

The Gospel of Matthew
Week Twenty-Eight
Matthew 24:35-26:5

Day One

35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. 36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,[f] but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

v. 35 – Let’s revisit this verse from last week’s study before we move on. **Do you realize that Jesus said there?** He said that His words would never pass away. That means that Jesus equated what He said with the words of God! So this simple, short verse is another indicator that Jesus is God and that He knew He was God. I woke up thinking about that this morning. Now, let’s move on.

v. 36 – It appears that Jesus was referring to the second question the disciples asked pertaining to His return. No one knows when it will be, only the Father. **Does this mean that Jesus in His divinity didn’t know something?** That cannot be possible but rather indicates a limitation in Jesus’ knowledge in His humanity. This also means that anyone else who tries to predict exactly when Jesus will return is off base.

v. 37 – Jesus verified that the Flood was not a fable but a historical event when He referred to Noah in this context. He indicated that the Flood was a type or shadow of the return of the Lord and pointed out similarities between the two events, one past and one future.

vs. 38&39 – I saw one estimate that there were a billion people inhabiting the earth at the time of the Flood. The deluge wasn’t some regional rising of the waters that caused local chaos. It was a global flood, and the waters would have had to cover the height (or depth) of the ark when it floated on the water. That’s quite a Flood and an indication of God’s ability and power to rule in history and perform deeds that impact the whole Earth. What’s more, God gave no indication that a flood was coming (except to Noah), so He is able to order events of nature in such a way to prove that He is all-powerful and in control.

vs. 40&41 – It will be business as usual when the Lord returns, and it will happen without any warning. We are to be ready, but we will never know the time, nor will we be able to tell when it will happen by the “signs,” which is what most of what I call the end-time kooks are searching for. They write books and host television shows that point out the

signs to prove that we are near the return of the Lord. Truth be told, they don't know. **Are you preoccupied with the Lord's return or with making an impact personally while you are here? Don't be infatuated with speculation about the End?** Focus rather on your time here and prepare your part of the world for Jesus' return, whenever that may be.

Day Two

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

v. 42 – This admonition could apply to either scenario – the Second Coming or Fall of Jerusalem. The times for both events were and are unknown to those who did and will participate and be affected. Some of the “old timers” would always admonish someone by asking, **“What would happen if the Lord returned while you were doing this or that? What would He think?”** That may not be a bad question to ask yourself as you attempt to live a holy life. Of course, some have carried it to extremes and would not go to a movie or other entertainment so that the Lord would not “catch them” there if He returned at that moment.

vs. 43&44 – The Lord has His own timetable to do what He chooses to do and He need not share it with His servants. Yet more often than not, He will inform His prophets, although I am not aware if He did this with the Fall of Jerusalem or will do it when Jesus returns.

vs. 45-47 – **What is the lesson of this parable?** It is that the Lord requires an attitude of watchfulness and faithfulness from His servants. **How can we prepare for Jesus' return?** We can be about the business that He assigned us to do. **What did Jesus assign for you to do? Do you know? Are you doing it in good times and bad? Are you performing your duty regardless of what circumstances are against you? Are you faithful in the dispatch of your duties?**

While it is noble and sounds spiritual to say, “Lord, I will do whatever You want me to do.” Yet that can be placing the burden on the Lord by requiring that He prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that He wants you to do this or that. I have heard many people say that and they are doing nothing because they don't want to do the wrong thing. They want all the responsibility on the Lord until they become the passive recipients of some Holy Spirit initiative.

When I think of faithfulness, I think of what the Lord said in Luke:

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? (Luke 16:10-12).

The Lord requires you to be faithful with a little, faithful with what belongs to another and faithful with money. If you are faithful with those things, you will be given more to do. The other tendency I have noticed among God's people is that they are faithful but sometimes have no expectation or desire for "more," whatever that more may mean for them. They want to be faithful and many are, but that doesn't translate into increased responsibilities or productivity. This is flawed thinking. Jesus said in verse 47, "I tell you the truth" and the truth was that God promotes faithful stewards. **Are you looking or expecting more? Are you preparing yourself to handle more duties, even oversight for others work and lives? What more can you do to do more?**

Day Three

48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' 49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

vs. 48&49 – I don't know when the Lord will return. I only know that I am closer to seeing Him than I was when I was younger. Time marches on and I am facing less days ahead of me than I have behind me. I now reflect on my life and I am glad that I did some of the things that I did and was faithful to do them over a long period of time. On the other hand, I wish now I had done some additional things. It's not too late to start, but I have less time to perform those deeds than when I was younger.

What about you? What have you been putting off because you have a lot of time to do them, or so have you have thought? What would you like to be in ten years, providing the Lord grants you ten years, which you could start doing today? What have you been putting off? If you don't start doing whatever that is today, when will you start doing it? If you don't do it in the next ten years, Lord willing, then when will you do it?

vs. 50&51 – Jesus painted a picture that indicated severe punishment for those servants who put off doing what the Lord wanted them to do because they thought they had plenty of time until He "returned." I am working to finish these New Testament studies because I don't know how long I have to do them. I may go home to be with the Lord tomorrow, so I want to work with some sense of urgency, while still trusting in the Lord and not doing the work in my own will and strength.

What long-term project have you put off and avoided? When will you start? Why not today?

Of course, the context here seems to be those who put off acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The hypocrites that Jesus addressed were the Pharisees, who continued functioning in their empty religious system while putting off the will of God as expressed in the person of Jesus Christ. They were acting like they had no accountability to God for what they were doing, and God was judging them accordingly. **Do you know that God will judge you for what you did and what you didn't do?** So your life isn't just one that you live to avoid sin, but to avoid sin and do the will of God. **What is the will of God for your life? If you know, are you doing it? If you don't know, what are you willing to do to know?**

Day Four

25:1 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. 6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' 7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 9 " 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' 10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. 11 "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' 12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' 13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

This parable has always puzzled me, but to you it may seem straightforward. **What are some of the lessons we can learn here?**

1. The main lesson seems to be one of personal preparedness in the context of the Lord's return.
2. God expects everyone to be faithful and work with a view toward the future. This requires balance, for you must work today to prepare for the future while waiting on the Lord to clarify His will and purpose. You cannot do your work in your own power, yet you are expected to prepare and aggressively seek God's will.
3. This does not only pertain to a state of holiness, where your life is free from sin, but also a sense of doing the work that God wants you to be doing to extend His kingdom.
4. If God gives you forty years or one hundred years, you are to be prepared to meet Him at any time by being faithful with the opportunities at hand. There will be a day when

preparation will no longer be possible; the door will be shut. You cannot cram for the things of God like you do for a college exam.

5. This principle can be applied to health, learning and relational matters. You must make the most of the time you have and not talk about what you are going to do “one day.” You don’t know how many “days” you have, so you must act today to do all that you can do.
6. You can mourn for lost opportunities just like for lost loved ones. You can think of what could have been and be sad or think of all that was (that you did) and be happy.
7. The return of the Lord will be sudden and your own death will also be sudden; it will come more quickly than you may think. So be ready and live your life in such a way that you minimize regrets.
8. You cannot live off someone else’s faithfulness, just like the foolish virgins could not borrow oil from the wise. You must live your own life and make the most of it!
9. We must work like those who don’t know the Lord may not have much longer to give their lives to Him and ask forgiveness for their sins.
10. Regret is a terrible thing. You often can’t make up for what you regret doing or not doing; you can only share the wisdom you gained from the regret with others.

Can you think of any more lessons to be learned from this parable?

Day Five

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents[g] of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' 21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' 22 "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' 23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' 24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs

to you.' 26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 28 " 'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

I am sure you have noticed how hesitant I am to diagnose the details of any parable, unless Jesus Himself had done so, a la the parable of the sower. Parables are stories with a lesson and the details are often relevant only as they lead the reader or listener to the main point. This is why I am only going to draw some lessons from the parable as a whole, while looking at only a few of the details as necessary or of interest.

1. The lesson in this parable is about increase. God expects His followers to bring some measure of increase in whatever situation He places them.
2. God is not content with maintenance or maintaining the status quo. He is interested in expanding the kingdom of God to many lives and places and wants to use His people to do so.
3. The amount of increase isn't the main thing, but the heart set on increase is.
4. In what areas does God expect increase? He expects it in every area of life and not just in holiness.
5. The attitude that seemed to hinder productivity and increase in this story seems to be fear. There are many fears that hinder success: fear of failure, success, criticism, rejection, and inadequacy. **What fear is hindering your increase?** It seems that someone can even fear God in an unhealthy way, so concerned about God's judgment as they make efforts that they refuse to even try. **Are you afraid of God in the wrong way?**
6. Verse 29 holds the summary. If you have something and are faithful with it, more will be given to you. If you are afraid and are cautious, what you have will be taken away. The way to increase is not protecting what you have. It's investing in ways that can bring you increase and bring God the glory. **Are you protecting or increasing right now?**
7. You have everything you need for increase. The Spirit lives in you, God hears and answers your prayers, and you have faith that can move a mountain. **What is hindering you still from increase?**
8. While increase in the fruit of the Spirit is important, it is in some ways beyond your control. It is fruit that comes from and belongs to the Spirit, so only He can produce that fruit. Yet there is fruit that is within your control or at least depends on your initiative.

God cannot write your books, start your business, go back to school or share your faith. Only you can do those things and then God will bring the increase based on your efforts. **Does this make sense to you? If it does, are you living in it to the fullest?**

9. The early disciples heard this story and knew how to apply it, for they turned their world upside down as they exercised their faith to see the kingdom of God advance. **What are you doing to advance God's kingdom in your sphere of influence?**

What other lessons can you learn from this parable? What am I missing?

Day Six

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' 41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 45 "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

v. 31 – We will treat this story in its entirety as well and not break it up verse-by-verse. One thing that strikes me is that Jesus knew what the final judgment would be like, so that means He had information that was only available to God. Of course, we know this is because He was and is God. He talked about the judgment like He had been there, which of course He had, since He had perfect knowledge of the past and future.

1. I don't think Jesus will sit on a literal throne. I think this is an image that portrays the fact that Jesus is a supreme King and Ruler of creation.
2. Not only is Jesus a King, but also a Shepherd, and we are His sheep. In this passage, there are only two kinds of people – sheep and goats. Sheep in this case are positive

while goats are negative. Some try to say that there are many categories of people at the judgment but God seems to indicate otherwise. **What distinguishes sheep from goats?**

3. **Could this story give us examples of the kind of increase that Jesus expects, as we discussed increase in yesterday's lesson?** Jesus commends the sheep for feeding and caring for Him when He was in need.

4. The righteous sheep were unaware that they had ever done their good deeds to and for Jesus directly. They were puzzled by His assessment of their work. The focus for good deeds isn't the needs of the people or the need to do good things. The focus is on God and Jesus. **What is your focus for your good deeds?**

5. Jesus obviously indicated that there was an eternal reward and punishment, the latter being in some kind of hell, separated from the presence and love of God. Those who were called goats received the punishment of hell.

6. Some deserved hell because they did not notice the needs of others and did not increase their good works as God would have them do.

7. The goats were surprised that they were being accused of not having fed or cared for Jesus Himself. They questioned God in the story, accusing Him of judging them with a false or faulty standard.

8. This story gives the impression that everyone will be judged at the end based on the number of good deeds that he or she did or did not do. If one has more good works than bad, then heaven is the reward according to this myth. If they have done more bad works than good, then they go to hell. This is a faulty concept, for they were sheep and goats prior to their being judged. Their sheep-ness or goat-hood is determined by their relationship with Jesus prior to this judgment.

9. Notice that the goats were condemned for things they *didn't* do, not for things they did do. The sheep were judged for the increase of good deeds that was an evidence of God's presence in their lives. **What things aren't you doing that you should be doing?**

What else do you see in this passage? What am I missing?

Day Seven

26:1 When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, 2 "As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." 3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, 4 and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. 5 "But not during the Feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

v. 1&2 – Jesus spoke to His disciples after He was finished with His discourse in answer to the questions He was asked. Now that He had given His final warnings about Jerusalem and its future. He turned His attention to the urgent matter at hand – His death and resurrection. Jesus clearly communicated what was going to happen to Him, yet the disciples did not understand or want to understand. When the events of Jesus’ death unfolded, as we shall see, the disciples acted like they had no advance warning, except perhaps for Peter.

This should give us great encouragement in our own walk with the Lord. **How so?** The disciples were among the most unlikely candidates to take Jesus’ message and mission forward after His ascension. Yet they did, and they did it magnificently! If God can use them, He can use anyone, and that includes you. **Do you try to talk God (and yourself) out of what God has called you to do?** You can stop trying, for God’s mind is made up and He chose you to do it knowing full well prior to His calling you how often you would fail. Stop procrastinating and trying to find a way out. There is no way, so you may as well get about doing the work He wants you to do.

v. 3&4 – While Jesus was talking to His disciples, the leaders were away plotting how they would capture and kill Jesus. When I read this, I think of Psalm 2:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them (Psalm 2:1-4).

The Lord sat in the heavens and laughed that day when Caiaphas presided over the conspiracy meeting because they were actually planning and doing God’s bidding in fulfilling all that had to happen for Jesus to be slain. The scenario in Psalm 2 has played out again and again as the nations and their political and economic systems have plotted to discredit and eradicate the Church of Jesus. It has never worked and never will; the Lord just sits in the heavens and laughs at their feeble, futile attempts.

There is no system or leader who can throw off the Lordship of Jesus Christ for long. He is King of kings and will always prevail, just as He did even in death.

The leaders had to seize Jesus in some sly way because the people knew that Jesus was a prophet and possibly even the awaited Messiah. Once again we see that the people had more spiritual insight and sense than their leaders. This is still true today. The leaders didn’t just want to arrest Jesus as Herod did to John. They wanted to arrest and kill Him; this was premeditated murder, pure and simple.

v. 5 – The leaders were afraid of the people. They weren’t afraid of God or of killing an innocent man, but they were afraid of the people, or at least the people’s ability to riot. That riot would upset the Roman officials and they could not have that, so they conspired to do their dirty deed secretly, under the cover of darkness. I am so glad that God is in

control and that even underhanded efforts like this one are under His watchful care. I remind you of the psalm we looked at earlier:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them (Psalm 2:1-4).