

Matthew 23-05-14b

Thank you Dan and Anna and Lori for that wonderful blessing in music on this Mother's Day. We're going to pick up our study now in the Gospel of Matthew, and just because I think it has gotten a bit of short shrift, I want to look at the phrase that there was darkness from the sixth hour to the ninth hour over the whole land, and looking at the extent of the land. Is it the earth? Is it the land? In both Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek, in Hebrew it is the word Eretz, E-R-E-T-S or T-Z, Eretz.

And you can hear the phrase used even in the modern day, Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel. And in that context, Israel limits the meaning of Eretz to the borders of the nation of Israel. Other times it is broader in its scope, such as Genesis 1.1, in the beginning God created HaShemayim, the heavens, the Eretz, and the earth.

And it is the land, as all of it that you know of, was created by God. And we have difficulty remembering that in the ancient day people were not possessed of the perspective that we have in seeing the blue marble suspended in space and the full planet with all of its continents. People walked around on the ground, there was no flight through the air and certainly nothing orbiting or extending into space.

And so when you talked about land, it was the ground upon which you walk. What is its extent? You know that there is land upon which people walk that extends beyond the borders of Israel. How far? Well, what is the furthest land away that you know of? They might know of Egypt, they might know of Syria, they might know of the northern parts of Africa and the things that surround the Mediterranean Sea.

But in terms of, did they know about China? They certainly didn't know about North and South America or the farthest reaches of Asia. And so land in the biblical sense, particularly in Old Testament days, is an extent that is suggested by context. And the reason I'm talking about this is it makes a difference when you come to phrases that talk about the ends of the earth or the ends of the eras.

And it's a fascinating study and it may seem a little bit off the subject, but it is pertinent for reasons that will become clear, I think, as we as we look at it. So I did a study of the phrase ends of the earth. And it's interesting that this is expressed in several different ways in the Hebrew scriptures using different vocabulary terms.

So there is one sense, which is expressed by the word Ephes, E-P-H-E-S. And this talks about the physical border of a thing or where something stops, where something stops. So if you go to Deuteronomy 33.17, for example, Moses in his song celebrating the various tribes of Israel gets to the tribe of Joseph.

The song of Moses is toward the end there in Deuteronomy. So in 33.17, he is talking about the tribes, plural, of Joseph. And he says he compares him because Joseph is a

double tribe, Ephraim and Manasseh, to the horns of a wild ox, two horns.

So his majesty is like a firstborn bull and his horns are like those of a wild ox. And it's so interesting that the tribe of Joseph, which is the 11th tribe chronologically, is the firstborn of Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin. But his majesty is like a firstborn bull, like a firstborn bull.

And Joseph is such a strong picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're looking at the crucifixion, we're looking at the death of the Lord Jesus, but he isn't going to remain dead. And in the eyes of Jacob, Joseph was dead.

The bloody coat of many colors was presented by the brothers. And Jacob believed his favorite son to be dead. The firstborn of his preferred wife, Rachel, for whom he worked an additional seven years with Laban and so on, and favored him with this coat, this special distinctive coat.

And that is what the brothers brought and said, he was torn by beasts. And here is his blood. Here is the symbol of your affection for him, torn and bloodied.

And Jacob believes him to be dead. But Joseph has a second life. His first life is as the 11th son of Jacob in the land, being a servant, taking food to his brothers, being betrayed and sold into slavery by his brothers, rejected and sent to what they assumed would be a permanent exile, if not death itself.

And yet in his reincarnation, if you will, in his new life, he is the ruler of Egypt in all practical respects, and is the means of deliverance of the very family that rejected him. And the two horns of this firstborn ox, this firstborn bull, in many ways, being associated with Joseph, foreshadow the Lord Jesus with his first advent and his second advent, with his role as the suffering servant and his role as the coming king. And with them, he will gore the nations.

Now, in what sense did Joseph gore the nations? He was a means of deliverance to the Egyptians and to his family. But you get the sense that Moses' prophecy here transcends Joseph and becomes a parable of the Lord Jesus, who is going to rule the nations with a rod of iron and shatter them as a potter's vessel in his coming king role. With them, he will gore the nations, even to the earth.

Clearly, in context here, if you were talking about the nations, this goes beyond the borders of the prospective nation of Israel or the land where Israel will dwell. Remember, this is Moses. They haven't even entered the land of promise at the point that Moses delivers this prophetic utterance under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

But this projects the pattern of Joseph and this two-horned ox beyond this time and beyond this geographic location to the Lord Jesus himself. And he will gore the nations even to the ends of the earth. And what's interesting here is that when you look at this in

the Hebrew, this is a plural word, ends plural.

And it turns out to make a difference if this word, fs, in this case, it becomes afse because it's plural. And Hebrew changes its vowels when you pluralize it or when you add suffixes and so on. And this is the afse eretz, to the ends plural of the earth.

And so fs or afes means to the limit, the extremity or the border beyond which that thing doesn't exist anymore. So if it is the land, it is to the extremities of the land. It is sometimes translated coasts to the coasts because the land ends, the planet doesn't end, but the land ends at the seashore.

And because it talks about something going so far and no farther, it is sometimes used to express non-existence, beyond which something does not exist. And you find this use in Isaiah 24, verse 12, where the Lord will stretch out over Edom a measuring line of chaos and a plumb line of destruction. No nobles will be left to proclaim a king and all her princes will come to nothing.

And the idea here is that these nobles and princes, there are no more. They have come to their limit. They existed, but they have come to an end.

There's nothing beyond that limit. So it's quite an interesting word, fs or afes. There is another word, and I could give you many examples of this word.

I just want to give you one more, which is in Zechariah 9, verse 10. Zechariah 9, 10 uses this same word, and we saw this in our Zechariah study, to talk about, I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem and the battle bow will be cut off. He will speak peace to the nations and his dominion will be from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the Eretz.

The very same phrase, ends of the Eretz. Now look at the context when it is talking about God sending his messianic king, I will cut off from Ephraim the chariot and the horse from Jerusalem and cut off the battle bow and he will speak peace to the nations and then it gives the limits of his dominion. This is the king that comes riding on a colt on the foal of a donkey in the preceding verse.

His dominion will extend from sea to sea. What seas would this entail? This is the Mediterranean sea on one side and the Red Sea on the other, from sea to sea and from the Euphrates to the limits of the land. And taking this at face value, a king doesn't become king of the world.

This is the king ruling in Zion. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you righteous and victorious, humble, riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, the horse from Jerusalem, the bow of war will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations. He will proclaim peace to the nations. There are other nations.

Nations have kings. We know from other prophetic passages that the kings of the earth and the nations will send their glory to this king in Jerusalem, but he is not the king of those nations. He is dominant.

He is ruling with a rod of iron, but he proclaims peace to the nations. You are reminded of Caesar or Alexander who subdued nations but left them with their governments intact. They send tribute, but they have their own king.

They have their own local suzerain authority, but they are subordinate to and don't want to run afoul of the great king of the empire. His dominion will extend from sea to sea and from the Euphrates. If it's to the limits of the world, why would you mention the Euphrates? The Euphrates is the northeastern limit of this land.

And you remember the maximum extent of Israel extends from the great river, which is the river Euphrates, not just the sea of Galilee, not just up to Tyre and Sidon, but all the way to the Euphrates. Remember God promised Abraham, everywhere you set your foot, I will give you that land. And Abraham starts out in Ur of the Chaldees.

Chaldea is going to be a part of this nation that he rules. But its limit is from the Euphrates to the ends, to the limits of the land. Sea to sea, Euphrates to the limits of the land.

What are the limits of the land? Well, down to the border of Egypt, down to the limits of where the land contacts other nations. Why is this important? Because there is another reference, another way of expressing the ends. These are physical borders.

Something exists out to this point and then it no longer exists. It does not extend beyond this physical limit. And it is a geographic extent.

You can see it in all of the list, but a few examples will suffice. That is Aphese, A-P-H-S-E, and generally in the plural, the ends of the earth, or the end of the earth, end of the land. And Aphese can be translated earth or land, depending on context.

There is a second one called Q-T-S-O-T. This is Q-T-S-O-T. This is a different word and you find it, for example, in Psalm 48 verse 10.

This is your name, O God, like your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is full of righteousness. Well, is this the entire planet? Is this the land of Israel? What exactly does Q-T-S-O-T mean? First of all, the preceding verse says, within your temple, O God, we contemplate your loving devotion.

Who worships at the temple? The entire earth or just Israel? And the following verse

says, Mount Zion is glad. The daughters of Judah rejoice on account of your judgments. So clearly the context here is talking about the people of God in the nation of God.

And so your name, O God, like your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth. What does this word Q-T-S-O-T mean? Well, this is from the word Q-T-S-O-T and this is to the edge of a thing, to the edge. It doesn't talk about existence or non-existent.

It just says there is a thing that has an edge and it's only used four times, two of them in the Psalms and two of them in Isaiah. And Isaiah 26.15 specifically says and refers to the borders of the land. You have increased the nation, O Lord.

You have increased the nation. You are glorified. You have expanded all the borders of the land.

You can't expand the borders of the earth, but you can expand the borders of the land of Israel. And as I said, you can expand them all the way to the Euphrates. You can expand them all the way down to Egypt and comprise the desert and the Shephelah in Judah from the sea to the sea.

Seldom, if ever, even in Solomon's day, did the land extend to the borders that are promised. So this has the idea of edge. The singular use of this Ketzah is a different thing.

And I want to specifically look at Isaiah 49.6. Isaiah 49.6. And because it's quoted in the New Testament and this is where we're headed, why am I belaboring all of this? So if you go to Isaiah 49.6, this is our target passage. This is quoted in Acts 13, and we want to pay close attention because this gets into two interesting areas of interpretation. It says here, starting in verse five, now says the Lord who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, that Israel might be gathered to him.

For I am honored in the sight of the Lord and my God is my strength. He says, it is not enough for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the protected ones of Israel. I will also make you a light for the nations to bring my salvation to the ends of the earth, to the ends of the earth.

And notice the word ends being plural in English. And it's a little bit disappointing that this is a singular in Hebrew. And they're a bit sloppy in both Old Testament and New in distinguishing the singular from the plural.

And it makes a difference. This is singular to the end of the earth. This is the limit.

This is the limit. It can be a spatial limit. It can be a time limit.

When it is plural, it is always geographical. Ends, to the ends of the land. There's multiple borders, but you would have to establish a particular direction and then say, well, to the

Eastern end or to the Western end or the Northern end.

But this is to the end of the earth. And this prophetic passage says, it is not enough that he's going to be deliverance for the tribes of Jacob and is going to raise them up. And to the preserved ones, the saved ones of Israel, I will give you as a light to the Gentiles.

This is you singular. I'm not giving Israel as a light to the Gentiles. I'm giving you singular as a light to the Gentiles that you should be my Yeshua.

That's what this says. My salvation. This is Yeshua T, my Yeshua.

You should be my Yeshua, my Joshua to the end of the errats. So you say, well, why doesn't it say ends? Why wouldn't it be to all of the nations? Go in any direction and find the multiple borders, but it is a singular. So what happens when this is quoted in the New Testament? This is going to be quoted in Acts 13:47.

In Acts 13:45, when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and they blasphemously contradicted what Paul was saying. Blasphemously contradicted, much as you see surrounding the scene at the cross. So in verse 46, Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly.

It was necessary to speak the word of God to you first. But since you rejected and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us.

And now we have the quote, I have made you singular, even here in Greek, it is singular, a light for the Gentiles to bring salvation to the ends of the earth. And here in the Greek, we saw that it was singular in Hebrew. Here in the Greek, it is also singular.

And as they did in Isaiah, they have changed it to plural. And it's not a plural. It is singular to the end.

And so they like to translate this, well, uttermost part. Why isn't it uttermost parts? Why isn't it plural? And the reason I'm pointing this out, here's where we are going to our various Perry Mason arguments together. I intend to tie this all together, Your Honor.

The phrase here is not directly translated from the Hebrew. You would expect Paul being a Pharisee would translate the Hebrew, but he is quoting the Septuagint. He is quoting the Greek translation.

And the Greek translation makes a change. It's not the same. And there's a whole fascinating line of study.

How do you account for the Septuagint changing the meaning of the Hebrew in some cases, and then being quoted in the New Testament with that changed meaning? There's a classic example of the quotation in Hebrews that says, sacrifice an offering you did not

desire, but a body thou hast prepared for me. And if you go back to the Hebrew that that is quoting, it says, my ear you have pierced. How do you get from my ear you have pierced to a body thou hast prepared for me? Well, the Septuagint evidently misunderstood.

And there are various explanations for how the Septuagint did not accurately use otia, which is the word for ear and pierce. And it ends up being body, which is soma you have prepared. The word pierce and the word prepare have the same consonants in Hebrew.

And so pierce or prepare is the same. But otia is ear. They used to tell me all the time when I had an ear infection, I had otitis media.

Otitis means it's in your ear. And media means it's in your inner ear, your middle ear. But they read the Hebrew and translated it body, soma instead of otia, ear.

And there are other cases of this. And it seems as though sometimes the New Testament writer leverages a new insight or a new meaning by quoting the Septuagint, even when it differs in meaning from the Old Testament. It's a fascinating study.

I say all that to say this. You can see in Isaiah 49, 6, that we're looking at the end, the limit of the land. And qesot or qesah talks about the border or the edge.

And this is geographical. It's space-based. The Septuagint changes that.

And it doesn't use ace, meaning unto, translating the Hebrew. That would be the normal translation of a spatial. If you're going to go in to a house, it's ace, acerchimi.

If you're going to come out, it's exerchimi. Ace means into, unto, or to the limit of, with a view toward. You're looking at this thing, ace.

Ad in Hebrew means until or unto. And when they translated this in the Septuagint, they used the word haos in Greek, H-E-O-S. And H-E-O-S is not a word of space in Greek.

It is a word of time, until. When you have until and you have the singular of the word end, it is until the end of a thing, until it's complete. It has chronologically come to an end singular.

So haos means until, in time. Eschatos is always a time word, always. This is why we have eschatology, the doctrines pertaining to end times.

It's not the study of the borders of lands. It's not the study of the extent of the world. Eschatos is the end time-wise.

You can do a study of this on your own, but eschatos is used in this sense twice in Acts. Once, it is here in 13:48. And the point here in Acts 13 is, I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation until the end singular of the world, geis.

Light to the world. Eschato, eschatos, geis. The chronological end of the world.

The other place this very same phrase is used is Acts 1.8. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria. And then it says, and to the ends of the earth.

That's not what it says. Haos, which means until, chronologically. Eschato, which is the singular end, not the ends, not the outer limits all around.

It is a singular end. And when you have haos and eschatos, it is until the chronological end of a thing. Haos, eschatos, geis.

Paul and Barnabas, their ministry to the Gentiles, Paul's ongoing ministry to the Gentiles in writing all his epistles, his three missionary journeys, and the scripture that he wrote is a witness to the Gentiles until the end of the world. Paul did not explore the limits of the Roman Empire, much less the world. In what sense has he taken the gospel to the very corners? He can't even go places that he wants to go.

He's very limited in where he can go. He is not going to physically take the gospel to the physical limits of the Roman Empire. The Romans knew all about Gaul and Britain and Spain.

They've got outposts there. They fight battles there. He didn't go anywhere near those places.

He is a witness until the end of the world. Same thing in Acts 1.8, you disciples will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria until the end of the land, until the end of the world. But it's end singular, and to translate it ends is to start injecting interpretation into the translation.

It's an easy thing to do, but paying attention to detail is important. What pertains to us as Christians in the New Testament age? What was a specific instruction given to Jesus' 11 disciples in Acts 1.8? Does every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ need to go and witness in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria? Christians take Acts 1.8 and say, well, we've got to witness to everybody in the world. The only parts that are named here geographically are Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

The time during which these 11 men are going to be witnesses in those areas is until the end of the world. The world is determined by context. Are the 11 disciples still witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria after 70 AD, the end of the land, the end of the world as they know it? No.

That witness ceases. Whose ministry continues to the Gentiles until the end of the large world? Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, specifically commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ, who commissioned these men to be witnesses to Israel until the end of that world, and

he specifically on the Damascus Road commissions Paul to be his witness to the Gentiles until the end of the Gentile world, which will come at the rapture. It is so clear once you see it, and how important is it for us to pay attention to our mission.

This is my foundation stone for a short special we're going to do on the misinterpretation and misapplication of the Sermon on the Mount. To whom is the Sermon on the Mount delivered? To Jesus' disciples, these same disciples. He ascended the hill and his disciples came to him.

He gives the content of Matthew chapter 5, chapter 6, and chapter 7. The modern claim, and it is ubiquitous. I challenge you, if you're interested in this subject at all ahead of time, go to something like YouTube and just type in Sermon on the Mount, and look at video after video, presentation after presentation. You can Google articles and read website after website, blog after blog, book after book that has been written talking about how the Sermon on the Mount is the foundation and basis for Christian ethics.

This should be our ethic. These are the rules for conduct of society. No, no, and again, no.

That is not the reason Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, and to appropriate something that pertains to the kingdom being offered explicitly and specifically to Israel is a grievous error, and it allows Satan to deflect, to deceive, to maneuver Christians into a completely pointless effort. Distraction, deflection, deception. Using Jesus' own words.

You who say you can destroy the temple in three days and raise it up, those are Jesus' own words. If you are the king of Israel, come down from the cross. Do what we want to do.

We're quoting your own words back at you. For the body of Christ to misunderstand our role and to be deceived into social justice, social action, what they used to call the social gospel, is a deflection and a distraction from what we're supposed to do. So what are we supposed to do? Can we learn from the Sermon on the Mount? Does it apply directly and very pertinently to us? Yes, it does.

Individually. Individually. And I will give you the key to that understanding right now.

Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees, you will in no wise enter the kingdom. The issue is personal righteousness. He doesn't say, unless your society mends itself and becomes more sensitive to the poor and the widow and the orphan, the kingdom isn't going to come.

The kingdom is coming. Are you individually going to enter it? Well, your individual righteousness has to be better than that of the Pharisees. This explains, you have heard it said, but I say, this explains, blessed are these categories of people, because their personal righteousness, based on faith, motivated by hope, exercised in love, exceeds

what the Pharisees who received those seven woes were doing.

So critically important. There is an attack on your faith, on your understanding of the scriptures, based on the distinction between Israel and the church. It is ubiquitous.

It is manifest. It is powerful. It is emptying churches.

It is deflecting the few that are left, that are seeking to live by faith in the Son of God and the guidance of the Word and the power of the Spirit. Our fellow believers are dropping like flies. We are casualties from not understanding this principle.

And as I hope to have demonstrated this morning, we find the truth. When we look at the scriptures closely, we pay attention to detail. We reflect, meditate, compare scripture with scripture, and arrive at the truth that the Holy Spirit can use to lead us and to guide us and to create in us an environment where righteousness is at home.

We'll see more about this in the future. Happy Mother's Day. Hope the rest of your day is great.

And we'll resume our study, looking at the greatest of all events in human history, which is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, next Sunday morning. But we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the clarity with which you communicate your truth to us, and that if we have ears to hear, we can truly hear.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will find us receptive and attentive and open to having the seed of your Word planted deeply into the soil of our souls, so that we can bear that fruit that is in keeping with righteousness, 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold. The love, joy, peace, and patience, and all of those wonderful characteristics and attributes that define those who love you and are called according to your purpose. We pray that in all things, in every area of our lives, the Lord Jesus will be glorified, and we ask it in His name.

Amen.