

Matthew 23-03-19a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 19th of March, 2023. We're in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 27.

We're going to take a broad sweeping look this morning at the results of the six trials, the three Jewish and three Roman trials, and then zero in on a specific aspect for the morning. We will find ourselves in several of the Gospels as well as the book of Acts. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our investigation and application of God's word, and then we'll begin.

Father, it is such a privilege to have the window of history open and be able to look back 2000 years to the momentous events that took place surrounding this central focus of your plan and purpose in human history. We are grateful for the preservation of your word and the work and labor of those who have endeavored to understand it and to give us insight according to the gift that you've given to them. We pray that you will extend that grace and mercy to us this morning as we look at the Lord Jesus in this hour of greatest trial, that as a result, we will have insight and understanding into our own situation, that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight, that reflects the glory and the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in our circumstances, to our families, to our friends, to our neighbors, coworkers, in such a way that they will see that light shining and be drawn to you.

We pray it in Jesus name, amen. We pick up this morning in Matthew chapter 27, in verse 15, at the feast, the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. This is consistent with our recent look at how long had Pilate been governor, long enough to establish a custom.

If he came to this office in circa AD 26, then this would be at least three years later. Luke tells us that Pilate was the governor when John the Baptist began his ministry. We know that John's ministry lasted at least a year.

We know that Jesus has been ministering for over three years. So this puts us near the end of the decade, circa AD 29, somewhere in that range. And all of these estimates are approximate because despite all of the notations, especially in Luke for the time, it is still a little bit indefinite, but it is later than some of my earlier speculations that it might've been as early as 26 or 27, if our information about Pilate's governorship is correct.

That is not as important as what happens. When it happens is not nearly so important. I think if it were important, it would be nailed down without any doubt.

So as we pick up here, he is accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. At that time, they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas or Yeshua Barabbas, some texts say. When they had gathered together, Pilate said to

them, whom do you want me to release to you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ? Jesus Barabbas or Jesus the Christ? He knew that they had handed him over because of envy.

While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife said to him saying, have nothing to do with that just man for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of him. It is interesting study to look at the dreams that God sends to non-patriarchal or non-Israelite individuals. You remember that Pharaoh famously had dreams that Joseph interpreted, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams that Daniel interpreted.

The people who are warned in a dream around the time of Christ and so on, God uses dreams both within his people and outside his people to accomplish his purpose. Why was this dream sent to Herod's wife? It is similar to the warnings that were given to Pharaoh by Moses and Aaron. It creates culpability and responsibility when God communicates truth and people then have to make a decision based on that truth.

All the world is condemned with their conscience, either accusing or excusing them because there is a witness in nature. There is a witness in creation. There is a witness of the Holy Spirit in convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

And where there is a lack of that witness, there is a lack of responsibility, accountability. In this case, Pilate is going to be accountable despite his hand washing because he has spoken to Jesus Christ personally. He has an additional supernatural witness that is sent through his wife.

It's an interesting puzzle to chew on. We don't often have the luxury to chew on puzzles that are less important than the ones that affect the way we live our lives. But I ask myself these questions just to see if I can figure out an answer.

Why did Pilate not have a dream the previous night? He was asleep during the Jewish trials, the arrest and the all night ordeal that the Lord Jesus has been through. He woke up in the early morning and goes down and is now conducting the Roman trial, sending Jesus to Herod and he returns. But he evidently slept, but he got up in the morning before his wife did because she sends a messenger to talk about her dreams of the preceding night.

Why was the dream not sent to Pilate? It is sent to his wife. And she says, I have suffered many things today in a dream because of him. So why to his wife? We don't know the circumstances of Pilate's marriage.

We don't know the level of his previous exposure. We know he's familiar with Judaism because he's now been governor of Judea for some years, a handful of years perhaps. But he is aware of their beliefs.

He has come to know that they have an Old Testament, they have a Bible, they have the

law. And he has probably formed an opinion of what that witness is in terms of value to himself. He says, well, I'm governing people who don't believe in the Roman gods and it's a problem.

We can't force them to worship our gods. They have their own God to worship. But this witness coming through his wife, which ties him back to Rome and to his upbringing and to his own culture, is external to himself.

He could perhaps doubt his own imagination. He could ascribe it to worry or whatever. But when it comes from his wife, this is external to himself.

And one of the principles that we see in terms of God giving evidence and creating accountability for choice is that the witness is external. There are people who say, well, I'm not gonna believe in God. I'm gonna be an atheist or an agnostic because I don't feel an inner prompting.

I don't feel the inner witness of the spirit. People talk about conviction. I don't feel convicted.

People talk about sensing that there is a God. I don't sense that. That is not what creates accountability.

It is the witness that is external, that is objective. Now, you have an evidence outside yourself and so the wife, in a sense, fulfills that aspect of the witness. And in verse 20, so his wife is saying, let him go.

Have nothing to do with him. Don't be involved in condemning him. But in verse 20, the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

So the chief priests and elders persuade both the multitudes and the governor. The multitudes, so they're working on the governor through the multitudes. This is never a basis for good government to pressure leadership by the anger of the mob.

We've seen that in recent days in our own country. So the one thing you might note just in passing is the Pharisees, after the Sanhedrin trial, seem to drop out of the picture. The Pharisees are the conservative religious types.

The Sadducees are the liberal kinds. The Pharisees are very dedicated to the integrity of scripture and so on. They have their own culpability.

The seven woes that Jesus pronounces are not on the Sadducees. They're not on the priests and elders. They are on the Pharisees, scribes and Pharisees who claim expertise in the word of God.

And the basis of their condemnation is because they claim to see from scripture,

because they claim to know God through his word, and they claim to know the scriptures inside out. This is the basis of their condemnation. The Sadducees treat the law and the prophets lightly.

The religious machine of the day with the priesthood and so on has prevailed. But once the trial is complete, there are some Pharisees in the Sanhedrin, but the Sanhedrin at this stage was dominated by the priests and the Sadducees. And you don't hear of any Pharisaical pushback at this point, but once that conviction is secured, the Pharisees seem to drop out.

And there is no scripture that I am aware of that indicts the Pharisees for any further action. At this point, you always see the priests, the scribes and the elders mentioned in terms of pushing this over the top and securing the execution of Jesus. What is the significance of that? I think there is something about the presence of the scripture, even though they've departed from it, even though they are bound up in legalism, pride, self-interest, something about that knowledge of the scriptures may have held them back and being totally unsecured from the scriptures, which is what has happened to the priesthood.

They don't care about the tribe of Levi or the sons of Aaron. They don't care about the niceties of what the law prescribed in terms of their function. You've got Annas and Caiaphas, and it's a real riot in the priesthood at this point.

They don't conduct sacrifices. They allow all kinds of heinous activities on the temple grounds, which is why Jesus on two different occasions cleanses the temple. That's on the priests.

And the Sadducees, of course, don't believe in a resurrection. They don't care anything about the scriptures. And they are the ones that take things forward from the point of the early morning hours.

So you see them mentioned here, the chief priests elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. So the governor answers, "'Which to the two do you want me to release?' They said, Barabbas. Pilate said to them, what then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ? They all said to him, let him be crucified.

Then the governor said, why, what evil has he done? But they cried out all the more saying, let him be crucified." You see this in the world today. It no longer matters about morality, ethics, truth, legality. There is an end we want to achieve and all is fair.

The end justifies any means, fair or foul. And if you can get the mob on your side, reason and integrity, truth, character, all go out the window. They don't give any justification.

They don't give any reason. They have no legitimate defense for this call for crucifixion. Pilate asked the question, what has he done? They don't answer it.

They just shout down any opposition to this incitement from the chief priests and elders. So when Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather a tumult was rising, he took water, washed his hands before the multitude saying, I am innocent of the blood of this person. You can scratch out the word just.

That is an addition. He is a just person. It's just not what Matthew wrote.

You see, all the people answered and said, and this is where we're going to zero in this morning. All the people answered and said, his blood be on us and on our children. So he releases Barabbas to them.

He scourges Jesus and delivers him to be crucified. So at the behest of the unthinking manipulated mob, there are people in key positions who manipulate the opinion of the mob and get the mob to accomplish what they want done. There's never been a crowd that wanted Jesus to be crucified until they are incited by the leadership.

And you see this today in cancel culture and manipulation of media and internet services and so on, filtering information, planting seditious thoughts. There was manipulation of the crowd following the election on January 6th, when they were going to certify the results of the election. The mob gets whipped up and there is a disregard for proper behavior, disregard for property.

And there you can see individuals whipping the mob into a frenzy and encouraging them to go inside the Capitol and to break down the barriers and people who are claiming to be conservative and claiming to be law and order and proper policy and lose their minds. And a proportion of them commit crimes and the aftermath of that. But I want to focus this morning on the verse 25.

All the people answered and said, His blood be on us and on our children. This is a very unusual thought in this context. His blood be on us and on our children.

Why would a mob start saying this? One of the more annoying things about political speeches in our modern day, I'm interested in somebody expressing their ideas, advancing their arguments, pointing out the deficiencies in the opposition with their arguments and their policies. That's good information. But if someone makes a claim, makes a point, cites a fact, and then the crowd starts chanting something like USA, USA, or the person's name or whatever, I don't find that helpful at all.

It's just delay. It's an expression of sort of mindless enthusiasm. I don't see the point of that, but somebody starts it.

The whole mob doesn't spontaneously do it. Somebody starts saying USA, USA, other people pick it up and it infects the entire crowd and you've got to wait 45 to 60 seconds until everybody quits shouting and the speaker can continue. You see this happen with a standing ovation.

Somebody finishes a performance of some kind and there's some people that were just really super impressed. And so they will stand up and start clapping and expressing their approval. And almost begrudgingly, other people will eventually stand in a truly exceptional performance.

People are on their feet. It's not something that spreads. It's something that everyone feels at the same time.

I'd be laboring this point because I don't think the entire crowd said this. I think it started in one area and became a chant. Who is it that would say this? His blood be on us and on our children.

I don't care how bad somebody is. I don't see myself saying, yeah, execute this person, put them in the gas chamber, bring down the guillotine blade. Flip the switch on the electric chair.

His blood be on me and my children. I will happily be accountable for the execution because the crowd can't even answer the question, what has he done wrong? Why would they take responsibility for his blood and pass it on to their children? This isn't a thinking response. Somebody planted this idea in the crowd, I am convinced, and it spread.

My point is we need to be very careful to be consulting God's word, God's spirit, the conscience that is rehabilitated in us by constant daily reference. Cleansing of our hearts and minds through confession of sin and getting back into the light and walking in the light. This will prevent us from being persuaded and caught up in group opinions that we haven't thought through, that don't have an anchor, that aren't built on a foundation of the solid rock.

This is a dangerous thing to shout. His blood be on us. If it was Barabbas they were executing, his blood be on us, let his blood be on his own head.

He's the guy that fouled up. He ought to bear responsibility for his crime and the responsibility for his execution rests on his decisions to commit capital crimes, right? That's where responsibility, blood guilt, look at the Old Testament law. We don't have time to review it because we're moving in another direction this morning, but think about the concept of blood guilt.

Think about the concept of expiation in terms of the symbolism of sacrificial blood, the blood that is applied to the priests themselves, their ear, their thumb, their big toe, the sprinkling with blood to sanctify and to remove accountability. And we talked about this a little bit last time, the significance of the blood, the blood can go two different ways. Blood guiltiness, his blood be on us, that's blood guilt.

Atonement and forgiveness and expiation are also accomplished by the blood. Blessed are those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.

Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? That's blood upon us, but it has the complete opposite effect from what is said here.

This is an awful perversion and a strange idea to erupt spontaneously in a crowd of this nature. I think it was planted by these individuals who are mentioned in verse 20. The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes.

They are now using the multitudes as their extended power. They're extending their power through the mob. Well, what about this? And what we're going to look at here is the idea of, is the mob, in fact, by their own statement, going to receive blood guilt? Are they going to be accountable for the crucifixion? The mob is not the ones who sent the arresting party.

The mob are not the ones who betrayed Jesus into the hands of the authorities. You don't have the mob saying, oh, scribes, Pharisees, Sanhedrin, he's over here. He's teaching, he's here in our midst.

He's here in the boat. He's here on the plane. He's here on the mountainside.

He's here in the synagogue. He's here, come get him, come get him. They are not the ones who initiated his arrest, right? He had a betrayer in the midst of his disciples.

The leadership decided in smoke-filled back rooms that he's got to go. He's going to take our place in our nation. We're going to lose both because of his activities and because the multitudes follow him.

Their fear was the multitudes are following him. Now they are getting the multitudes to deny him and to call for his death. The multitudes, a crowd doesn't have a brain.

A crowd can't reason. A crowd is very liable to manipulation. And in the same way that the multitudes follow Jesus, in most cases for the wrong reasons, they're following to see a miracle, they're following for self-interest, they're following to get a healing, but it doesn't result in conversion or renewed interest in their Old Testament scriptures, renewed interest in their covenant relationship to God.

Hey, Uncle Bob was lame and now he can walk. My son or daughter was blind and now they can see, this is great. But the fulfillment of the sign, the exercise of God's power and God's grace and the demonstration of his presence and his covenant willingness to benefit the people doesn't draw them to a long-term commitment, a long-term relationship, it doesn't work.

So Jesus has swayed the multitudes, but it is superficial. These individuals has swayed the multitude, but it's superficial. So in one sense, is the crowd going to be blood guilty for the crucifixion? They didn't betray him, they didn't initiate it.

All they are doing is responding to manipulation and calling for his crucifixion. In many cases, they don't know why, that Pilate says, why should I crucify him? What has he done wrong? He gets no answer to that question. It's an unthinking mob.

It is incumbent on us as a point of application to not be part of an unthinking mob or a superficially motivated and manipulated mob. Well, I believe what I believe because I saw it on the particular TV network that I watch. Or the particular podcast or blog that I follow.

There's an opinion monitor. There's an influencer that I regularly listen to. I like their personality.

I like their basic convictions and commitments. I like what they say on other things. So when they tell me about this, I'm just going to believe it.

We are called to be wise. This is our Proverbs study. Wisdom comes from taking the truths of the word of God and applying them for ourselves, not because an influencer or a news outlet or somebody else has put it in our heads.

What you see on the page here is what happens when we let that happen. We are responsible for what we think. We are responsible for what we choose.

Shifting blame is as old as the conversation on the afternoon of the fruit eating in the garden. The woman thou gave us to be with me. She gave it to me and I did eat.

Well, the serpent beguiled me and I did, you know, it's the serpent's fault. It's the woman's fault. Scripture through and through says, whereas by one man, sin entered the world.

Death passed upon all men when that one man sinned. Doesn't say one woman, doesn't say one snake, one man. We're accountable for what we choose regardless of the source of the temptation or the source of the deception.

Deception is not an excuse. So what about this now? What about responsibility? Here they say his blood be on us and on our children. Turn with me to the gospel of Luke chapter 23, verse 33 and 34.

Jesus is being led out along with two other criminals to be put to death. When they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Verse 34, then Jesus said, father forgive them for they do not know what they do.

They divided his garments and cast lots. This is the first of the seven words from the cross that are so celebrated and the stations of the cross, all the rest of it that have been traditionally observed down through the centuries, this is the first. But do you see at the

end of that red ink there, father forgive them, they do not know what they do.

See the little number three there if you have a new King James and you go down to the footnotes, what does it say? In you text brackets the first sentence as a later addition. The earliest texts of Luke do not have that saying. And let me read you what Bruce Metzger has to say.

He was on the committee. In you is the Nestle Allen UBS text. And they analyzed every available Greek manuscript when they were going through to establish the rigorous and authoritative Greek text from which all the rest of us like to study and interpret.

And there is a note here on Luke 23, 34, as follows. The Greek here is Hada Yesus Elegin. Hada Yesus Elegin, Jesus said, Pater afeis autois, which is forgive them father, ou gar for not oidasen, that's from oida, they do not know, ti poiosen.

Ti is what, poiosen is what they do. So Hada Yesus Elegin, Pater afeis autois, ou gar oidasen, ti poiosen. Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.

Metzger says, the absence of these words from such early and diverse witnesses as Papyrus 75, Codex B, Codex D, Codex W, Codex Theta, the Italian witnesses A and D, the Syriac, the Coptic, the Bohairic and the Sahitic is most impressive and can scarcely be explained as a deliberate excision by copyists. It is an impressive, diverse collection of the earliest witnesses who do not have Jesus saying this in 23, 34. It isn't there.

The notion is when people say, well, there were early scribes who deleted it, why would they delete it? Anytime there is a textual variation where some include a thing and others omit it, you have to say, which is more probable? Is it more likely that someone added this in or is it more likely that somebody deleted it? What is more probable? What is more reasonable to assume? Those who say that it was deleted as a deliberate excision, say that considering the fall of Jerusalem as proof that God had not forgiven the Jews, if Jesus prays this prayer, Father forgive them, then why did Jerusalem get destroyed 40 years later? So they try to explain it as a deliberate excision by copyists who considering the fall of Jerusalem to be proof that God had not forgiven the Jews could not allow this prayer to appear unanswered. They could not allow it to appear that the prayer of Jesus had remained unanswered at the same time. So that's the argument for somebody deleting it.

Well, that puts an error in Jesus' mouth. Jesus said, forgive them, but God didn't and destroyed Jerusalem and wiped out the whole nation. At the same time, the Logion, this statement, Jesus said, Father forgive them, they know not what they do.

Though probably not part of the original gospel of Luke bears self-evident tokens of its dominical origin. Self-evident tokens of, dominical means early church. So this was evidently some sort of oral tradition that was very early.

And though probably not a part of the original gospel of Luke bears self-evident tokens of dominical origin and was retained within double square brackets in its traditional place, where it had been incorporated by unknown copyists relatively early in the transmission of the third gospel. This puts it as a parallel with something like the woman taken in adultery. Remember when we did the gospel of John, that little pericope of the woman, let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

It sounds like Jesus. It, and yet it isn't in the earliest copies of John. And when it does begin to show up in the gospel of John, it shows up in different places.

It moves around and it is evident that someone thought it ought to be in the gospel, put it into the gospel, but it isn't what John wrote. This bears all the same earmarks of something that was added later. So this is the question.

What is the question? Not just is this in the text or not, but what is the nature of this prayer? This is the Lord Jesus saying, father forgive them because they are ignorant of what they are doing. Is it legitimate to request forgiveness for a sin of ignorance? For us, can a third party ask forgiveness for your sins? Is it legitimate? Is there a basis? Is there a ground of forgiveness for sins of ignorance as it is invoked by a third party? We can determine whether or not this is legitimate or spurious by using systematic theology, which as you know, is near and dear to my heart. If this is original, whether or not Luke wrote it, if it is something Jesus actually said, then it is going to be consistent and there will be application for us.

All scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction, right? So if this is original, it will be confirmed as we search the scriptures to see if these things are so, and we will come to an understanding regarding the nature of forgiveness, the ground of forgiveness, whether or not consciousness or ignorance of sin is involved, whether or not it precludes or includes forgiveness. So that is our question. It is significant.

This is not found in any of the other three gospels and in Luke, it is questionable. I will give you some additional information about whether or not this is early or late when we come back from the break, but it is a useful question to ask because 1 John 1.9, 1 John 1.7. Remember our verses, oft repeated, but when you think through them, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with him and he with us, each with the other, and if we walk in the light as he is in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1.9, if we confess our sins, if, if we walk in the light, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He cleanses us from the sins we confess and because we have confessed what we know, he cleanses us from all unrighteousness. How does this line up with father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. Does the father answer this prayer in the affirmative? Is it even a prayer that Jesus prayed? This is what we will address when we

come back from the break.