

THE LATTER PARABLES OF JESUS

Message 15

Scripture: Matthew 24:45-51

INTRO: We have before us this morning the parable of two servants in Matthew 24:45-51. One was believing, or faithful; and the other failed to continue to believe and became evil. But before we look at that, let me take a moment to review where we are.

The first six parables had the time of Christ as their central point. The first parable took place just before Jesus arrived at Jericho on His last trip to Jerusalem before He died. From Jericho He is within one day travel to Jerusalem. And just before He arrived at Jericho He gave the parable of the landowner who had a vineyard. The vineyard is a picture of Israel. As I see it, Jesus gave Israel's history pictured in 12 hours, and the last would be first and the first last because many were chosen but few chose Him.

In the next parable, because they expected Him to set up His kingdom immediately, he gave a parable of the ten minas. In essence He told them I am leaving for quite some time and I have given all of you a work to do, so be faithful and do it. When Jesus arrived at Jerusalem and cleansed the temple twice. And there He cursed the fig tree that did not bear fruit though it had leaves. And the picture is that of Israel being set aside until the time of the end.

Jesus then directed his next three parables at the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus had twice disrupted business in the temple and cleansed it of those who sold and those who exchanged money there as business for the Passover. And the religious leaders were angry about that, but they were also afraid of Him, so they asked Him by what authority He did all these things. So He gave them the parable of the two sons. Israel was pictured as the son who said he would go but did not and thus did not enter the kingdom. The rejected people of the day, however, entered the kingdom.

Then Jesus gave these religious leaders the parable of the rented vineyard. God had prepared a vineyard and lent it out to sharecroppers. This pictured the Jews. The fruit God expected was righteousness, but when He sent servants to collect, the servants were mistreated and sent back empty. Finally God sent His Son, and they said, "Let's kill Him, and the whole thing will be ours."

The sixth and last parable of this time period was that of a wedding for a king's son. The first guests that were invited pictured the Jews at the time of Christ. They made many excuses and did not come. The king destroyed them and burnt their city. The Jews and Jerusalem have been set aside now for some 2,000. The second call, as I interpret the parable, speaks of God's call to the world in the tribulation. When the king came to see the guests he saw one that did not have a wedding garment and he was cast into hell. This is the judgment at the end of the tribulation.

It was after this that the disciples showed Jesus the temple and Jesus said that one stone would be left on another there. And as they left Jerusalem, Jesus told them many things that would happen in the future. And when they arrived at the top of the Mount of Olives and could look back over the city, the disciples came to Him privately and said, "Tell us, when will all these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming? And what will be the sign of the end of the age?"

And so, in Matthew 24:3-31 He gives them all these events in chronological order, ending with Christ's coming back down to the earth at the end of the tribulation. And in my interpretation, He then concentrated on telling them what would be the sign of His coming. That sign is related to the fig tree, which pictures Israel. Other signs were many coming in the name of Christ and wars and rumors of wars and unrest in between nations and unrest in nature. I think the crucial time here centers around 1948, when Israel became a nation and the nations of the world and the earth itself began to experience more and more unrest, just as we see it today.

In the first parable, that of the fig tree, we have the promise that Israel will not be annihilated, an effort that has never yet ceased and we see it going on today. After this Jesus then cautioned that we cannot know the day or the hour of His coming and we need to be ready at all times. He used the illustration of Noah. Jesus then illustrated why believers must always be on the alert for His coming for them. Luke gave the setting. He said, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly for it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 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. Jesus gives several parables on

watchfulness. And Jesus said in Mark's Gospel, "What I say to you, I say to all, 'Watch.'" And all of this now prepares us to look at the parable of the two servants.

J. The Two Servants (Matt. 24:45-51)

1. The Parable

We have before us then, this morning the parable of the faithful servant and the evil servant. We have had numerous exhortations to watch because we do not know the day or the hour when the Lord is coming. The Lord had said we might know when we are getting close. There will be signs. I understand that to be the beginning of all those things he said in 24:4-8.

But then in verse 36 He said we cannot know the day or the hour. That is, we will not know the precise time, and He likened the time of His coming to the days of Noah. They did not know until the day the flood came and took them all away. Then He said that when He comes, two men will be in the field, one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be making bread, one will be taken and one left. And then He gave warning: Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour or in what watch your Lord is coming. And He gave the parable of the servants and the porter, and He gave the exhortation to watch again. Then He gave the parable of the master of the house and the coming of the thief and again He gave the exhortation to watch.

As I put the Gospels together, it is after this that we have Matthew 24:45-51 (read).

2. The Setting (32-41)

The setting of this parable is all the watch passages and Luke's Gospel which records that Jesus said, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 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."

3. Interpretation

a. The faithful servant

We come then to the interpretation of our present parable. We have in this parable a servant who remains faithful, and a servant who does not remain faithful. We begin with the faithful servant. Now I want you to notice what Jesus said. He said, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant..." Note that we have two things. First, this servant is faithful. Now the word translated faithful is 'pistos'. You are well familiar with the verse that says, "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever 'believes'..." The word translated 'believes' is pisteuo. It is a verb that has the same root as our word 'faithful' pistos. Note further, that when it says the just shall live by faith, it is pistis. The words faithful, believing, and faith all have the same root. They mean to believe or to have faith or to be faithful.

I want to recommend to you that the faithful servant is the one who continues to believe in Jesus and that Jesus could come at any time and that he ought to be doing what he was commanded to do. You see, almost all the places where we are instructed to believe are present tense verbs. Listen to me carefully, as I give John 3:16 like that, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that 'whosoever goes on believing in Him goes on having eternal life..." It is not 'whoever has ever once believed'. It is whoever goes on believing. The servant in our passage is faithful, he goes on believing.

Second, he is a wise servant. Why is he wise? Because he goes on believing, because he knows Christ could come at any time. That is our context. He knows if he diddles or doddles a little, he may end up on the wrong path altogether as Luke warned us in the overeating and overdrinking and over doing looking after the cares of this life. This servant is wise.

Now I want you to notice how the faithful and wise servant is rewarded. It says the master made him

ruler over his household, to give them food in due season. What does that mean? Well go back to Matthew 19 (read 28-29). The regeneration is the millennium. And in the millennium the disciples of Christ and the believers of this age will have ruling roles. They will co-rule with Christ. The rewards for the believer in the coming age for faithfulness in this present age go beyond our comprehension.

Go with me to 1 Corinthians 6 (read 1-2). Well, when will this happen? Well, go with me to Revelation 20 (read 1-4). There is a theological question that has stumped theologians over the years. It is this: to whom does the pronoun 'they' in 'they sat upon them'. There is no near antecedent that fits. It is my view that it refers to the Church of the previous chapter. It is the believer that will here fulfil 1 Corinthians 6:1-2, at least in part. No matter what the believer must live through in this life, it will be more than worth it some day!

Now, in verses 46-47 we have the application of the first part of the parable made to the faithful servant. Jesus said in verse 46, "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing." Will find 'how' doing? Watching! And if he is watching, he will not be letting carousing and drinking and the cares of this life taking over. The servant that continues to watch is a blessed servant. He may experience many trials and much derision in this world, but blessed is the man or woman whom God finds watching!

So, as I interpret this parable, the Lord of this servant comes for him at the catching up of the Church before the tribulation. He is indeed a blessed man. And note now verse 47. Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods!" That is the millennial promise for today's believer!

b. The evil servant

We come then in verse 48 to these words, "But if that evil servant..." And we ask, what evil servant?

Notice first that he was a servant, just like the first one. He was a saved man. Then notice again, he says, "My master is delaying His coming." The Lord is his master at one point in life.

Now let me mention that this passage and a few others like it have been a great difficulty for those who believe in the doctrine that a believer cannot forfeit his salvation. This man is a servant just like the previous one. He owns Jesus as Lord, just like the first one. But he becomes an evil servant. Now, if this servant represents a believer, and one holds the position that a believer can never forfeit his salvation, how then can this verse be explained?

In Matthew 25:14-30 we have another long parable. Look at verse 14 (read). Note, he called 'his own' servants. We will look at this parable later, but three servants are here spoken of. But the last servant was disobedient and look at what happens to him in verses 28-30 (read). Now I ask you, where is this place called 'outer darkness'?

Well, a number of the teachers of the view that a believer cannot forfeit his salvation have come to this position. Since the Christian is referred to as a servant and thus must be saved, and since a believer cannot be lost, then the place of outer darkness and the place of gnashing of teeth must be a place in heaven. So, how could this possibly be made to work?

So here is what they have discovered. There is another place in heaven where these people go. He is a second rate Christian but he will go to heaven. He will go to a place called the Gizrah, or the outer court. Connection is made between 'outer darkness' and the 'outer court' of the temple described by Ezekiel. Ah, that solves the problem. It is a place in heaven, but it is a place for bad Christians. It is a place of 'outer darkness' and 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' but it is in this temple so it is in heaven.

Listen to Nancy Missler, wife of Chuck Missler. She writes, "Finally, the phrase *outer darkness*

(Strong's 1857, *exoteros*, and Strong's #4655, *skotos*), which we talked about in the last article, means the 'darkness outside' and is so rendered in the new International Standard Version of the Bible. It's simply *the darkness outside the light of God's presence*. It's another region or another area outside of where the joy of the Lord was being experienced by the first two faithful and obedient servants. It's a place outside the room where the obedient servants are enjoying God's presence, but evidently contiguous to it. The unprofitable can see what is going on in the other region, but he cannot enter in. He is a castaway—he was cast out of fellowship. Now we might be able to understand a little more clearly why Paul was so apprehensive about being a 'castaway' (1 Corinthians 9:27). In this darkness outside, the unfaithful servant will experience weeping and gnashing of teeth, which simply means 'profound regret'." Later she writes, "Many of us have been so influenced by our preconceived ideas about certain terms in the Bible that it's often very difficult for us to be open to new ideas and new interpretations", end quote.

The new idea we are encouraged to be open to is that heaven has a second rate place for evil Christians. And maybe you say, "Surely not too many believe something this outlandish!" Well, there are Chuck and Nancy Missler; Charles Stanley; Kenneth Wuest in his Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament says, "The outer darkness is the darkness that is outside of the King's banqueting house." It would seem he is saying it is not hell! Then there is Erwin Lutzer; Thayer's Greek/English Lexicon says that the outer darkness is, "the darkness outside the limits of the lighted palace." Dr. Spiros Zodhiates; Warren Wiersbe, and Tony Evans in the Prophecy Study Bible quoting Zane Hodges.

I have mentioned that there is no use believing in a pretribulational rapture only because you find it more comforting than other views. One must seek the most Scriptural view. The same holds true to the outer darkness and hell. You need to be aware of this teaching and to be beware of it.

Now, back in our passage, notice that this servant said, "My master is delaying his coming." He did not say, "My master is not coming." He said, "My master is taking much longer than I expected." And expecting more time yet, he begins to slack off, thinking it will be a lot longer yet. So notice in verse 49 what happens. He begins to mistreat his fellow servants. You see, a Christian who expects his Lord to come at any time would not do that. It begins here with being rough with his servants.

Second, he now wanders from the place of fellowship with believers to sitting with the wrong crowd. He begins to eat and drink with the drinkers. Now it does not say he gets drunk. He hangs out with them. Do you see the progression? And the Lord does not have to tell us what eventually happens. Eventually, according to the law that 'birds of a feather flock together,' he eventually begins to do what unbelievers do. He has slipped off the path entirely. Why? He failed to watch!

No doubt we could say he was unfaithful. The first servant was faithful. And if the same rule holds here that I recommended in the first case, he does not continue to believe. He becomes an unbeliever! A believer has become an unbeliever! How? He failed to watch.

There are those who say that those who teach that Christ will come before the tribulation are not preparing their people for the antichrist and the tribulation. But could it be that they, who are preparing their people for the antichrist and the tribulation are not preparing their people for the imminent return of Christ? For them, he is delaying His coming for at least seven years yet. And with that view, the danger of slacking off increases considerably.

2 Peter 3:3-4 says, "...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

Then Peter says this, "For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Now note the application that is made to the evil servant in verses 50-51 of our text (read). The master of that evil servant will come in a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour he is not aware of. Now, we must ask ourselves when will the Lord of this servant come? Is this when Jesus comes for His own at the rapture? I believe the Lord's coming for this servant is at the end of the tribulation, the second coming.

Here is the picture I propose to you. This man, who was a Christian, said, "My Lord is delaying his coming." And he begins to live badly and to company with the wrong crowd and ultimately rejects the faith. And so he is not ready when the Lord comes for his own. And the righteous are caught up and he is left behind.

Now I want to ask you a question. If a person was once a believer, and then he rejects the Lord, and then the rapture happens, would he then not suddenly become a believer? I know a man who came under deep convictions of his sin at times. And he said, "If the rapture happens, then I will know the Bible is true, and then I will give my life to the Lord." This man had a lovely wife and children who were already 10 or 12 years old. And then he got interested in another woman and dropped his wife and children and to this day lives with this second woman who was also married and had children as well, and to this day they are living together.

Such a person as I just mentioned, and believers who reject the Lord, will be deceived when the rapture happens. If I see it right, right after the rapture happens the man of sin, the antichrist comes along. Go with me to 2 Thessalonians 2 (read 6-12). Here we are told that antichrist's coming is

with all power, signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish.

What will happen to this servant who left his Lord or the man I told you about before? Without doubt, they will believe what the antichrist says. The people who enter the tribulation are deceived by the antichrist. And how could a person who was once a believer be so deceived if the rapture actually took place? Well, note the second part of verse 10. It is because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Now note what it says in verses 11-12 (read). There are speculations as to what 'the lie' will be. We do not know what it will be but no doubt it will make a lot of sense.

I was reading just recently about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was a pastor when Hitler rose to power and the second World War began. And as unbelievable as it seems to us in hindsight, the many of the Lutheran Church pastors, the church that Bonhoeffer was in, hailed Hitler as the Messiah of the church! Let me read for you what they said, "through God's providence our beloved fatherland has experienced a mighty exaltation!" One pastor said, "Christ has come to us through Adolf Hitler!" (pg. 30). It is not hard to see then what the antichrist will do with such people as are pictured for us in this servant.

Now, our passage says that when the Lord comes, this servant who turned to become evil will be appointed his portion with the hypocrites. But 2 Thessalonians speaks of unbelievers not hypocrites. But in Luke 12 we learn that not only is he appointed his portion with the hypocrites, but with the unbelievers as well. Go with me for a moment to Luke 12. This passage is given quite some time earlier than where we are now, but you will notice the similarities of topic (read 35-46). In Matthew Jesus said that this evil servant would be appointed his portion with the hypocrites. We will see that in another parable. But note here that he is appointed his portion with the unbelievers, as well as with the hypocrites. So, those who reject

the faith; the hypocrites and unbelievers all go to the same place.

We go back to Matthew 24:50. It says the Lord of this servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour that he is not aware of. I propose this is the second coming of Jesus when He comes at the end of the tribulation to judge the world and to set up His kingdom. And at this judgment, which we will look at in much more detail later, the unbeliever is cast into hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

4. The Application (46-47 and 50-51)

So, let me now make application of this parable to both servants. We have the application to the faithful servant in verses 46-47 (read). The first servant, the faithful, believing servant, is caught up to the Lord when He comes for His bride. He will become a co-ruler with Christ in the millennium. And why was he caught up? He was faithful to the Lord. He was constantly on the watch.

The application to the second servant is found in verses 50-51 (read). This servant failed to continue to believe, missed the catching up and fell into the antichrist's lies and in the end, he was appointed his portion with the hypocrites and the unbelievers. And why did this servant believe the antichrist's lie? Because he failed to continue to believe the truth. He failed to remain watchful.

But look at his end. A person who once knew the Lord Jesus will be appointed his portion with the hypocrites, and we found in Luke that it was with the unbelievers as well. Let us go back to Luke 12 for one more thought (read 45-46). Now consider how our Lord closes this section in verses 47-48 (read). Those who fall back into sin and ultimately end up going to hell will receive a much worse punishment in eternity future. Such is the justice of God.

CONCL: In conclusion, we have had pictured for us a faithful servant and one who turned to become evil. May I ask you this morning, if you were to be judge of yourself at this moment, and you were to move the gauge of your spirituality to a number

between 1 and 10, 10 being best, where would you evaluate your spiritual life? May I ask you, in your own evaluation, is it going down or up? I have a weather temperature gauge at home and it shows if the temperature is rising or going down. May I ask you, which direction is yours going?

I know many of you are committed to the Lord. I know many of you have gone through difficulties and others are still going through difficulties. I want to encourage you, find out what is true and right, and do it. Keep your eyes on Jesus and keep living in light of His soon return.

May I encourage you with this poem I have not read in quite some time and some lines of a song:

My Father's way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my soul I'm glad I know,
He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away,
But still I'll trust my Lord to lead,
For He doth know the way.

Tho' night be dark and it may seem
That day will never break;
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
He maketh no mistake.

There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But come what may, I'll simply trust,
And leave it all to Him.

For by and by the mist will lift,
And plain it all He'll make,
Through all the way, tho' dark to me,
He made not one mistake.

And let me add:

There is coming a day when no heartaches shall come,
No more clouds in the sky, no more tears to dim the eye,
All is peace forever more, on that happy golden shore,
What a day, glorious day that will be.

There'll be no sorrow there, no more burdens to bear,
No more sickness no pain, no more parting over there,
And forever I will be, with the One who died for me,

What a day, glorious day, that will be.

What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see,
And I look on His face, the One who saved me by his grace;
When He takes me by the hand, and leads me through the Promised
Land,
What a day, glorious day, that will be.