

Text: Matthew 24:36-25:30

Section 1

36"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38"For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40"Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41"Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. 42"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43"But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44"For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. (Matthew 24:36-44)

We don't know when Christ is coming. Therefore, we must live each day as if it will be the last day on earth until He comes. If you're not saved, repent and believe *now* and be saved—tomorrow it might be too late! Beyond that, even if Jesus doesn't come back tomorrow, you might not live to see tomorrow. At our age, we typically expect to live another 50-60 years. Lord willing, that will indeed happen. But, it might not. Don't find yourself in the situation Jesus described in the following parable, in which a man absorbed in acquiring worldly wealth was suddenly dead and, apparently, unsaved. His wealth didn't follow him into death, and it certainly didn't save him!

13Someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." **14**But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?" **15**Then He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." **16**And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. **17**"And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' **18**"Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. **19**'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" **20**"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' **21**"So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:13-21)

Everyone that dies without Christ will find himself immediately in torment. Yes, at the end of the world all unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire, but until then the place where they go isn't great either. Jesus told his hearers what may have been a true story and not a parable about such an individual.

19"Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. **20**"And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, **21**and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. **22**"Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. **23**"In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. **24**"And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' **25**"But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. **26**'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' **27**"And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house--**28**for I have five brothers--in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' **29**"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' **30**"But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' **31**"But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:19-31)

"If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." That's a statement worth talking about for a moment. Nowadays there is no end of authors and evangelists promoting some new method, based on the "latest research" that is guaranteed to bring lost people into the Church and, supposedly, into God's Kingdom. Abraham, however, told the rich man that "**Moses and the Prophets**," in other words, the Word of God, was the only thing that could convince a sinner to repent. Paul said something similar:

17So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

Beware of anyone that has some “new” means of evangelism that ignores this important truth. God saves people by using us to confront them with the Truth of His Word. That means that we will share, from God’s Word, who He is, who we are, our sin and the consequences thereof, and the means to salvation. If they won’t repent and believe after being confronted with the Word, nothing else will do better.

Section 2

45"Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46"Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. 47"Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48"But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' 49and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; 50the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, 51and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:45-51)

Henry and Calvin agree that these last verses are discussing pastors and teachers—those that are to lead and instruct His people. James warns us that few should accept the role of teacher, since being in such a role brings **“a stricter judgment.”**

1Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

While Jesus commends those pastors and teachers that faithfully “feed” His people, he spends more time harshly condemning those that abuse their position and His people. Such individuals, perhaps those that preach a false gospel or, worse, deliberately pervert His message for the sake of financial gain (at the expense of those that follow them), are **“false prophets,”** and are destined for Hell if they don’t repent and believe the true Gospel.

15"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17"So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20"So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' (Matthew 7:15-23)

Section 3

1"Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2"Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. 3"For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. 5"Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. 6"But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7"Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8"The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9"But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' 10"And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11"Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' 12"But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' 13"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. (Matthew 25:1-13)

As we begin talking about this chapter, I want to revisit one important verse in Matthew 24:

13"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Matthew 24:13)

The Church is, as you know, full of professing Christians that are really not Christians at all. Brother Skip has a burden about this, as I’m sure you’ve noticed from his preaching. All of us need to make sure daily that this does not describe us!

In this parable, we have ten virgins going to take part in a marriage feast. I won’t go into the details of this custom because I haven’t studied it thoroughly, but suffice it to say for now that it was customary that ten of them participate, and there was a need for them to have lighted lamps ready. Among these ten virgins, five were prudent. They not only carried the oil in their lamps that they needed for the moment, but also some reserve if extra time was needed. The other group only took what was needful for the moment, and gave no thought to the future. Henry compares these to genuine Christians versus mere professors. Genuine Christians are possessed of a faith that is plentiful and enduring. Their “light” is steadfast even through trials, hardship, and the continued delay of Christ’s return. Mere professors of Christianity are so for the worldly benefits, for social and perhaps professional and political advancement. They associate with the Church only for benefits available in the here and now, and when difficulties or delays arise they fall away—their lamps burn out. This is similar to the two groups of “professors” Jesus described in the Parable of the Sower.

18"Hear then the parable of the sower. 19"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. 20"The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22"And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23"And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." (Matthew 13:18-23)

One of the challenges that Christians must endure is the continued delay of Christ's coming. We have no shortage of men today that think they know when His return will be, or at least they are sure it must be "soon." Such individuals have appeared throughout the history of the Church, and each time they have been proven wrong. This has presented great opportunity for enemies of the Faith to mock us, implying that His delay really means that there will be no second coming at all. Peter told us to prepare for this, and realize that we must remain faithful, and that our "lamps" must remain full as we anticipate His coming.

3Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." 5For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:3-9)

We do not know when He is coming. There are many out there that say "It's ok. I have plenty of time. I'm going to live it up now and then I'll 'get saved' when I'm ready." There are two problems with this: first, such people never are ready. Second, Jesus can come back at any time, and when He does it will be too late. The foolish virgins scrambled to get oil at the last minute, and wound up shut out from the feast.

42"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. 43"But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. 44"For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. (Matthew 24:42-44)

Let me remind you that when they set out for the feast both groups of virgins looked the same. Both had lamps lit, both were, I'm sure, properly dressed—visually, one could not tell the difference between the two. Likewise, in this life, true believers and false ones often have similar appearances. This makes it all the more important for each of us to:

5Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5)

How do we test ourselves? Look for the fruit!

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

John expounds even further on the topic of love as a necessary element of the Christian's life:

7Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. 13By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 15Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19We love, because He first loved us. 20If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. (1 John 4:7-21)

If we don't find that fruit in our lives, what do we do? Repent and believe. Fall on your knees before the Lord Jesus and beg His forgiveness and salvation. He has promised to save all that ask!

38Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39**"For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (Acts 2:38-39)

9that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; **10**for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. **11**For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." **12**For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; **13**for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:9-13)

Remember, a false profession may look good now, but in the end will not save. Jesus told us that many such individuals would be surprised at their predicament at the last judgment, much like the foolish virgins were. Don't be one of those people!

15"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16**"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? **17**"So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. **18**"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. **19**"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20**"So then, you will know them by their fruits. **21**"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. **22**"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' **23**"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (Matthew 7:15-23)

Section 4

14"For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. *15*"To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. *16*"Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. *17*"In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. *18*"But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. *19*"Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. *20*"The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' *21*"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' *22*"Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' *23*"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' *24*"And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. *25*'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' *26*"But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. *27*'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. *28*'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' *29*"For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. *30*"Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 25:14-30)

I have a group of verses that I want to read, and then we'll talk about this passage.

17"Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you. (Deuteronomy 16:17)

12For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; **13**for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. (Romans 2:12-13)

47"And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, **48**but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. (Luke 12:47-48)

22But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. **23**For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; **24**for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. **25**But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of

liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. 26If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. 27Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:22-27)

14What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19You believe that God is one You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:14-19)

19"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

So, we have three slaves, each of which was entrusted by his master with a sum of money. Each was given a different amount, depending on his own ability. God does not gift each individual equally, nor does He expect the same results from everyone. What He expects is 100% effort on the part of each of His slaves, which we are, if we are truly Christians. Notice that the slave that doubled his two talents received the same praise as the one that doubled his five talents. Whatever talents, abilities, knowledge, wealth God has given to us are to be thoroughly invested in His service. If we do that, we can expect to be rewarded.

What is damnable is to not employ what God has given to us in His service. If the slave with the one talent had put his talent to good and profitable use he would have been praised the same as the others. Instead, he used fear and perhaps even contempt for his Master as an excuse for laziness and sloth. We as Christians are to be busy about God's work, employing all of our faculties in His service. Paul condemned laziness on the part of professing believers.

10For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)

What does that passage have to do with obeying God? Remember, all work, when done with a Godly attitude, is honorable to Him, and even regarded as service to Him.

23Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Colossians 3:23-24)

As we close today, I want to take a closer look at verse 29:

' 29"For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

What does this mean? Remember, at the last day all of our works will be judged.

9For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 10According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:9-15)

As Christians, we have a sure Foundation in Jesus Christ. The things that we do for Him in this world are, by way of example, fine building materials: **gold, silver, precious stones**. Works that are worldly only are **wood, hay, and straw**. The latter will burn up at the judgment, and the former will remain. If we have any of the former, that will be retained, and we will be rewarded. If a true Christian has none of the former, he at least has the Foundation of Jesus Christ, and will be saved, **yet so as through fire** (though I suspect that no true Christian will be entirely lacking in these things). An unbeliever, however, does not have the sure Foundation of Jesus Christ, and surely does not build upon his foundation with precious materials—works that honor Christ. Therefore, the one that has Christ will receive more in reward for his service. The one that does not have Christ has only pitiful, worldly achievements that will be burned up, leaving him with nothing, and himself cast *into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. I pray that each of us has Jesus Christ for our Foundation, and that we are building upon that foundation each day with **gold, silver, and precious stones**.