence in France a few hundred years ago, people walking around in powdered wigs and prancing and simpering and men looking like women and putting on fake warts and powdering everything they've got and prancing around being effete and shallow and completely disconnected from reality. That literally pales by comparison to what is going on now and it is worse for the same reason that those signs earlier in this chapter are worse, because it has accelerated and multiplied with population growth.

It has become ubiquitous, it is connected, it is linked, and it is worldwide. Only in the most isolated and remote places, I saw somebody visiting with the Maasai tribe and explaining what's going on in this country with regard to gender identity and whatnot, and the Maasai busted out laughing. They asked them, what do you all do if somebody says they're trapped in a body that doesn't match their inner child or whatever, and they just busted out laughing.

They could not believe it. They said, there's just no such thing. We've never heard of such a thing.

Only in those remote disconnected locations are there still human beings with a lick of sense in this regard when it comes to societal movement and societal support for these notions. So, when you see alternate worship set up, and can you imagine if we were to demand that unless you put your hand on a Bible and said you believe in sin, righteousness, and judgment, a divine God in heaven, Jesus has his son, our Savior, you can't hold government office, you can't buy and sell. It's unthinkable at this point.

The closest you can come to is to back in the days of the Catholic Church with their stranglehold over some societies in Europe. But there would be a huge pushback to say the least. How dare you impose your beliefs on us.

You believe there's a God, and you believe there's a Savior, and you believe that right and wrong is defined in the scriptures, and you're making us comport with that. No way. You're oppressive.

You're bigoted. You're some kind of an ist. Just put a long m- and ist.

You're something ist. They've even called Christianity Christianity because they like the sound of it. It sounds close to communism or some other ism.

So, it's Christianity. Can you imagine the pushback if we tried to perpetrate that? Because you can't force us believe in your God. However, look at what society is doing today.

I am my God. I will define the ways you talk to me and the pronouns you use referring to me, and if you don't comply, I'm going to hurt you. I will penalize you.

I will out you as a fascist, and you're going to suffer. You can lose your job. You can lose your social standing.

You can lose your reputation. If you have any connection with the government, you can lose your funding. You are not allowed to reject the recognition of my God, which is me.

You reject my God, I will hurt you. This is an abomination of desolation. It is an abomination that causes destruction, and it's right here, right now.

It's unprecedented. You've had local expressions of things like this. Communists have tracked down and stamped out Christians.

The Catholic Church tracked down and stamped out what they defined as heretics. What is the difference? Localized. Limited.

Short periods of time. Relatively small locations. Spain.

Times of the Reformation in the areas of Calvin and Zwingli and so on. You've got somebody being burned at the stake for printing Bibles. But limited.

This is global. This is being embraced north of us, southwest of us, around the globe, certainly all over Europe. Large places in every continent are subscribing to these notions.

The only governments that have not yet swallowed this abomination of desolation are the large kings who are going to come and attack the Middle East. The king of the north, the king of the east, and you know who they are. You see them monkeying with these ideas over there.

You know why? They're smart, and they're powerful, and they will still exist, and they will exist in largely their present form when these latter-day events take place. So, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, in other words, when you see forced acknowledgement of a deity other than God, you are not allowed to preach biblical morals. You are not allowed to name the name of Christ or post the Ten Commandments.

Matthew and I were remembering one of the Bible story records we listened to as a child when Satan is giving a spiel, and he says, I forbid you to mention his name or anything that reminds me of him. That's our society today. You keep his name out of the public

discourse.

I don't even want to be reminded of him. And you see open rebellion. Who assigns your gender when you're born? And who is expressing enough hubris to override the decision of God in every area of life? God says a man shall leave his father and mother and claim to his wife.

Not me. I was born male or I was born female. That's not me.

And I will not only change myself and live in the way that pleases me, but I'm going to force everyone around me. This is the abomination of desolation. It is not enough for you to the extent that it is up to you live peaceably with all men.

Just go your own way. Go be warm, be fed. If you disagree with me, I'm not going to convert you.

I'm not going to force you into my universe and make you bow down to whatever I consider to be God. If I'm a Christian, I worship the God of the Bible. I'm not going to beat you over the head with my Bible.

I am going to support positions that are in keeping. I will vote my conscience. I will speak my mind.

I will seek to speak the truth in love, but it's in love. Do you see a loving approach for the demand that people's personal decisions be recognized by society and be codified into law and given privileges and enshrined in the constitution and so on? That is not love. Stuff is getting burned down.

Stuff is being defaced. Stuff is being torn down. People are being hounded, blacklisted, canceled.

They say, well, but this is what you've done. There are religious people who have been religious bigots and who have used Christianity as a weapon to hurt other people. Their judgment is coming.

God is going to deal with them far more severely than anybody on this earth can. But the fact that somebody else did a wrong thing is no excuse. I mean, we teach children this from as soon as they can understand plain English, just because Johnny hit you or just because Johnny threw a rock or scratched your bicycle doesn't give you the right to go and do likewise.

Two wrongs don't make right. We used to teach these things. They were common sense.

The messiah still understand this. When they ask the messiah, who is it that decides whether you're born a boy or a girl? You know what they said? God. God decides.

The messiah understand this and our university educated people here can't figure it out. It's just, these are the days of the abomination of desolation in our spiritual world. It's here.

It's now. The thing has been set up and even great masses of Christians in the form of churches and denominations are bowing down and worshiping it. Don't kid yourself.

It is now. When you see this abomination of desolation set up, let those who are in Judea flee. What was Judea? The center of organized Jewish worship.

When you are in a denomination of Christianity that formally recognizes and claims brotherhood and welcome and acceptance for things that are biblically classified as abominations, leave that organized form of worship. If you're in that denomination, get out of it. If you're in that church, leave it.

If you're in a fellowship of believers who assent and comply and support it and think that this is a wonderful new thing, this is a time for distance. Make sense? Flee Judea. Like the heading of my King James 1611 Bible page says, Go, G-O-E, from Babylon.

Flee Babylon. Get out of Babylon because it is about to be judged and judged severely because there is no excuse. If what may be known of God is manifest in creation and it's manifest in Scripture and you willfully reject, you willfully defy, you willfully redefine and say, that's not Christ.

This is Christ. Oh, we acknowledge that Jesus is in the Bible, but let me tell you who Jesus is. This is Jesus.

And you completely define the true Jesus away and make him a false Christ. That's what we have now. That is what is happening now.

Unlike anything in history, it is unprecedented. In the annals of mankind from Adam to now, it has never been this bad. Name me a time when it was globally this way.

Never happened. And there have never been more people on the earth, therefore a more critical mass of wickedness. There weren't this many people when God destroyed the earth by a flood.

There weren't this many people at any time in history as there are now. And there are more of them embracing and practicing this attitude than ever before. The time is near.

I could get a sandwich board and walk up and down out here in front of the pastor, but the time is near. Doomsday is at hand. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

Let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. What does this mean for us? There's a much more literal meaning of it during the tribulation period. What does that

mean for us? If it costs you something to leave and to escape and flee before it infects you and before you come under its judgment, do that.

Don't worry about the cost. Don't worry that you lost your clothes. Don't worry that you left something in the house.

As soon as you recognize that this is what is happening, you get that distance between you and it immediately and at whatever cost. If God knows how to take care of the lilies of the field, God knows your daily needs. If God understands that you need fellowship and you need mutual support from believers of like mind, he will provide that.

You have got to leave as soon as you recognize it. When you see it, flee it. See it and flee it.

I'm using that consciously because we have a real interesting thing in Greek coming up here pretty soon. We talked about those who are pregnant and those who are nursing babies in those days that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. These are going to be extreme times and you cannot look to others for support.

There will be great tribulations such as not been since the beginning of the world until this time nor ever shall be. Both now in this age, it's never been this bad and it will be worse than it has ever been in that closing three and a half years of the tribulation. Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved.

But for the chosen ones sake, those who are chosen, those days will be shortened. God never loses track. We looked Wednesday night at the book of Remembrance.

It isn't that God has any memory problems and that He needs a book, but He writes the book because it is, in a sense, tangible evidence. It is a book that God's people can see. They don't just say, well, I know God's got an invisible memory and I'm in there somewhere.

God says, no, you know what? I'm going to put a book out here and so that there is quote unquote tangible proof that you are not forgotten. God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, your labor of love, your patience of hope. God would be unrighteous if He forgot that.

He is not unrighteous that He would forget the triad of Christian virtues, your work of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope. It is remembered, and for the chosen ones sake, God is going to measure and weigh and carefully proportion those days, and they will not go as long as they might otherwise have gone for the sake of those that God values. If anyone says, look, here's the Christ, or there, do not believe it.

False Christs, false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive. Oh boy, is there a lot in here to talk about? We're going to pause here and take our break,

but we're coming up to the parable of the fig tree, and you can already see the connection. We've got a little cherry tree out here.

It's kind of like this one lonely hen. It's the survivor out of four that we bought and planted. Three of them died.

There's one hardy survivor out there, and it's got cherries on it right now, but nobody had to come and tell me, well, this is spring, and it's the growing season, and you can soon expect cherries, because when I went out and looked at that tree some weeks ago, there were little green buds on it, and the twigs were bendy. It had survived the winter. It didn't freeze.

The buds weren't eaten by the deer. The little things that turn into cherries started forming, and nobody had to tell me that there would soon be cherries on that tree, because I look at the tree, and I can see it for myself. If anyone has to tell you who Jesus Christ is and where Jesus Christ is and what the good news of his kingdom is, you're in trouble, and anyone who heeds someone who says, here is the Christ, there is the Christ, is in trouble.

Learn the lesson of the fig tree, Jesus is about to say. When you see its tender branches, you know spring is near. Nobody has to come up and say, hey, let me explain to you about the precession of the earth's axis and the rotation and revolution around the sun and all the rest of it.

All you got to do is look at the tree. You see it with your own two eyes, and you know in your heart from experience, from your knowledge of the truth, that spring is near. Learn the lesson of the fig tree.

Your heart, if you know and love the truth, if you are soaked in the truth, no one can deceive you. No one is going to point and say, here's the Christ, there's the Christ. This is why there is significant resistance, although minor, but significant, to redefining Jesus, to reconstructing the church, to ignoring and tossing out vast portions of scripture.

Because there are believers who know the truth, and know that, sorry, I've seen the truth. The truth is a friend of mine, and you are not true. What you say is not true.

I know the truth. The Holy Spirit confirms the truth in my soul, and what you are saying is not true. How do I know that? I'm looking at the fig tree for myself.

I know life when I see it. I know progress when I see it. And you're not that.

You're not associated with it. You're not teaching it. You're not representing it.

Be gone. Take comfort and encouragement and continue to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is what preserves us.

It is what gives us clarity of vision. You will know the truth, Jesus said, and it will free you from slavery. It will free you from deception.

It will free you from being misled, misguided, and ultimately rendered unfruitful. It is our regular exposure to the truth, reflecting on the truth, thinking through the truth, figuring out how to apply it in our own lives. That is what preserves us.

That is what prevents us from being deceived. Let's pause here and take our break.