

Matthew: His Life And His Gospel

– Part 15

Matthew 24:1-2 [New King James] *“Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’”*

Jesus Christ is giving us a composite vision of the future from what would happen in the lifetime of His first disciples until His Second Coming.

These first two verses refer to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD70.

Matthew 24:3-4 [New King James] *“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’ And Jesus answered and said to them: ‘Take heed that no one deceives you.’”*

Jesus Christ was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the very place that the prophet Zechariah had predicted that the Messiah would stand when He returned to establish His Kingdom, [Zechariah 14:4].

It was a fitting place for the disciples to ask Jesus Christ when He would come in power and what they could expect then.

Jesus Christ then emphasised the events that would take place before His Second Coming.

Jesus Christ pointed out that His disciples should be less concerned about knowing the exact date and more concerned with being prepared for His return.

Matthew 24:5 [New King James] *“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”*

The fact is that whoever looks for signs will become susceptible to being deceived.

There are many false prophets around with counterfeit signs of spiritual power and authority in every generation.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-9 [New King James] *“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,”*

Behind all these false prophets is Satan who gives them the power needed for “signs and wonders,” blinding people to the gospel message, [2 Corinthians 4:4] and acting as if what he and his human ministers preach is the truth, [2 Corinthians 11:14-15].

Matthew 24:5-9 [New King James] *“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.”*

True Christians will face intense persecution as we see happening even now in many countries.

Matthew 24:10-13 [New King James] *“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”*

Under the pressure of persecution some will lose the love of God in them and grow cold in their attitude towards fellow Christians. **Endurance, the result of well-founded faith in Jesus Christ, is the only way through this testing time.**

Matthew 24:14 [New King James] *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”*

Nothing will stop the preaching of the gospel message of what Jesus Christ has done for all humanity, even those who are hostile towards Him and the message He brought from the Eternal God.

Matthew 24:15-20 [New King James] *“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.”*

Matthew is referring to the prophecy given by God through Daniel, [**Daniel 11:31; Daniel 12:11**].

In the end-times the antichrist will set up an image of himself and order everyone to worship it, [2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Revelation 13:1-18].

Some of these events have already happened in part, but will come to a head just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 24:21-26 [New King James] *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it.”*

Jesus Christ is telling us of these events so that we will not be taken by surprise when we see them happening, or deceived by many false prophets.

Matthew 24:27-31 [New King James] *“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*

The return of Jesus Christ will be unmistakable, [Mark 13:24-27] no-one will doubt that it is Jesus Christ who has returned to the earth, this time as “*King of kings and Lord of lords,*” [Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:11-16].

The nations of the earth will mourn, [verse 30] because unbelievers will suddenly realise they have chosen the wrong side, human society instead of Jesus Christ. The message that had been preached by true Christians, that they had scoffed about, was happening before their very eyes.

Matthew 24:32-35 [New King James] “*Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*”

God’s physical creation is powerful evidence as to His power, wisdom and character.

Romans 1:18-25 [New King James] “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*”

People who claim to have great intelligence have sought to suppress what God’s physical creation tells us about Him, by trying to get us to believe in evolution, so there is no need for a Creator God.

[Please download and study the articles on this website under the main heading ‘*Evolution – The Delusion Of.*’ You will be eternally grateful that you did.]

Matthew 24:36-39 [New King James] “*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*”

These verses confirm that the time of these events is known only to God. It is therefore clear that any speculation regarding the time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is nothing less than blasphemy, for the person who so speculates is seeking to wrest from God secrets which belong to God alone. Our duty is to prepare ourselves for that event.

These verses tell us that the time will come with shattering suddenness on those who are immersed in material matters.

In the account of Noah’s flood, Noah prepared for it in calm weather, so when it came he was ready. But the rest of humanity were completely caught up with physical domestic affairs and were therefore swept away, [Genesis chapters 6-8].

However necessary worldly affairs are, they can completely distract us from remembering there is a God and that the issues of life and death are in His hands, and whenever He chooses for our physical life to end, [Ecclesiastes 8:8]. We have no power to change it. That day will be for us the time of Jesus Christ’s Second Coming.

These verses tell us that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will be a time of separation and of judgement.

Beyond these things we cannot go, for God has kept the ultimate knowledge to Himself and to His wisdom.

Matthew 24:40-44 [New King James] *“Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

To live without watchfulness is to invite disaster; a thief does not send us a letter to tell us when he is going to burgle a house.

The watching is not so much world events but the quality of our personal relationship with our Creator God, only then can we be watching with eager expectation for the Second Coming of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:10-18 [New King James] *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”*

Realising that the surface of the earth is going to be burnt up, we should put our confidence and time in what is lasting and eternal and not be bound to the earth and its treasures and pursuits.

Grace of God and the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ and His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, are “*fire-proof*” and eternal.

Matthew 24:45-51 [New King James] *“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Jesus Christ is telling us to spend our time waiting for His return taking care of His people and doing His work of witness here on earth, both within and outside the Church fellowship. This is the best way to prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Knowing that Jesus Christ’s return will be sudden and unexpected should motivate us always to be prepared. **We are not to live irresponsibly, sitting and waiting, doing nothing but self-serving pleasures. Developing a false security based on world events or letting our curiosity about the “end times” divert us from doing the work of witness, [Matthew 5:13-16].**

The most dangerous of all delusions, prompted by Satan, is that there is plenty of time to “*think about spiritual things,*” this I have heard being said by many young people, even my own grandchildren.

There are things we cannot put off, for no person knows if for them tomorrow will ever come, [James 4:13-17].

Matthew 25:1-13 [New King James] *“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”*

First of all notice that all involved were “*virgins,*” that indicates that they were all freed from sin by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In other words, this parable is directed to Christians, and gives us two universal warnings.

1) There are certain things that cannot be obtained at the last moment of our lives.

It is all too easy to leave things so late in our Christian lives that we are no longer ready to meet with Jesus Christ on the day of personal judgement, [2 Corinthians 5:10-12].

John 15:1-11 [New King James] *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”*

A close relationship with Jesus Christ is essential if we are to be prepared to meet with Him on our judgement day. We do not wish to hear the words “*I do not know you,*” [Luke 13:22-27].

We cannot have this close relationship with Jesus Christ unless the Spirit of Jesus Christ, [Romans 8:9] the Holy Spirit, is leading our lives into the truth, [John 16:13] and developing in us the very character of God, [Galatians 5:22-25].

The oil that gave light to the virgins’ lamps is symbolic of the Holy Spirit and He is not Someone we can borrow from another person.

The Holy Spirit is only given to those who obey God, [Acts 5:32] and He is a being we have to ask God the Father to give to us personally, [Luke 11:13] and who will eventually give us eternal life, [Romans 8:11].

Matthew 25:14-30 [New King James] *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents,*

to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

What does this parable tell us about our lives and how God will judge it in the end?

1) **It tells us that God gives people different gifts, [1 Corinthians 12:4-11]** all through the Holy Spirit and intended to be used to serve other human beings.

It is not a person's talent which matters, what matters is how they use it. God never demands from a person abilities which they have **not** received from Him.

God does demand that every person should use to the full the abilities they do possess.

Humans are **not** equal in talents or abilities, but we can all be equal in the effort we make to use that talent to the full.

2) **It tells us that the reward of work well done is still more opportunities to serve humanity in a greater way.**

3) **It tells us that people who do not try to use the talent or ability they have received from God will lose this talent and be punished by God for not using it to serve other human beings.**

Matthew 25:31-46 [New King James] "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to

you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The lesson of this parable is crystal clear. God will judge our lives in accordance with our reaction to human need.

God’s judgement does **not** depend on the knowledge we have amassed, or the fame that we have acquired, or the fortune we have gained, but on the help we have given.

There is also in this parable a guideline of the simple help we are to give to other human beings, a meal to someone who is hungry, a drink to one thirsty, welcome to a stranger, cheering the sick, visiting the prisoner; these are things anyone can do.

It must be help that is quite uncalculating. Those who helped did not think that they were helping Jesus Christ, and thus piling up eternal merit. **They helped because they had developed the heart and mind of a servant, [Matthew 20:28].**