

The Second Coming of Christ in Biblical Perspective
“Missions, Evangelism and the Second Coming of Christ”

Matthew 24:42-51

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

October 13, 2002 • Sunday Sermon

Let's look at these introductory words again of our Lord in Matthew 24:1-3 which says
[1] Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. [2] But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

[3] 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?”

We come finally to this last study in our series. Where this passage brings us actually is to the focus upon missions and evangelism. Before we get into this study, I want to remind you of three things. The first thing is the context of this is called the Olivet Discourse found in Matthew 24 and 25. There are six discourses of Christ's ministry recorded in the Gospels. This is the sixth one. It follows immediately on the heels of the fifth one in which He brought a scathing indictment against the religious conservatives of His age, the Pharisees, for what they were teaching, preaching, and living. In fact, His words are so clear to these Pharisees, He would tell them in Matthew 23:15, *[15] Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.*

Jesus gives this great lamentation and in the midst of it, He made a comment at end of Matthew 23:38 that this temple will be desolate. The disciples have a hard time understanding that. They look at this gorgeous, tremendous, almost a ninth wonder of the world, this Herodian refurbished second temple of Israel and say, “look how beautiful it is, look at the size of the stones, Jesus, what about this temple?” Jesus begins to address them by, first of all, telling them that not only will that temple be desolate, but it will be utterly destroyed. In their minds, that can only mean the end of the age. So they then asked Him a question that has three prongs – when will all of these things be, meaning the destruction and desolation of the temple. Number two, what will be the sign of the end of the age and then thirdly, what will be the sign of Your coming in glory?

Then He gives them the answer. I'm just going to give you the basic points that we've covered thus far. In Matthew 24, Jesus tells them the desolation and destruction of the temple will happen as it is preceded by a replay of the abomination of desolation spoken of in the Book of Daniel. Now the abomination of desolation prophesied in the Book of Daniel actually has already been fulfilled two centuries before Christ's coming right down to the very letter of the prophecy. But there will be a replay of it that is the desecration of the temple and the altar, and that will precede the destruction of the temple. And the siege upon Israel will be so terrible that Jesus says, ‘I pray it's not upon the Sabbath that your travel will not be hindered. I pray it's not in the winter that you'll go back for a cloak, because when you see that desolation of the temple know that there is something coming of great distress upon Israel.’

Then Jesus disabuses them of any notion that the temple desolation, desecration and destruction, in fact, will bring the end of the age. He tells them that the end of the age will not occur until this Gospel is preached throughout the whole world. He wants them to be aware of

this because people are going to make religious hay out of this end of the age curiosity that you have. They're going to take what He calls birth pangs and try to tell you those are the signs of the end of the age, like wars, rumors of wars, nations rising up against each other, lawlessness, the killing of love, apostasy within the church, natural phenomena and catastrophes. Jesus says those are not the signs of the end of the age. Once again, I marvel at how many books are written that say those are the signs of the end of the age, and Jesus himself tells us not to pay any attention to that. That's the convulsions of a sin cursed world that is convulsing to be delivered into the new heavens and the new earth. As birth pangs they will get more and more intense but they are not the signs of the end of the age. The sign of the end of the age is that this Gospel is going to go to all the world.

What about the coming of Christ? He tells us in the text that it's going to be sudden. It also says we don't know the time – day or hour. You can't know the time. Nobody will know the time. Save yourself a lot of money and don't buy books that tell you they know the time. He says His coming will be sudden like lightning. Then He makes an interesting comment that it will overtake the unbelievers like a thief in the night, and they will be caught unawares. But believers, while they don't know the time of the day, will be looking, ready and anticipating, even as they know, a fig tree is about to give blossom and then fruit. That will be a line between them.

Jesus then gives an example of the end of the age and this example has been so misused. Jesus tells them the coming of Christ will be like the days of Noah when God came in judgment where they were eating, drinking and giving in marriage. In other words, it was business as usual. Noah kept warning them that God is coming in judgment, and they paid this preacher of righteousness no attention. Then the Lord came suddenly, unexpectedly to them although Noah was waiting for it and anticipating it, the believer but the unbeliever was taken away in judgment. Jesus said, 'So it will be when the Son of Man comes for two will be in the field, one will be taken.' That's not the church taken out. That's the unbeliever taken away in judgment. The believer is left in security to be gathered up by the angels for the new heavens in the new earth.

Then Jesus concludes this sermon with four parabolic, using parables, exhortations, and we covered one of them which was the exhortation of the faithful steward. This is found in Matthew 24:42-51. In this we saw that the faithful steward is one that's alert and certain things mark him out. First of all, we're told in that parable that the second coming of Christ is factual, yet undatable. Secondly, we are told that it is not only undatable and inevitable, but that demands alertness, not slothfulness. If we know that it's certain, but we don't know the date, then we are always to be alert, not slothful. The third thing that we learned is that when you're alert, that means you're going to be practicing good stewardship. Fourthly, we learned that salvation is exemplified or demonstrated by stewardship. It is not stewardship that saves you, but salvation is demonstrated through good stewardship. Then fifthly, and finally, these are matters of eternity because those who are not ready, manifesting with stewardship, are cast away unto judgment. Those who are in Christ and those who are secure in Christ manifested with their alertness and their stewardship, are gathered unto everlasting life.

Now, I'm going to sum of the three parables we have left and then talk about the fourth exhortation. The three parables are the ones concerning the good steward, the ten virgins and the talents. The good steward parable we just covered is found in Matthew 24:42 through 51. The second exhortation came with the second parable, about the ten virgins which is found in

Matthew 25:1-13. The third exhortation is given by the parable of the talents which is found in Matthew 25:14-30.

I want to sum up for you what all three of them have in common. The refrain in every one of them is the call to be on the alert. The second coming is a call to be watchful, to be awake, to be on the alert, to be anticipating it, to be looking for that blessed hope. All three of them repeat the following things. Number one, the second coming is factual, but it's undatable.

Number two, they emphasize that those that are ready for Christ coming are wise. When Christ comes wise people are ready. They're wise unto salvation having put their trust in Christ. They're wise unto ministry, serving Christ. They are making the kind of decisions that when Jesus comes, they don't have to do any changes. The illustration that I used with you on this is the one that Dr. Francis Schaeffer pressed home to me. He said, "If he knew Jesus was coming back tomorrow, he wouldn't change anything that he's doing today." Let that sink in for a moment. If you knew Jesus was coming back tomorrow, would you change what you're doing today? If you have to change what you're doing today then what you're doing today is wrong. We ought to live every day in light of a Christian world and life view that honors Christ with every decision we make. Every single day ought to be lived as the last day.

You might be thinking "Then should I put a deposit in an account for my children's college if Jesus comes back tomorrow, because they won't get a chance to go to college?" I set aside for my children to go to college, and I didn't know whether Jesus was coming back or not. I did it because it was right to do it as a father. It was part of my calling to educate my children. If it's right to do it and our calling to do it, then that's what we want to be found doing when Jesus comes back. Those are the kind of decisions we need to be making every day in our life. If you know Jesus is coming back tomorrow, then we ought not to have to change anything that we're doing today because our decisions for today should have been made in light of His coming tomorrow. It's factual. It's undatable and those who are ready for Christ coming are wise. Those who are not ready for His coming are not wise.

What does it mean not to be ready? It means to be unsafe. If you're reading this today and you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then, my friend, I say this respectfully, and with Biblical language behind me, you're playing the fool. You need to be ready for Christ that you would not be taken away in judgment, but gathered unto Him for everlasting life. Perhaps you have made that wise decision the by God's grace, then He opened your eyes, gave you eyes to see, and ears to hear so then every day live your life unto Him. [31] *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31). God, allow us to do all for Your glory. Help us to think our way through it.

The third thing that these three exhortations in these three parables teach you is that to be wise is to be prepared. I want to try and give you an illustration on this. There are many areas of my life I could illustrate the opposite of this – being unprepared. The most notable are those fix-it jobs around the house. I wish I knew how many times my wife and I have had this discussion – 'Oh, honey needs to be fixed.' "Don't worry. I'll do it Tuesday. My wife's next comment isn't "You're so loving and kind. Thank you for being willing to help" but her next comment is, "Would you please hire somebody?" Her sense is that this is going to end up costing a lot more so let's just go ahead and pay to get it done first before it gets really messed up. My tools basically consists of a hammer, a screwdriver and a pair of pliers and I've learned that if it takes more than that, I can't handle it anyway.

Sometimes I'll try these fix-it jobs and like on a roof or something or on a wall. Do you know how many times I end up going up down a ladder to fix something? I notice that people

who know how to do it don't come down from the ladder until their finished. I say, 'What's the secret?' This is what I hear – we stop and think about everything we're going to need while we're on the ladder. We get it, take it with us and then we don't have to keep coming up and down for it. So basically they are prepared.

That's the way we ought to live our life – prepared. We have the means of grace. We have all of the necessary strength we need to live for the Lord spiritually but are you prepared? Will you be prepared tomorrow for what faces you or will you just get out the bed, take a shower, get dressed and take off? Or will you be prepared by meeting with the Lord, eating of His Word, drinking deeply at the throne of grace, so that that transformational power of God's grace will help you go into that tomorrow, when Satan will surely attack you in a broken world, but instead of being under the circumstances, you'll be more than a conqueror because you took time to get prepared. You get prepared for a week by saying, 'God gave the Sabbath as a gift to me. I'm not going to misuse the Sabbath. I'm going to use it for refreshment, renewal, and to gather with God's people for the means of grace. So I'm ready for the next week. I want to get prepared.' All of the areas of our life call for preparation, and there's one word in the Bible for that. It's stewardship. Those that are wise are prepared.

Number four is prepared people exercise wise, good stewardship. They practice stewardship. All three of these parables call for alertness, wisdom, preparation, and if you're alert and wise anticipating the coming of Christ, they all come back to good stewardship. Every one of them call for good stewardship, whether it's the ten virgins parable, the ten talents parable, or the good steward parable. Remember, stewardship is not just finances, although it certainly deals with finances. I'm not going to dodge that with you because I know that's one of the things that Satan uses to trap you in this world and to bring you into bondage. We know that we have a Gospel of grace that frees us yet many of us are still walking around in practical bondage because our calendars are too full and our bills are too much and we're not practicing good stewardship.

Every one of us have been born into this world with a finite number of sunrises and sunsets. How are you spending it, because once it's gone, that day is gone. It's not renewable. If you spend \$10, you can likely go get another \$10, but you spend a day and it's gone. The wise person realizes that 24-hour day is God entrusting them with the days of their life. God has entrusted to them relationships. God is entrusted to them, their children. God is entrusted to them, their resources, material resources, financial resources. They say "Lord, this belongs to You. I am an overseer on this so would You direct me by Your Word, lead me by Your Spirit so that I practice lifestyle stewardship?" Those who are looking for the coming of Christ are wise, those that are wise are prepared, those that are prepared are thoughtful, good stewards.

Number five, those that are not prepared are not simply unwise, they're unsaved. At the end of each one of those parables, when the good stewards are pointed out and the bad stewards are identified, what happens to the bad stewards? They're cast into outer darkness. They're cast into the unquenchable fire. Now, the passage is not telling us that if we don't work well in stewardship, we can't get to heaven because we're not saved by our works, we're saved by grace. It is telling us that saved people are thoughtful about their life. That's the evidence of their salvation. Now, some of us are better stewards than other, but there is no such thing as a saved man or woman who does not sense the call from God to think about how their life is to be spent for Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a decision in a moment in which I have a policy in my back pocket to escape the fires of hell. Salvation is a relationship with Jesus Christ in which He is dear and in which we love Him, who first loved us. And if we love Him, who first loved us,

the evidence of our salvation, not the cause of our salvation, not the ground of our salvation, is a life that to some degree is purposefully spent for Jesus Christ.

I'd like to look at one final text in this study in Matthew 25 where we see Jesus' concluding remarks. His fourth exhortation is in Matthew 25:31-46 which says [31] *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. [32] Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. [33] And He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. [34] Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. [35] For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, [36] I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'* [37] *Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give You drink? [38] And when did we see You a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] And when did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?'* [40] *And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me.'*

[41] *"Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. [42] For I was hungry and You gave me no food, I was thirsty and You gave me no drink, [43] I was a stranger and You did not welcome me, naked and You did not clothe me, sick and in prison and You did not visit Me.'* [44] *Then they also will answer, 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?'* [45] *Then He will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'* [46] *And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

There are three things that this exhortation tells us. Number one is that the second coming brings the end of the age, and that means it brings the last judgment. When Jesus comes, He brings the end of the age, not a second chance and when the end of the age comes, there's a last judgment.

The second thing the text is telling us is those who are bound for heaven are saved by the sovereign grace of God. They're not saved by works. He says "Come in, those of you who have been blessed by My Father." The changed life does not give you the blessing, it is the sovereign blessing of God's grace that brings the changed life.

The third thing is telling us is this those who are saved by grace manifest the authenticity of salvation, by grace, with the evidence of works. Those who are saved by grace, will not be secret servants of Christ. Grace leaves tracks. Grace leaves evidences. Grace that saves a life takes the life right where it is, but never leaves it right where it is and changes it. Thus, He will be able to point out the difference between the sheep and the goats. Notice when you do your work, it's an act of worship – you have done it unto Me, Jesus says.

In closing, here are some takeaways. As we finish the second coming, what does that mean for my life? The Bible says it's the hope that purifies. Number one, it means that you're alert unto the practice of stewardship. Eschatology is a proper doctrine of the second coming which leads to good stewardship. It is living your life responsibly and wisely for Jesus Christ.

Number two, the right doctrine of eschatology, that is the last things in the coming of Christ, lead you into ministry, into prisons, to the hungry, to the poor, to the oppressed, to the lost, to the least. The second coming of Christ does not lead you to inactivity, it leads you to good ministry. It leads you to stewardship.

Number three, it leads you to missions in evangelism. In Matthew 24 it said before Jesus comes back the Gospel has to be preached to all the nations. This continent is the one continent where Christianity is losing ground. I don't think it's because we have a lack of opportunity. I think it's because of a lack of the proper preparation of living under the eye of Christ by God's people. The way that we will claim it is by being committed to giving forth the Gospel of grace. Now let's look at II Peter 3. Here people are mocking the second coming of Christ.

II Peter 3:3-9 says [3] *knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. [4] They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." [5] For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, [6] and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. [7] But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

*[8] But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (God is not governed by time.) [9] **The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.***

Why hasn't Jesus come yet? It is the patience of God, waiting for His people to come to Himself. That is the coming of Jesus at the end of the age. He's not slow, tardy, late. He's patient. He's patient toward who? He's patient toward you, which is actually plural. Who is Peter talking to? II Peter 3:1a say [1a] *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. Who is the beloved? The people he is writing to. Who are the people he wrote the first letter to? I Peter 1:1-2 says [1] Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those **who are elect** exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, [2] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*

He is writing to the elect, the chosen. Why hasn't Jesus come back yet? All of His people haven't come to Himself yet. That's why. That's why we do missions. II Peter 3:11-13 says [11] *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, [12] waiting for and **hastening the coming of the day of God**, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! [13] But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

How can I hasten the coming of the Lord? What's the one thing that awaits for the Lord to come? It is the Gospel preached to the nations and all the beloved to come in, to be saved, to be converted. So, if I want to hasten the coming of the Lord, what should I be involved in this? Missions and evangelism. I'm just a simple person. Let me just tell you how simple I am. I go out on an EE visit or I'm on an airplane or somewhere and somebody says "Yes, there is no reason why I shouldn't commit my life to Jesus Christ" after I've shared the Gospel with them and they pray. What pops in my mind next is 'This could be the last one. This might be it. The Gospel to the nations. And the last one brought in.' So if I want Jesus to come quickly, then I need to be about my responsibilities, to be about missions and evangelism, planting churches that will win others to Christ, winning people to Christ in my connections, my relationships, the people I know – that will hasten the coming of the Lord.

When being prepared for the second coming, don't act stupid and go climb a tree to be the first one up. The second coming of Jesus Christ brings to you alertness, wisdom, preparation. It brings you into good stewardship – I have some time left, some resources left so let me invest it for what counts because I want to be found as a good steward when Jesus comes. I want to be investing in what He is coming to consummate. I want to be involved in ministry when He comes. I want to be in that prison. I want to be in that soup line. I want to be with that person that's oppressed. I want to be with the lost. I want to be with the least. I want to be with the last. I want to get the Gospel out there. That's what it means to grasp the second coming of Jesus Christ.

I want to win people to Christ through missions and evangelism. I want to hasten the coming of the Lord. That will change our faith promise giving. That will change whether we're involved in evangelism or not. That'll change our commitment to pray for church planting, church planters and churches that come back to life, to win people to Christ for it hastens the coming of our Savior. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for our moments together. Thank You for Your Word and the privilege to examine it particularly in light of this series, focusing upon the coming of our Savior. Thank You for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for the way He moves and is moving and will come again. O dear Jesus, thank You for Your finished work on the cross – a grave, a resurrection and an ascension. Now we wait for You to come to the finish of all the work. Come, Jesus and when You come we want to be found wise, faithful, and alert about Your business. Lord, help us not to fall short. Help us to mean business in Jesus' Name, Amen.