

Christ Church

## **“The Glorious Appearing”**

Passage: Matthew 24 & 15

Main Ideas: The World is Not Falling Apart; It’s Falling into Place  
It Matters How We Live

Doctrine: Prophecy/Second Coming/Works

### **PRAYER**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Theme of entire Bible from Genesis 3 on, when Adam & Eve sinned, is God restoring what was lost in the Garden; restoring *world* as God created it to be; restoring *our relationship* with Him as He created it to be, which is what will *fully & finally* happen when Jesus returns to set up God’s Kingdom on earth

- Second coming of Jesus, *His Glorious Appearing*, is the second-most frequently mentioned doctrine in all Bible; only the subject of salvation is mentioned more frequently
- Although there are various interpretations about *when* He may reappear, there is absolutely no question that Jesus *will* come again

One of most significant passages in Bible on subject of end times is Matthew 24 & 25; passage is also one of most difficult to interpret

- There are many different thoughts & it’s easy to get lost in the details so we’re going to look at simple meanings & big picture
- Important to remember that all prophecy is *not* given to fill our heads with facts; to win arguments & make charts & timelines
- Prophecy is not given to *inform* us but to *transform* us; any time the Bible gives glimpses into future, it’s to change how we live *right now*

### **Outline**

- I. Watch Carefully (Matthew 24:1-41)
- II. Wait Expectantly (Matthew 25:1-13)
- III. Work Faithfully (Matthew 25:14-46)

### **TWO MAIN IDEAS from Matthew 24 & 25**

**First:** The World is Not Falling Apart; it's Falling into Place

- God is absolutely Sovereign; He controls all drama in lives & world
- And not only is God Sovereign, He's purposeful; *Ephesians 1:11*: "He works all things according to the purpose of His will"; in spite of what may appear, everything is going according to wise, good plan
- Our World is Not Falling Apart; rather, it's Falling into Place

**2<sup>nd</sup> MAIN IDEA:** It Matters How We Live

- It matters how we live as we see God's plan falling into place
- It matters *now* because gives evidence we belong to Jesus; matters *now* as determines how much of God we experience in our lives; it matters how we live *now* as to how much God uses us in His work
- It matters *later* when Jesus returns as to whether or not we hear Him say, "Well done", or "I don't know who you are"
- It Matters How We Live

Open Scripture to Matthew 24 (Big Picture; questions afterwards)

**I. WATCH CAREFULLY (Matthew 24:1-41)**

Jesus leaves temple; crosses Kidron Valley; meets privately with disciples on Mt of Olives (Garden of Gethsemane) = Olivet Discourse

- *24:1-2* Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple
- Disciples assumed Jesus was talking about end times, which He was, but Jesus was *also* predicting a destruction that would take place in 70 AD when Rome captured Jerusalem & destroyed temple

Nature of prophecy: Prophetic Mountains (talked about in *Matthew 2*)

- Prophecies are often difficult to understand because they contain multiple fulfillments, which writers & readers didn't see
  - For example, two comings of Messiah were perceived as one event, which is why so many Jews didn't accept Jesus as their Messiah
  - They took prophecies which said Messiah would overcome the world & set up His Kingdom on earth & applied those to His first coming
  - But in His first coming, Jesus came to suffer for their sins, die on cross, & rise again, without which there would be no forgiveness of sins and no eternal life and no eternal kingdom of God on earth
  - If we see key prophecies of Jesus' *two* comings as mountaintops & other events like church age (now) & Tribulation period as valleys, then much of what we read in Bible prophecies becomes clearer
- So, Jesus predicts downfall of temple in *near* future (40 years) as a guarantee that everything else He's going to predict will come true

- 24:4-12, Jesus gives a panoramic view of history between His first & second comings; He says that throughout history there will be things happening, painful things, but they are not signs that the end of the world is near
- “*Beginning*” of birth pains; this is just the start, but, like birth pains, they will increase in intensity & regularity; climax during Tribulation leading directly up to Jesus’ second coming
- Birth pains include what’s going on in whole world: Imposters; false messiahs; wars; natural disasters like famines & earthquakes
- Birth pains include what’s happened to believers throughout history: Persecution; suffering; many fall away & betray each other; lawlessness will increase & love of many for Jesus will grow cold
- For 2,000 years all these have been happening, but Jesus said don’t be frightened; God’s plan is falling into place; that’s why in verse 6 Jesus said these things “*must*” take place – why?

Verses 13 & 14 shed light on a couple of God’s purposes in pains:

- Verse 13: “*But the one who endures to the end will be saved*”
- *Suffering separates* true from false believers (Parable of soils)
- Endurance is NOT what saves us; it’s proof we are saved
- True believers don’t fall away; persevere because God’s holding us
- Those who walk away from Jesus prove were never truly saved

A second purpose for what we see happening in world is in Verse 14: “*And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come*”

- *Suffering provides a platform* for proclaiming Gospel like few other things do; people are more open to listening when suffering, & we are more likely to share Jesus when living in world full of suffering

If you’ve studied end times, may have opinion on Rapture of church, *when & if* it happens; Jesus doesn’t teach Rapture in Olivet Discourse; He leaves that primarily to Paul in Corinthians & Thessalonians

- Matthew 24:15-28 describe a period known as the Tribulation
- Verses 29-41 describe Jesus’ second coming following Tribulation
- Jesus says He will appear like lightning across a dark sky
- No one will miss it; there will be no question as to *Who* He is & *whether* or not He came

But people won’t expect it; verse 38, Jesus says His coming will be like in the days before the flood; people were “*eating & drinking; marrying & giving in marriage; unaware until flood came & swept them away*”

- It's so easy, especially in America, to be distracted by delights of marriage & kids & vacations & careers; easy to live like this life is all there is; that's why passages like this are in Bible
- We must *Watch Carefully*; Jesus IS coming back; we don't know *when* He will return, but we must be ready when He does

## **TRANSITION**

What does it look like to *Watch Carefully*? Jesus gives 2 *Parables* to illustrate = a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning

- NOT like allegory where each thing represents something else
- Parables are big picture truths with 1 or 2 main points

And, in *Parables of 10 Virgins & Talents*, focus is NOT on people who are obviously lost, like those who perished in flood; Jesus is focusing on "look-alikes"; people who *look like* believers, people who think they are saved, but who prove by their actions they're really not

- Both are parables of warning; of separation & final judgment
- Both illustrate that it really does matter how we live

## **II. WAIT EXPECTANTLY (Matthew 25:1-13)**

Parable of 10 Virgins; don't over-analyze; simple theme, Jesus coming back unexpectedly, so be prepared; *Wait Expectantly* for His coming

### Scene of Parable is a Wedding

- A Jewish wedding was greatest social event in town; 3 parts:
  1. Engagement where official contract made between parents
  2. Betrothal with an official ceremony & vows; couple officially married, but no physical consummation; lasted 1 year or longer as groom prepared house for couple to live in (*John 14*)
  3. When house is ready, groom comes to take bride into house & consummate marriage; feast & celebration lasting up to 7 days

10 virgins represent bridesmaids: All carried an oil "lamp" like a bouquet; identified them as part of the wedding party; all were waiting for bridegroom to come, and all fall asleep – that's not the issue

- Though they all look alike, they were NOT alike; 5 wise & 5 foolish
- Wise took "*flasks of oil*" with lamps; foolish took lamps but no oil
- Oil in Bible most often represents the Holy Spirit

Every true believer has Holy Spirit living inside; proof of salvation

- 2 Timothy 4:8: True believers "*love appearing of bridegroom*"; love Jesus; that's what the Holy Spirit does – creates love for Jesus

- Foolish virgins had a little oil in lamps because liked shiny lamps; liked being identified with wedding party, but didn't love bridegroom
- Not prepared for His coming; not *Waiting Expectantly* for Him

Bridegroom (Jesus): Big picture is that He will return at an unexpected time, & once He comes, there won't be time to get ready

- It's not that the wise virgins were selfish not to share their oil; not that they *wouldn't* – they *couldn't*; salvation is non-transferable
- We cannot give others love for Jesus; that's what Holy Spirit does
- No love for Jesus means He doesn't know you personally; closes door; parable of judgment; once the door closes, it's shut forever

It matters how we live; *the only sure way to be ready on an unexpected day is to be ready every day*

- Waiting doesn't mean sitting on mountaintop staring up into sky
- Those who *Wait Expectantly* are also those who *Work Faithfully*

Have to be careful when we talk about “works” that we understand the place of works in the life of a believer; we are NOT saved by works

- Saved by grace alone through faith alone trusting in Jesus alone
- Grace produces love for Jesus so *Wait Expectantly* for Him (wise)

But Jesus said in John 14, “*If you love Me, you will obey Me*”

- Jesus is not saying “Get to work”; He's stating a fact
- Works are proof we do love Jesus, & we do have the Holy Spirit living in us to enable & empower us to *Work Faithfully*

### **III. WORK FAITHFULLY (Matthew 25:14-46)**

Parable of the Talents: Man goes on long journey; entrusts servants with his property, “*talents*”, in different measures

- Gives 5 talents to one; 2 to another; 1 to a third
- In Bible, a talent was a measure of money; in parable, represents anything we've been given to be used in the power of the Holy Spirit to glorify God; to make Him look good; to put Him on display
- Time; personality; gifts; education; opportunities; money; health
- When Jesus returns, we will give account for how we used them

In parable, when master returns, both 5-talent & 2-talent servants have doubled them, & they both receive the same reward: Verse 21: “*Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.*”

- It's not the amount of what we've been given that matters, but what we do with what we've been given
- It matters how we live; our reward will be joy; more opportunities to serve Jesus & experience presence of Jesus right now & in heaven

But, like third servant, a wrong view of God results in hiding what He's given us

- Not believing everything we are & everything we have are gifts from God to be used for Him; not believing Jesus will return & that we will be held accountable for what we've done with His stuff
- By his actions, third servant exposes what's in his heart; not saved
- Parable of separation – worthless servant is cast into hell
- To do nothing is proof that we do not love Jesus, do not belong to Him, & have no share in His kingdom; & it is to perish forever

Verses 31-46 also speak of *Working Faithfully* as proof that we belong to Jesus; interestingly, it also teaches *works* as basis for separation

- But, in judgment of sheep & goats, Jesus distinguishes sharply between false believers and true based on how they treat others
- Remember 2 greatest commandments? Love God & love others
- When we love God rightly (like the wise virgins; the 5-talent & 2-talent servants), we will love & serve people right

Picture of final judgment where King Jesus returns & judges all people

- Separates true believers from false believers; the wheat from tares
- Puts true believers (sheep) on right = Verse 34: “*Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” – God chose us to be in His family before He created the world; not because of how good we are, but because of how Good He is; that's why Jesus says we're “*blessed*”
- Jesus says when we serve others, we're really serving Him
- Verse 35: “*I was hungry & you fed me; thirsty & you gave me drink; a stranger & you welcomed me; naked & you clothed me; in prison & you visited me*” = ordinary things anyone can do
- Loving & serving others flows out of our love for God; Holy Spirit does that in us so that our service is not a sacrifice, but a joy

The goats (unbelievers) are surprised when they are sent into eternal punishment simply because they didn't do these ordinary things

- Matthew 23 “*Woes*”: Religious leaders of Jesus' day did their deeds to be seen by others (fasting, praying); loved place of honor at feasts & best seats in synagogues; loved being called rabbi; wouldn't be caught dead feeding a beggar on street or visiting someone in prison

Surprising emphasis in both *Parable of Talents* and the *Judgment of Sheep & Goats* is on *works*; people were judged by what they did

- Works DO NOT save us; but works are *necessary* evidence that we are saved; fruit of our faith, not the root of it; “*if it’s faith, it works*”
- We are NOT justified by works, but we cannot claim to be a Christian if we do not have works
- And notice that these works are not “great” things but little things; things we *faithfully* do for others in our daily lives which are the overflow of a heart filled with *Holy-Spirit-produced* love for God

## **CLOSING**

We live in a broken world & “we groan”; some things just don’t “get better”; even when we know Jesus, we don’t always “just get over it”

- For Christians, our greatest happiness in this life comes from knowing that our greatest happiness is not in this life
- Knowing that no matter how things appear, the world is not falling apart; it’s all falling into place
- Many different views on *when & how* it all happens, but we all agree on one thing, Jesus wins; & by His amazing grace, we win with Him

But the reality is that it matters how we live – right now & later

- Proof that we belong to Jesus is that we are *Watching Carefully & Waiting Expectantly*; prepared to meet Him when He comes
- And, we are *Working Faithfully* right now to serve Him by serving others with whatever He’s given us until He comes or until we go
- And, since Jesus has not yet returned & since we’re still alive, our work is not yet done

## **PRAYER**