

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, THE CHURCH LIFE, THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE,  
AND THE COMING OF THE LORD, Week 2**

**Watching and Being Ready in Order to Be Prepared by the Lord for His Second and Imminent Coming**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 24:1-3, 32-44; 25:1-13

- Matthew 24:1 And Jesus came out from the temple and was going away, and His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple.
- Matthew 24:2 But He answered and said to them, Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, There shall by no means be left here a stone upon a stone, which shall not be thrown down.
- Matthew 24:3 And 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 consummation of the age?**
- Matthew 24:32 But learn the parable from the fig tree: As soon as its **branch has become tender and puts forth its leaves**, you know that the **summer is near**.
- Matthew 24:33 So also you, when you see all these things, know that **it is near**, at the doors.
- Matthew 24:34 Truly I say to you that this generation shall by no means pass away until all these things happen.
- Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but **My words shall by no means pass away**.
- Matthew 24:36 But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens nor the Son, **but the Father only**.
- Matthew 24:37 For just as the days of Noah were, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.
- Matthew 24:38 For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day in which Noah entered into the ark,
- Matthew 24:39 And **they did not know that judgment was coming until the flood came and took all away**, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.
- Matthew 24:40 At that time two men will be in the field; **one is taken and one is left**.
- Matthew 24:41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; **one is taken and one is left**.
- Matthew 24:42 **Watch** therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes.
- Matthew 24:43 But know this, that if the householder had known in which watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.
- Matthew 24:44 For this reason you also **be ready**, because at an hour when you do not expect it, the **Son of Man is coming**.
- Matthew 25:1 At that time the kingdom of the heavens will be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.
- Matthew 25:2 And five of them were foolish and five were prudent.
- Matthew 25:3 For the foolish, when they took their lamps, did not take oil with them;
- Matthew 25:4 But the **prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps**.
- Matthew 25:5 And while the bridegroom delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.
- Matthew 25:6 But at midnight there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom! Go forth to meet him!
- Matthew 25:7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their own lamps.
- Matthew 25:8 And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.
- Matthew 25:9 But the prudent answered, saying, Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to those who sell, and **buy for yourselves**.
- Matthew 25:10 And as they were going away to buy, the bridegroom came; and **those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast**. And the door was shut.
- Matthew 25:11 And later the rest of the virgins came also, saying, Lord, lord, open to us!
- Matthew 25:12 But he answered and said, Truly I say to you, I do not know you.
- Matthew 25:13 **Watch therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour**.

**Day 1**

- I. The Greek word for coming (parousia) means “presence”; Christ’s coming will be His presence with His people; His parousia will begin with the rapture of the man-child (Rev. 12:5) and of the firstfruits (14:1-4) before the great tribulation and will end with His appearing on the earth with the saints at the end of the great tribulation (Matt. 24:27, 30; 2 Thes. 2:8; Jude 14).**

**THE COMING—PAROUSIA (PRESENCE)—OF CHRIST**

Now we will speak concerning the coming—parousia—of Christ. The Greek word parousia means “presence”; in ancient times it was applied to the coming of a dignified person. In the New Testament this word refers to the **coming of Christ**, the presence of the most dignified One. This presence will last for a period of time. It will begin first in heaven with the **rapture of the overcomers** before the three and a half years of the great tribulation; then, toward the end of the great tribulation, it will come down and remain in the air; finally, at the conclusion of the great tribulation, it will come from the air to the earth. (*Excerpt from The Up-to-date Presentation of the God-ordained Way and the Signs Concerning the Coming of Christ, Chapter 7, Section 3*)

## Day 2

II. We need to see the **signs of the Lord's second and imminent coming**—Matt. 24:1-3:

- A. The **greatest sign** of the end of this age (when the last three and a half years of the great tribulation are about to begin) is the **preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to the whole inhabited earth**—v. 14; Rev. 6:2.
- B. Another **great sign** of the Lord's coming is when **Israel**, represented by the fig tree, was miraculously **restored as a nation**; to the believers this fig tree is a sign of the end of this age—Matt. 24:32-35; Jer. 24:2, 5, 8.

**The Restored Nation of Israel Being a Sign of the End of This Age and a Sign to the Believers**

Verse 32 says, “*But learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near.*” The **fig tree**, signifying the nation of **Israel**, was cursed in 21:19. It passed through a long winter, from the first century to A.D. 1948, when the nation of Israel was restored. That was its branch becoming **tender and putting forth its leaves**. This fig tree is a sign of the end of this age and a sign to the believers. To become tender signifies that **life has come back**, and to put forth leaves signifies **outward activity**. Winter signifies the time of being dried up, the time of tribulation. Summer signifies the age of the restored kingdom, which will begin at the Lord's second coming.

We have pointed out that the fig tree symbolizes the nation of Israel. Israel is a sign to us, just as the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom is a sign to the Jews. When the Jews see the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, they should realize that it is a sign of the coming tribulation. Likewise, Israel as a fig tree is a sign to us concerning the Lord's coming. The disciples had asked the Lord concerning the sign of His coming and the sign of the consummation of the age. In the foregoing section the Lord gives the sign of the consummation of the age. This sign is the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. Now the Lord gives another sign, the sign of His coming. This sign is the fig tree. **When its branches become tender and it puts forth its leaves**, we know that **summer, the full restoration of the Messianic kingdom, is near.** (*Excerpt from the Life-Study of Matthew, chapter 63, section 1*)

## Day 3

- C. Before the day of the Lord's second coming, the apostasy will come, and the man of lawlessness, **Antichrist**, will be revealed—2 Thes. 2:3, 7:
  1. **Sin is lawlessness**, which is the living of a life outside of and not under the principle of God's ruling over man—1 John 3:4.
  2. The **mystery of lawlessness is working today among the nations and in human society** until Antichrist as the man of lawlessness is revealed; because the perishing ones do not receive the love of the truth, God sends to them an operation of error, an active power of misleading, that they might believe the lie—2 Thes. 2:11.
  3. Thus, we can see that Isaiah 5:20 is fulfilled with the ones who believe the lie—“Woe to those who call evil good, / And good evil; / Who put darkness for light, / And light for darkness; / Who put bitter for sweet, / And sweet for bitter!”
- D. When the great tribulation, the last three and a half years of this age, is about to begin, Antichrist will set up an **abominable idol of desolation**, an image of himself, in the temple and make people worship both it and him (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:27; Rev. 13:14; 14:9, 11); this shows that the temple of God will be rebuilt before the Lord comes back (2 Thes. 2:4).
- E. The conditions of evil living that stupefied the generation of Noah before the flood portray the **perilous condition of man's living** before the Lord's coming and the great tribulation—Matt. 24:3, 21, 27, 37, 39; Luke 17:26-27; 21:34-36.
- F. A sign of the Lord's second coming is a **lack of faith** among many of His believers—“When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”—18:8.
- G. Another sign of the Lord's second coming is that “because lawlessness will be multiplied, the **love of the many will grow cold**”—Matt. 24:12; Rev. 2:4.
- H. A sign of the end times and of the Lord's second coming is the **over-accumulation of wealth**—“You have stored up treasure in the last days”—James 5:3:
  1. In the last days before the Lord's coming, men will **accumulate wealth in an unprecedented way** and will thus be unaware of their coming misery and their miserable destiny of God's judgment—Matt. 16:27.
  2. In the last days there will be a **multiplication of material enjoyment** and **lustful indulgence** with **unprecedented hedonism**—James 5:1-6; cf. Zech. 5:5-11.

People today are studying and working for the purpose of enjoying good eating, good drinking, and a good marriage. They have **no thought concerning the things of God**. How prevailing is this lack of sense concerning God today! It is prevailing especially in the educational sphere and the commercial sphere. So many in the universities have been drugged by their pursuit of an education. Their education is merely for eating, drinking, and marriage. Those in the commercial field have also been drugged by the desire to make money, also for the purpose of having better eating, drinking, and marriage. This has caused many divorces. When a young man is poor, he may marry a certain woman. But when he makes more money, he may divorce his wife and marry another in his desire for a better wife. **This situation will continue until it reaches the climax during the Lord's parousia.** During the days of Noah, this climax was reached a little before the flood which came in with the judgment of God. In a sense, the parousia of Christ will be like the flood coming with God's judgment. The flood brought judgment upon the drugged people of Noah's day. The parousia will bring God's judgment upon this drugged world. Christ will descend to earth and execute God's righteous judgment upon this drugged and rebellious world. (*Excerpt From the Life-Study of Matthew, chapter 63, section 2*)

## Day 4

III. To be taken by the Lord, we need to be those who are **watchful** for His imminent coming and **prepared** and **ready** to be His bride (Matt. 24:32-44; Rev. 19:7) so that we may be **raptured** before the great tribulation (3:10; Luke 21:36):

- A. The meaning of **rapture** is to be **taken into the Lord's presence**; if we would be taken into the Lord's presence, **we must be in His presence today**—2 Cor. 2:10; Psa. 16:11; 27:8; 43:4; Acts 3:19-20; Exo. 33:14-16; cf. Gen. 4:16.

- B. In order to be those who love the Lord's appearing, His coming back, we must **treasure His appearing, His manifestation**, to us **today**—2 Tim. 4:8; Acts 26:16; John 14:21.
- C. The one who is taken is **mature in life**, and the other is not; to become mature is a life-long matter; for the Lord's coming, we need to prepare ourselves by **loving Him to the uttermost** and by growing up into Him in all things so that, at His appearing, we may be matured to be raptured—Heb. 6:1; John 21:15-17; Eph. 4:15; cf. Gen. 5:22-24.
- D. Being ready to be raptured is a matter of being **filled with Christ to the uttermost** by **praying** that we may grow and mature in life—Eph. 3:16-17a; Hymns, #395.
- E. The meaning of being watchful is to be **careful, not careless**, every day on the alert against the possibility of stumbling; those who watch must be those who do not trust in themselves and are not self-confident—Jer. 17:7-8; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 3:3; 1 Cor. 10:12.
- F. The Lord will come secretly, as a **thief** (Matt. 24:43-44), to those who love Him and will **take them away as His treasures**; Christ is the preciousness to His believers (1 Pet. 2:7), and our desire is for Him to fill us and saturate us with Himself as our supreme preciousness, our treasure (2 Cor. 4:7), so that we become men of preciousness, even preciousness itself (Dan. 9:23; 10:11, 19).
- G. Especially in these last days, we need to be watchful and give heed to the prophetic word as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts (2 Pet. 1:19); in the few remaining days that we have, let us be those who **love** and **serve** the Lord, who are **revived** and **overcoming** every day, and who **let the world go** in order to be ready and **waiting** with all our heart for the Lord's second coming.

#### Day 5

#### IV. The Lord's word in Matthew 25:1-13 is a parable for **watchfulness**:

- A. **Virgins** signify believers viewed from the aspect of life; the believers, the kingdom people, are like chaste virgins, bearing the Lord's testimony (the lamp) in the dark age and going out of the world to meet the Lord; for this they need not only the indwelling but also the **filling of the Holy Spirit**—2 Cor. 11:2; Luke 11:13:
  - 1. **Lamps** signify the **spirit of the believers**, which contains the **Spirit of God as the oil**—Prov. 20:27; Isa. 61:1; Heb. 1:9; Rom. 8:16:
    - a. The believers shine forth the light of the Spirit of God from within their spirit; in order for the divine light to shine into man's inward parts, God's Spirit as the **oil must soak** (mingle with) man's spirit as the wick (cf. v. 16) and "burn" together with man's spirit (12:11).
    - b. Thus, the believers become the light of the world and **shine as a lamp in the darkness of this age** (Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:15-16), **bearing the testimony** of the Lord for the glorification of God.
  - 2. Went forth (Matt. 25:1) indicates that we believers do not settle or linger in any place; instead, we are **going out of the world to meet the coming Christ as our Bridegroom**.
  - 3. As the Lord's seeking ones who are waiting for the Lord's coming, we are **going out with Him** to meet Him by leaning on Him as our Beloved, **trusting in Him** helplessly and **constantly enjoying** Him as our "going-out" strength to leave the world behind—S. S. 8:5a.

#### Day 6

- B. "The foolish, when they took their lamps, did not take oil with them; but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps"—Matt. 25:3-4:
  - 1. **Vessels** signify the **souls** of the believers—Rom. 9:21, 23-24.
  - 2. **Having oil in our lamp is to have the Spirit of God dwelling in our spirit**; taking oil in our vessel is to have the Spirit of God filling and saturating our soul that we may be enabled to live the virgin life for the Lord's testimony—Matt. 25:4, 9-10.
  - 3. We have the Spirit in our regenerated spirit, but there is a question as to whether or not we have an **extra portion** of the Spirit in our soul.
  - 4. The **prudent virgins took oil in their vessels** with their lamps; this signifies having an **extra portion** of the oil by being filled with the Spirit in our soul for our transformation—2 Cor. 3:18.
- C. One of the best ways to gain the oil, to receive more of the Spirit, is by **musings on God's word** in order to have intimate fellowship with Him in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer—Psa. 119:15, 23, 25, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148; John 6:63; Eph. 6:17-18.
- D. "The foolish said to the prudent, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. But the prudent answered, saying, Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves"—Matt. 25:8-9:
  - 1. To **buy** means to **pay a price**; we need to pay the price for the filling of the Spirit in our soul—v. 4; cf. Prov. 23:23; Rev. 3:18:
    - a. The Spirit who came into our spirit (Rom. 8:16) was given to us freely, but the saturating Spirit as the **extra portion** of oil to fill our soul is not free; this is **something for which we have to pay a price to buy**.
    - b. The price involves matters such as **giving up the world, dealing with the self, loving the Lord above all**, and **counting all things loss on account of Christ**—Matt. 16:24-26; Mark 12:30; Phil. 3:7-8.
  - 2. Our urgent need is to gain more of the Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God, to live a life of buying an extra portion of the Spirit to saturate our entire being—Matt. 25:9; cf. Dan. 5:27.
- E. The **foolish virgins**, who **do not take oil** in their vessels and who are **not ready** when the Lord Jesus comes, will miss the wedding feast; whether or not we will be raptured early to enter into the wedding feast depends upon our daily buying of the Spirit—Matt. 25:10-12; Rev. 19:7-9; 2 Cor. 4:16; Titus 3:5:
  - 1. For us to be qualified to be raptured to enter into the Bridegroom's marriage feast requires our passing through a **long period of accumulating sufficient spiritual oil in our vessel**—Rev. 19:7-9.
  - 2. If we would be prudent and wise virgins, those who are watchful in life, we need to redeem the time; this means that we **seize every available opportunity** to be filled with the Spirit; the sufficient oil will be our entry to the wedding feast—Eph. 5:16.
- F. To be **watchful** is to be filled with the Spirit all day long; if we allow the Spirit to saturate our entire being, we are watchful persons, making ourselves ready and being prepared by the Lord for His second coming—vv. 14-18; Rev. 19:7; 21:2.
- G. Every day we need to be **watchful by paying the price to buy the Spirit** as the golden oil so that we may supply the churches with the Spirit for the testimony of Jesus and be rewarded by the Lord to participate in the marriage dinner of the Lamb—Matt. 25:9-10; Rev. 3:18; Zech. 4:6, 11-14; Judg. 9:9.

**Watching and Being Ready for It**

When the Lord comes, He will come secretly as a thief to those who love Him and will steal them away as His treasures and bring them into His presence in the heavens. Hence, we need to [watch and be ready](#). If we desire to be raptured, first we must be [filled with the heavenly breath](#) and [have oil in our vessels](#). If we are rooted on the earth and occupied daily with the anxieties of this life and with earthly pleasures, we will not be raptured at that time. We should remember Lot's wife. Because she loved and treasured the evil world, which God was going to judge and utterly destroy, she took a backward look. Thus, she became a pillar of salt and was left to suffer in a place of shame. This should be a warning to us. If we love the world, the Lord will leave us here to pass through the great tribulation so that we may be put to shame until we become mature and are raptured.

**Beseeking To Prevail To Escape**

The Lord also reminded us to [take heed to ourselves and to be watchful at every time](#), beseeching lest our hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that the day of the great tribulation come upon us suddenly as a snare; for it will come in upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth. We should [guard our hearts](#) and [give all the room](#) to the Lord so that we may prevail to escape all these things and stand before the Son of Man.

[To attain maturity is not an overnight matter](#). Therefore, for His coming we must prepare ourselves, love Him, and grow in Him, that at His appearing we may be mature to be raptured and receive the reward. (*Excerpt from The Up-to-date Presentation of the God-ordained Way and the Signs Concerning the Coming of Christ, Chapter 7, Section 4*)

**THE BELIEVERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE COMING OF CHRIST****Loving It, Awaiting It, and Taking It as an Encouragement**

Since we know that the Lord's second coming is so precious, we should [love the Lord's appearing](#). The Bible concludes with "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). From the record in the New Testament, it is not difficult to discover that in their hearts the apostles firmly believed that the Lord would come quickly, and they also lived a life in preparation for the Lord's second coming. In the church's history, I know that Miss M. E. Barber was one who lived such a life. On the last day of 1925, Brother Nee went to pray with her, and she prayed, "Lord, do You really mean to say that You will let 1925 pass by, that You will wait until 1926 before You come back? However, on this last day I still pray that You will come back today!" Not long afterward, Brother Nee met her on the street, and again she said to him, "It is really strange that up to this day He has not yet come back." Do not think that since we are clear concerning the signs of the Lord's coming, we can be slothful and can first love the world and then pursue the Lord when the last week comes. [There is no such convenience](#). We should believe that the Lord is to be feared. In Luke 12 the Lord gave a parable concerning a rich man who endeavored to lay up wealth for himself so that his soul might enjoy itself and be merry. But God said to him, "Foolish one, this night they are requiring your soul from you" (vv. 16-20). Every "today" that we have is truly the Lord's grace. Therefore, [as long as we have today, as long as we still have breath, we should love the Lord and His appearing, await the Lord's coming](#) (Phil. 3:20), and always take His coming as an [encouragement](#). (*Excerpt from The Up-to-date Presentation of the God-ordained Way and the Signs Concerning the Coming of Christ, Chapter 7, Section 4*)