

**Intro:** As I was growing up, I was taught **“In God We Trust,”** and that America was **“One Nation under God.”** There used to be a certain respect for the Name of God and those who were godly. What Happened? How did our country fall away from their Love for God? The simple answer: **Mankind has fallen in LOVE with SELF!**

In **(tt. 2 Tim 3:1-5)**, Paul prophesied that such **godlessness** would take place...**let’s READ it.** In this passage three things stand out here that are evidently widespread in these last days:

- Notice the phrase, *“in the Last days”* - In the time of **“Last days,”** things will only get worse! **Many in the church would forsake the vital essentials of Christianity.**
- Also, **men would be “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God!”** (*Consumed with self*)
- Especially in the church today *‘we see many professed Christians’* who have only a **‘Form of godliness but have No Power!’** – **Paul then warns true Christians to turn away from these!**

**Let’s face it people,** we live in a time when **people have forgotten what truly matters most!** A society has formed which is **not only godless** but is in fact **Anti-Christ** and **Antagonistic** towards God’s righteous standard. (*People believe that “they are their own God...i.e., divine! Wow!”*)

**As so,** I find it necessary to **STIR YOU UP** this morning, as we continue in Jesus’ teachings from His Olivet discourse. Within the selected passage, **(Matt 24:45-25:13)**, Jesus provided **Three Simple MATTERS which true believers must hold on to in these last days: \***

[READ]

**I. MATTER OF RETURN (24:44)** **“...The Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.** – Remember that Jesus gave **Signs of Warnings**, so that His people would not be caught **“Off-Guard,”** regarding the **MATTER OF HIS RETURN.**

**A. Jesus IS Coming Back Soon!** – **Do you believe this?** This factual event is accepted we **BY FAITH**, as it obviously has not happened yet! **We believe this because Jesus’ promises are faithful and true!** – In the Gospel of John, **Jesus spoke of HIS RETURN, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for, I will come again and receive you to myself; that I where am you may be also!”** (John 14:1-3) – If Jesus said it, I believe it! Because **Jesus’ Return is a Matter of Fact**, so He emphasized this to His disciples.

**B. Jesus instructs us to “Be Ready!”** – The Signs of Warning that Jesus provided in **(32-44)**, were threefold: **The Fig Tree illustration (32-36)**, **The Days of Noah (37-41)** and **The Illustration of the Thief (42-44)** were used to warn that **they will not know the hour.**

**CLOSING THOUGHT: Jesus’ Warnings must be Heeded** – Every Christian is therefore instructed to **hold on to His promises without wavering**, because we presently **dwell the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.** **Sadly, many in the church act as if Jesus will not return in their lifetime...this is dangerous!**

On this note, David Guzik says, **"The most dangerous lie is not "There is no God", not "there is no hell"; but the most dangerous lie of Satan is "there is no hurry."** – The fact of the matter is that it is only **A MATTER OF TIME** before **the Lord Returns** for His bride.

[READ]

**II. MATTER OF RESPONSE (45-51)** – This section teaches that it is just a **Matter Of Time** before our **Christian Servanthood will be assessed**. The assessment is driven by the phrase **"who then"** (v.45a), which causes us to examine the actions of the two servants. (COMPARE)

The Faithful Servant (45b-47)...	The Unfaithful/Evil Servant (48-51)...
Is made ruler over his masters kitchen (45b)	Assumes that he has time to play (48)
Is blessed when faithful with his assigned duties (46)	Treats others harshly (49a)
Is promoted with greater responsibility (47)	Pursues self-gratification (49b)

The Main Fact that we Need to Consider Most here is...

**A. The Response of Each Servant!** – A positive or a negative **response to his master**.

1. The **Faithful Servant was BLESSED** for his faithfulness. - He was given much more! **(Luke 16:10)** says, **"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."** (A principle, which can be applied to many forums in life.)

2. The **Evil Servant was JUDGED** for his unfaithfulness and worldly desires – As a result, he suffered much loss! – **W. Wiersbe** said, **"Worldly living begins when we forget Christ is coming back."** – If we profess to be Christians, then **we should be enamored with God's grace and love for us**. (1 John 3:1a) says, **Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!** (His love and acceptance of us should be motivation enough to remain pure!)

Another Fact to Consider in this Parable is that...

**B. The Master Returns at a Time when Not Expected (50)** – Notice that **"He will come when the evil servant IS NOT LOOKING for him!"** (i.e., Caught off guard)

The final thing to Consider in this Parable is...

**C. The Recompense for Unfaithfulness (v.51)** – Many believe that the punishment of the evil servant results in eternal damnation. However, in context I don't believe this is the case. **This speaks of the discipline Christ will exercise on unfaithful servants when He returns to give rewards**. The word **"hypocrites"** means **"unfaithful,"** which suggests that unfaithful Christians will **have sorrow and suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ** (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–11). [READ]

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** This parable exhorts us to **Serve Christ faithfully**, looking for His return every day. What a wonderful motive for service—to hear His **"Well Done!"** (25:23). If our motives are wrong and we serve to please people or to for selfish gain, we will lose the reward. Keep looking up!

**P/A** – **Have you found yourself slipping lately?** Maybe you have been faithful, but for some reason **you find yourself tired and burned out**. Maybe you are looking at others and see that they are unfaithful, so you let your guard down! Maybe you think that God doesn't see your faithfulness... let me assure you that He does, and **YOUR RESPONSE MATTERS!** Segway to my 3<sup>rd</sup> point...

**III. MATTER OF READINESS (25:1-13)** – This next parable is a **kingdom parable**, which calls for readiness and preparation. Many truths come from this parable, however as with all parables, it is not necessary to find meaning in each detail, such as **WHEN** Jesus would return.

**[READ and EXPLAIN]**

**A. The Party** – This was a **Jewish wedding**. All Jewish weddings included three separate time frames to complete the Wedding Ceremony:

1. **The Engagement:** This was an ‘Official’ contract/made by fathers.
2. **The Betrothal stage:** Was an ‘Official’ ceremony/vows and promises/officially married/binding.
3. **The Wedding:** This is when the groom comes to receive the bride, and when ‘the marriage’ is fully consummated.

**B. The Procession** – In Jewish wedding the bridegroom could show up at any time after the betrothal. – It could be day or night, morning or midnight, **no one ever knew what the exact hour would be**. But as soon as the groom appeared in the village to receive his bride, news spread quickly. Then those who were ready would accompany the bride and groom to the wedding celebration. **What then does this parable teach?**

1. **The Wedding** is figurative of the Great Marriage Supper of the Lamb (**Matt 22:1; Rev 19:7,9**)
2. **The Bridegroom** represents Jesus Christ who will consummate the marriage to his bride (*the Church*).
3. **The Bridesmaids** were the ten-virgins who each possessed a wedding garment and a lamp, (*cf. Matt 5:16*), which allowed their entrance into the wedding ceremony. However, this parable distinguishes between the bridesmaids: **5 were WISE and 5 were FOOLISH!** Also, **5 were PREPARED with OIL**, and **5 were NOT!**
  - The **WISE ones** kept their lamps *trimmed and burning*, they were prepared and watching for the bridegroom! **This signifies those who will enter into God’s Kingdom in the end of this age!**
  - The **FOOLISH ones** let their oil burn out and wanted to borrow oil. They were **NOT READY** for the bridegroom! **These bridesmaids represent those who are “Professed Christians” in the last days, who are NOT READY for the second coming of Jesus Christ!**

**C. The Point** – Once again, **the purpose of this parable is to warn us not to be caught in such unpreparedness when the Lord comes.** These foolish virgins were only outwardly committed, their faith is dead and therefore they had no light when it was required... **It was too late!**

P/A: Within the church today there are many people who are unredeemed and unprepared for the coming of our Lord... Does that shock you? – Notice the ratios provided in this parable, it wasn't just one bridesmaid without oil, but it was five, which is 50%! (Here's a thought...Is it possible that 50% of people who go to church may not even be saved? – So many play church!)

**CLOSING THOUGHTS: ARE YOU READY** for Jesus' return, because **it's just A MATTER OF TIME**. He could come at any moment. **Don't be unprepared or caught off guard**. When the door is shut, it is too late! W. Barclay said, ***"To live without watchfulness invites disaster."***

For the **BELIEVER**: **WATCH AND BE READY! (Luke 21:36)** – Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

- As we see world conditions shaping up, **we should be LOOKING UP**; redemption draws near **(Luke 21:28)**.

For the **UNBELIEVER**: If you are a person who says there is still plenty of time before the Lords return, **you are deceived**. Look around you, heck just watch the news!

- ***Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (Rev 3:20-21)***
- Accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, so that time of refreshing may come, and **so you will escape the wrath** which is about to be poured on this earth.