

## **Matthew 23-03-12a**

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday Morning Services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 12th of March, 2023. We're looking at this most central of all episodes in the sweep of human history, certainly in the life of the Lord Jesus and so critically important to our own lives, which is the lead-up to the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

And we will pick up this morning in Matthew chapter 27 by way of Luke chapter 23 and also a side excursion into Luke chapter 13. So you can, I have markers in my Bible at Matthew 27, Luke 13, and Luke 23, if you want to be pre-locating yourself in those areas. Let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask His blessing on our fellowship and our study together.

Father, what a wonderful blessing it is to wake up as though in resurrection, to find ourselves granted another day, another opportunity to be stewards of the resources you have placed at our disposal, our time, our talents, our gifts, our financial wherewithal, and the circumstances that enable us to spend time together, to endeavor to execute the commands related to our fellowship together. We pray that as we look at this portion of Your Word together, that Your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, help us to understand it, and having understood it, to interpret it and apply it in our own lives so that we are more thoroughly equipped for every good work, we are renewed in our minds, and will more fully understand Your good and acceptable and perfect will for us as we seek to reflect the presence and the glory of the Lord Jesus in this life. We pray it all in Jesus' name, Amen.

We have seen that there are a total of six trials that take place for the Lord Jesus. And it is significant perhaps that half of them are at the hands of the Jews and the other half are at the hands of the Romans. As you look at the details of these and discover that there is mistreatment, there is malfeasance on both sides, we in chapter 27 saw where after the Jewish trials, Jesus is handed over to Pontius Pilate.

It is very interesting, it has always been difficult to ascertain the exact time of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus because of His birth in the pre-AD years, Herod the Great, who seeks his life after hearing from the wise men, died in 4 BC, and Jesus obviously was born prior to that, beginning His ministry at about 30 years of age. He could have begun His ministry as early as 24 or 25, AD 24-25, could have begun it as late as 29 or 30, depending on when the scripture says that He was about 30 years of age. How much leeway is there in about? There are scant Roman records from this time dealing with the accession of Pilate to the governorship of the various Herods, the Tetrarchs, you have Herod Philip, Herod Archelaus, Herod Agrippa, and the Herod we have involved in these Roman trials, which is Herod Antipas.

You will remember that Antipas is the one who took his brother Herod Philip's wife, I believe it was Philip, Herod II, Herodias, and John the Baptist called him out for this because she was both his brother's wife, and he was still alive at the point that Herodias left him to marry Antipas, and Herodias is Herod the Great's granddaughter, so she is niece to these Herods. They are sons of Herod, she is a granddaughter, and so he is both marrying his brother's wife and his niece, which is identifiable as incestuous in the minds of the Jews of this day. So it was quite the scandal, quite the hot-button issue in the days of John the Baptist and of the Lord Jesus.

But we pick up here in the account in chapter 27, verse 11, Jesus stood before the governor, this is Pontius Pilate, he is known in history, he is mentioned by Tacitus and Eusebius, he is named, unusually so, in the early Christian creeds, and is a figure of some note. We're going to see this morning that his name occurs several times in Scripture, and his involvement, however brief, he is with Jesus for a little over an hour, and yet that decisive moment is historic in its import. So we saw this in verse 11, but we have the details of these Roman trials in Luke chapter 23.

So to see the fullness of what takes place here, we can travel over to Luke chapter 23, and when Luke coincides with Matthew 27, verse 11, the multitude at chapter 23, verse 1, arose and led Jesus to Pilate, they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation. You remember, here's a pop quiz question, from the three Sanhedrin trials, the high priest trial, the other high priest trial, and the Sanhedrin trial, what is their charge making Jesus, in their minds, worthy of death? What is the charge, what is the religious charge? Blasphemy, blasphemy, right? He has made himself equal with God. When he says, he combines Psalm 110, 1, and Daniel, in talking about the right hand of the majesty, the power on high, and this is a place of honor, also a place of judgment.

What further need do we have of witnesses, says Caiaphas? He has condemned himself out of his own mouth by claiming to be the son of God. Jesus had dealt with this notion in earlier days, but this is the pretext that they need. So the charge, in the mind of the Jewish authorities, is blasphemy.

That is what is spoken of. They are trying to get the witnesses to agree that he was going to tear down the temple, which would also be a religious charge. I doubt the Romans would care if the Jews tore down their temple or not, but it is a religious charge, making himself equal with God, using the Lord's name in vain.

You would think that he would need to break one of the Ten Commandments, and by making himself equal with God, this is the equivalent of having another God along with or before the God of Israel, and taking his name frivolously or in vain. That was the charge. So if they take Jesus now to Pilate and say, this man is guilty of blasphemy, how interested is Pilate going to be? Not much.

Pilate couldn't give a hoot and a rain barrel about whether some Jew allegedly commits some form of blasphemy against the Jewish religious standard. It doesn't rise to the level of Roman interest. So what do they do? They began to accuse him in 23.2 of Luke, we found this fellow perverting the nation, forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king.

This is a three-fold charge that they have concocted that they think will trigger Roman action of the judicial and capital punishment kind. So the charge has suddenly changed. None of this came up with Caiaphas, with Annas, or before the Sanhedrin.

It was all about blasphemy. Now we found this one perverting the nation. Perverting our nation is a slightly better reading here from the text.

Perverting our nation, forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar. Now let's just take these in order. I think you know the answer to these questions.

Did Jesus pervert the nation? What would perversion be? If the Pharisees or the Sadducees, the priests, the scribes, the elders of the people, what would they consider perversion? What is perverse? Does the law of Moses detail perversion? You shall not lie with a beast as you do with a man. Incest is a perversion. Adultery, fornication, covetousness.

Any of the two tablets commands might be if someone is endorsing behavior that is in direct violation of the law of Moses, that might be considered perversion, the moral law. Did Jesus do any of that? Did he pervert the nation? Of course not. What did Jesus call for? Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

Did he spark, sponsor, encourage, or otherwise imply that there should be any sort of rebellion against the Romans? No. He is forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar. You know what this refers to? They came to him saying, should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? They are the ones who brought this issue up.

You don't find anything about paying taxes in the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon on the Plain, any of the other extended discourses of the Lord Jesus. They raised the issue trying to create an issue. And what did he say? Show me a coin whose picture is on it.

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. He said, you do need to pay your taxes, right? So this is a direct lie. Lie number one, perverting the nation.

Lie number two, forbidding to pay taxes. The third charge is saying that he himself is Christ a king. Can you think of any New Testament scripture, any verse in the Gospels where Jesus says, hello there, I am the Christ, the son of the living God.

Others said it and Jesus affirmed it. Who do men say that I am? Some say you're John the Baptist. Some say you're Elijah.

Some say you're another one of the prophets. Who do you say that I am? You are the Christ, Peter says, the son of the living God. And Jesus says, blessed are you, Simon.

Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. Notice, he doesn't say, I'm so glad you believed what I told you. Simon Peter came to this realization because of the revelation from the Father.

And it is a blessing to be in a position to receive revelation from the Father. That's what Jesus says. He certainly does not deny it, but to come to the Romans and say, this man is traipsing around the countryside, claiming to be the king is a grotesque distortion of the truth.

So, a lie, a second lie, and a third lie. Pilate asked him, saying, are you the king of the Jews? Jesus answered him and said, and you remember this problematic saying, this colloquialism, if you will. If you scratch out the italics, it just says, you are saying it.

It is not an affirmation. It is a desire to be non-committal. You're the one bringing this up, not me.

That's what its connotation is. I didn't come in here saying I'm the king. I didn't go around the countryside saying I'm the king.

Other people have made this an issue. What was the issue that Jesus made as he went around preaching and teaching in villages and synagogues? What was his message? Was it the gospel of the king or the gospel of the kingdom? There is a difference. A kingdom needs a king, no doubt.

But the message was not, you'd better bow before me because I'm the king. You'd better acknowledge me. You'd better get ready for an insurrection, for an overthrow of the government, because there's a new sheriff in town.

The king has arrived. I can go back and tell you that the wise men three decades ago recognized that at my birth I was the king. Where is he that is born king of the Jews? But you notice there was no angelic proclamation in Jerusalem that the king had been born.

There was no public declaration of a general nature saying that the king has come. Why? Before Jesus asserts his reign and his rule, there needs to be a kingdom. And a kingdom is not an empty structure of authorities, regulations, and policies and structures and courts and so on.

Kingdom is composed of individuals. And the message from John the Baptist through the Lord Jesus and his disciples was the gospel of the kingdom. The kingdom is at hand.

Why didn't Jesus say the king is at hand? The king is at hand. That makes an issue out of Jesus. And this is often the case today in evangelicalism, making an issue out of Jesus.

You need to accept him as your Savior. He's the one who died for your sins. Is this true? Absolutely.

Is it true that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the king? It is true. But Jesus isn't making that point. That is not his emphasis.

That is not his message. What is his message? This is what happens when you take a picture and you expand and magnify some portions of it and you shrink and diminish other portions of it and it becomes a twisted, strange picture instead of a balanced and accurate picture. It is true.

Everything they say is true about Jesus being the king, the king of the Jews. But that was not his message. His message was the kingdom is at hand.

And what action is required? Bow before the king, repent, change your mind. What did John the Baptist tell the people that came to him and ask questions? What should we then do? Bear fruit in your life in keeping with repentance. Your life should reflect orientation to God, love for God, and love for one another.

If you make an issue out of Jesus as the king in the same way that all you do is make an issue out of Jesus as savior, don't really care about anything except I just want you to say the words, Jesus come into my heart, or I accept you as my savior, I am sorry for my sins, be my savior. That is a true and necessary step, but it is not the emphasis. Christianity, as I've said so many times, is not a pyramid scheme where we're just trying to get more converts on paper.

We want somebody to assent that they are believers. God sent the Lord Jesus to transform us on the inside, not just to enlist us and leave us as we are, but to change us. The gospel of the kingdom.

You begin to look at the scriptures and be sensitive to that phrase, gospel of the kingdom, gospel of the kingdom, over and over again. Jesus went about in the towns and villages preaching the gospel of the kingdom, not the gospel of the king. Gospel of the king makes an issue out of the person and work of the Lord Jesus, which is an issue, but the issue for us is our problem.

Repent, change our minds, change our hearts, change our direction by God's grace and through God's strength to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, the renewing of our purpose, the shifting of our direction. This is why in Hebrews chapter 6, the foundation stone begins. The foundation is laid with change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God.

Jesus is sent by the Father, and the Father is the issue, and life before the Father, life in covenant relationship with the Father through Christ. He is the high priest, but it's a weird and cultish form of worship to... Can you imagine, just think about this, if Catholics

went to Mass and went to their forms of worship and began to worship the priest that's handing out the host, or the priest that is giving the reading for the day, or reciting the ritual words. Why do you have a priest? What is the definition of a priest? What is the function of a priest? He is an intermediary, right? He's not the end.

Jesus is over and over again presented as our great high priest. A high priest is the intermediary to the God you worship. Again, it is true that Jesus is God.

He's the second person of the Trinity, but he is the way to the Father. And to stop short and begin to make an issue out of the king, or the priest, or even the prophet. There are people who want to take Jesus' teaching, or some subset thereof, and make an issue out of that.

Well, Jesus was a great teacher. He had these great teachings. And if we just focus on the Sermon on the Mount, or we just focus on the Golden Rule, or we just focus on his summary of the Old Testament law, that's going to get us there.

When you stop short and make an issue out of a truth, but it becomes an unbalanced and unaccompanied truth, it is no longer true. It is misused. It is mishandled.

So, this charge, he is saying that he himself is Christ, a king. Jesus would not deny this, but he doesn't affirm it either, because it's not the point. How many times have you been in conversation with someone, and there is a truth that you know, but it would be the worst thing in the world to make an issue out of that truth at that time? There are things we know that we don't say to children.

There are things we know that we don't say to people who are bereaved or grieving. There are things we don't say to people who are happy and celebratory and infatuated with a situation or a person. And we have some knowledge, we have some experience, we have a background.

And although it is true, it is not the time. It is not the time, it is not the occasion, it is not appropriate, it is not going to be helpful to make an issue of that truth at that time. This is why we pray for discernment.

We pray with the psalmist, keep the door of my lips. The man who can bridle the tongue has his whole body in subjection, because you don't always say what you know. I've told you before, one of my earliest impressions of this truth when I was a child is a present had been purchased for one of my parents by the other parent, and I was on hand.

So as soon as the gift-receiving parent got home, I just blurted out, guess what mom got you? It is true, but there is a time and a place to reveal a truth. And sometimes we reserve our knowledge, and it is critically important. There are a lot of things that Jesus knows that he does not reveal.

People who were healed, and he told them, do not tell anyone what just happened. Why not? It's true. It's the power of God.

It's the glory of God. It's evidence that you are the Christ, that you are from God. No one could do these works, Nicodemus says, if he were not from God.

So why can't I tell people? Jesus said don't. Right? Jesus said don't speak. Discernment in knowing when to hold your peace is a wonderful life skill.

So, this is why during these trials, three different times, it is emphasized, Jesus answered nothing. Like a lamb to the slaughter is silent, he spoke not a word. There are occasions when he speaks, there are occasions when he answers questions, but for the great bulk of these trials, he simply stands there.

Pilate is amazed. He says, you've heard these accusations, are you saying nothing? We get accused and we want to jump to the defense. No, no, no, that's misconstrued.

That's not what I said. I didn't say don't pay taxes to Caesar. I said show me a coin.

I said look at the picture on it. That's not what I said. Why does Jesus not refute these charges? Because he is in communion with the Father through the Spirit.

He is keeping his own counsel. He's looking at the larger picture. He has self-control.

He knows that these things must come. He's been telling his disciples for months that he would be brought before the authorities and he knows he is going to be crucified. What is the point of trying to refute these charges? All of his disciples have fled.

There's nobody there that is going to be the second or third witness in the Jewish trial to establish the truth of the thing. Everybody's gone. So, Jesus remains calm, collected.

He knows how this is going to go and that at this point it is a part of the cup that the Father has asked him to drink. So, Pilate says, are you the king of the Jews? He said, you're the one making an issue out of it, not me. It's neither an affirmation nor a denial.

It is almost a diversionary response. You're the one wanting to bring this up. I'm not bringing it up.

The implication is I would prefer not to talk about that. That is a subject for another time. You're saying it, not me.

So, Pilate said to the chief priests in the crowd, I find no fault in this man. But they were the more fierce, saying, he stirs up the people. This is back to perverting the nation.

Teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. He's stirring up the people. He's creating a public disturbance.

This is going to be something the Romans will have to deal with because the people will be in an uproar. They will be in a stir. They're going to riot.

They're going to protest. They're going to cause problems for the governing authorities. But this is now unique to Luke, beginning at verse 6. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the man were a Galilean.

As soon as he knew that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Both Pilate and Herod are visiting. Pilate does not rule from Jerusalem, nor does Herod.

They have come for the feast. The high priest is going to do some things, and they're going to let him have his holy garments out of the fortress of Antonia there. That's where the high priestly garments are kept, and the Romans only let them out on special occasions because they don't want the high priest to come forth and brook opposition to Rome.

So he only gets to wear his own outfit when they give it to him. But when he heard that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he had desired for a long time to see him, because he had heard many things about him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by him.

This is the Herod who was fascinated by John the Baptist. This is the Herod who married his niece Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. This is the Herod who, when he heard about Jesus' ministry, thought that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead.

He is superstitious. He is interested in wonders and signs. So he hoped to see some miracle done by him.

I think he was also greatly curious to see, does he resemble the Baptist with whom Herod had many conversations while he was imprisoned in the fort at Machairas. He wouldn't release him. He wouldn't believe him.

He just kept talking to him, and it was sitting on the fence. And not until the dance by Herodias did he finally get forced into beheading John. So Herod questions him in verse 9 with many words, but he answered him nothing.

Why does Jesus answer him nothing? There is a lesson here for us along the lines of the theme we have just been discussing. How does Jesus know when to speak and when to remain silent? There is a strong clue here in his silence before Herod that we will look at when we come back from the break.