

THE FAITHFUL AND WICKED SERVANTS
Matthew 24:44-51

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The Lord Jesus Christ has told His disciples to be ready for His coming (24:44) and because no one knows the day or the hour except God (24:36) they are to be constantly watching for His return for the Church (24:41). Our Lord's coming for the Church or as it is sometimes called the Rapture of the Church can come at any moment; it is imminent and at any moment in history Christ can call His Church home to be with Himself. This will be a glorious day for those members of Christ's Church who are alive when the Lord returns. They shall be translated and snatched away to be with Christ.
- B. In view of His imminent coming, Christ gives four parables to instruct His people on their attitudes and behavior until He comes -- the parable of 1) the thief, 2) the ten virgins, 3) the talents, and in 24:45-51 the parable of the faithful and wicked servants. These parables are very important and if we do not understand them then we will not watch for his coming in the way He expects us to watch. And if we do not watch we will be deceived and miss much, if not all, of the exciting possibilities of the present hour.

II. THE FAITHFUL SERVANT -- Matthew 24:45-47

- A. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?" -- This parable is clearly instruction for those who are waiting for the Lord's coming. The master of the household is gone but he has entrusted certain work to his servants or stewards until He returns. The master is Christ and the household is the Church. The servants work is to the rest of the household, and his task is "to give them meat (food)." This meat is spiritual food for the Church, and we conclude, therefore, that the servant is a minister of God's Word to the Church. This parable, then, is addressed to pastors, elders and all who have the ministry of feeding and shepherding the Church of Jesus Christ. By application this would include
- 1) Sunday School teachers,
 - 2) Children's workers,
 - 3) Bible class leaders,
 - 4) seminary professors,
 - 5) editors of magazines,
 - 6) radio teachers,
 - 7) missionaries,
 - 8) youth workers and nay person who has a teaching ministry to the Church.

- B. “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” -- Just as the servant is to feed the household, so the teacher of God’s Word is to give spiritual food to the Church. The watching servant feeds the Church the Word and in return the Church grows strong and keeps watching for Christ’s coming. Every servant of the Lord must be teaching.

ILLUSTRATION: True ministers of God want to be doing the work of teaching the Church. When John Calvin was persuaded to give up his ministerial labors because of ill health, he said with some resentment, “What, would you have my Master find me idle?”

The well taught Christian will be ready when the Lord returns.

NOTE: Every teacher and minister should so prepare the Word of God that he set a feast before God’s people that both the babes and mature can grow. God has designed the Bible so that when it is taught through verse by verse it meets the spiritual needs of all Christians. Also the Bible taught through consecutively will cover a wide variety of subjects and yet keep truth wonderfully in balance.

NOTE: It is obvious that one of the supreme tasks of the Church during the time she is anxiously awaiting Christ’s return is Bible study and Biblical doctrine. The Bible is divine revelation to Christians and presents the only sane, realistic and “down to earth” approach to life. Only Bible truths can produce mature Christians (II Timothy 3:16-17). **NOTE:** All evangelism, worship, obedience and prayer flows out from Bible doctrine understood and applied to life. The Bible is not an end in itself but it is the means God uses to take us to Christ and give us an understanding of God’s plans and purposes. The Bible is a book that takes us to a person. We cannot neglect the Bible and grow in Christ but we can have knowledge of the Bible and not be involved with the person of Jesus Christ, for knowledge must be applied to one’s experience.

ILLUSTRATION: It is said the D. L. Moody, near the close of his ministry, made this statement: “The next revival will be a revival of Bible study, and it will be brought about by a teaching evangelism.”

- C. “Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.” -- The faithful servant, who is watching for Christ’s coming and instructs the Church in the Word so they too will look for His coming, is “blessed” or “happy.” He is blessed by God and has a happy feeling that he has served his Lord faithfully. Then the Lord makes a staggering promise, one that boggles the human mind. This faithful servant will be made ruler over all the Lord’s possessions. The faithful servant will rule with Christ in His earthly kingdom and through all eternity in the eternal kingdom. What adventure and challenge this promise holds out to the faithful servant! **NOTE:** 1) The hours of study, 2) the passing up of earthly pleasures, 3) the times of loneliness, 4) wrath of unbelievers and 4) the scorn of believers are not worthy to be compared with the reward that God has in

store for the faithful servant who teaches the Word to please God. I Cor. 4:2 says, "It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful." Faithfulness means that a man teaches the whole counsel of God.

III. THE WICKED (UNBELIEVING) SERVANT -- Matthew 24:48-51

- A. "But, and, if that wicked (evil) servant," -- This servant is called "wicked" not because he was a believer who failed to be responsible but because he was an unbeliever who called himself a Christian and minister. He is a unbeliever because he 1) denied the coming of Christ, 2) abused the people of God, 3) intimately fellowshiped with unbelievers and 4) was appointed to hell. This servant is a wolf in sheep's clothing, a mere professor but not possessor of Christ. **NOTE:** It is evident that the wicked servant had the same ministry committed to him as the faithful servant. He had the Bible and authority in the household to teach the Word, and the Church depended upon his ministry. But he was not faithful!

ILLUSTRATION: Matthew Henry said, "The vilest of creatures is a wicked man, the vilest of men is a wicked Christian, and the vilest of them a wicked minister.

- B. "Shall say in his heart,, My lord delayed his coming;" -- This wicked servant only gave intellectual assent to Christ and his Christianity was only superficial and external. He was a minister but a professor and false teacher. Apparently he fooled a lot of people for a long time, but the seeds of his apostasy came when he began to deny the coming of Christ. What was the thing he gave up? He gave up the conviction of the imminent and moment return of Christ, and from that point on he went consistently downhill in doctrinal beliefs finally denying all of the Christian Faith. **NOTE:** The Lord Jesus has delayed His coming now for many centuries. Many who claim to be teachers, ministers, elders and pastors have given up not only a hope of the imminent return of Christ, but have given up the belief in a literal and bodily second advent of Christ.

ILLUSTRATION: The late Bishop Pike who was a minister in the Episcopal Church gave up any belief in the return of Christ and stated that "only 24% of Episcopalians, by survey, believe it.

- C. "And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;" -- Having given up the hope of the imminent return of Christ, the affects of his life became obvious. Christ, the effects of his life became obvious. This servant begins to visibly fall away from the truth by becoming a tyrant and a despot and he begins to abuse or smite the true children of God. He begins to take a stand over against his fellow ministers. Perhaps he calls them 1) religious fanatics, 2) Bible Thumpers, 3) unscholarly, 4) super-naturalists, or 5) psychologically unbalanced. Whatever the accusation, he definitely opposes "to

eat and cook with the drunken.” He Himself indulges in excesses and riotous living and begins to run with the “wolf pack” of unbelievers. **NOTE:** Undoubtedly this servant is minister over some group that calls themselves Christians but he is not giving them the true Word of God. This minister fails to teach the Bible and the household stays unsaved or grew carnal and weak. Therefore, the local church manifests itself in quarreling, injustices, and excesses of every sort. **NOTE:** The widespread ignorance of the Church and its nature and purpose is directly traceable to a lack of systematic Bible teaching.

ILLUSTRATION: Ray Steadman, the late pastor of Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto, Ca. makes this observation:

But how much does the average Christian know of this? The blunt answer is scarcely anything! In church after church the congregation hardly knows that the Bible exists. The degree of biblical illiteracy prevalent in American churches is beyond belief. And the widespread effect, visible everywhere, is a powerless, quarreling, materialistic church whose knowledge of its Lord’s living presence is almost nil, and whose hope of his soon return has long ago burned out into gray embers.

The cause of this sterile mediocrity is, says Jesus, faithless and wicked servants who have never assumed or have given up the task of feeding the household at the proper time.

- D. “The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,” -- The Lord Jesus is going to come unexpectedly and the wicked servant will not be prepared. At the coming of Christ, He will reveal the secrets in men’s hearts and He will be able to tell whether there is a genuine faith or not. (I Cor. 4:5). At His return, Christ will show what was really in the hearts of men all the time. False teachers and prophets may fool men but they will never fool an all wise, omniscient Christ. The shocking thing is that what a person has been in the secret places of the heart through life must now be displayed as the true self through eternity.
- E. “And shall cut him asunder, (cut him off) and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” -- The end of this wicked servant is death and eternal damnation (punishment). The Master, Jesus Christ, is in furious rage with this servant and His eternal wrath comes against him. The wicked servant will be cut off from any of Christ’s possessions and shall be appointed with the hypocrites. Luke’s account says, “appointed with the unbelievers” (Lk. 12:46). The wicked servant will weep out of frustration and lost opportunities, and he shall gnash his teeth out of bitter rage and defiance of God. This is a horrible description of eternal punishment but let us remember that it was Christ who made this description.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. The faithful servant was faithful because he believed in an any moment return of Christ and lived his life accordingly. An imminent return of Christ produces a readiness to serve on the part of those who love him.

- B. Yet the wicked servant first questioned and then denied the imminent return of Christ. He got tired of waiting for the Master and forgot about him. The Lord Jesus Christ has been away almost two thousand years from His Church but He is coming. Remember, God's clock is not like our clock and that a day with the Lord may be a thousand years or a thousand years as one day. Just because some are saying that Christ is not going to return does not mean that He is not going to return. Christ says He is coming again! Are you ready to meet Christ? If you are not, you can get ready by trusting Him as your personal Lord and Savior. The consequences of rejecting Christ are devastating and are of eternal significance. Get ready and stay ready for Christ. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."