

THE LORD'S RETURN

Message 7

Our Preparation for the Lord's Coming (2) Being Faithful in Service

Scripture Reading: Matt. 24:45-51; Eph. 2:19; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:10; John 6:57, 63, 68; Eph. 6:17-18; Acts 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:6; 2 Tim. 4:4, 10; 2 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 3:8; Luke 17:31-32; 21:34-36; 6:37; Eph. 4:31-32; Phil. 2:2-4; 1 Pet. 5:3; Matt. 20:25-28; 2 Cor. 6:14; 2 Tim. 2:22; Matt. 25:14-30; Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7-8; 1 Tim. 4:14

I. Matthew 24:45-51 reveals that we must be faithful in service in the Lord's commission to give God as food to the members of His household that we may win Christ as our reward in the coming kingdom:

- A. God has a household and a household administration, an economy, to dispense Himself as food to the members of His household for His expression—1 Tim. 1:4; 3:15; Eph. 2:19.
- B. God has set faithful and prudent slaves over His household as household administrators, stewards, channels of supply, to give His people food at the proper time—Matt. 24:45; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:10; Phil. 1:25.
- C. *Give them food* refers to ministering the word of God and Christ as the life supply to the believers in the church; Christ as the life-giving Spirit is our food, embodied and realized in the word of life—Matt. 24:45; John 6:57, 63, 68; Acts 5:20:
 - 1. In order to enjoy the Lord as our spiritual food so that we can feed others, we must pray over and muse on His word, tasting and enjoying it through careful consideration—Eph. 6:17-18; Psa. 119:15; Ezek. 3:1-4.
 - 2. We must devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word—Acts 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:6, 8; John 7:37-39; cf. Heb. 7:25; 8:2.
- D. To say in our heart that our Master delays is to love the present evil age and not to love the Lord's appearing—Matt. 24:48; 2 Tim. 4:8, 10; cf. Acts 26:16:
 - 1. We must beware of covetousness, not storing up treasure for ourselves but being rich toward God—Luke 12:16-20; 2 Cor. 6:10; Eph. 3:8.
 - 2. "Remember Lot's wife" is a solemn warning to the world-loving believers—Luke 17:31-32; cf. Rom. 1:21, 25.
 - 3. We must be watchful and beseeching so that the day of the Lord's coming would not come upon us suddenly as a snare—Luke 21:34-36; cf. Matt. 2:3.
- E. To beat our fellow slaves is to mistreat fellow believers—24:49a; Acts 9:4:
 - 1. We must not judge and condemn our fellow believers but be kind to them, tenderhearted, forgiving them even as God in Christ forgave us—Luke 6:37; Eph. 4:31-32.
 - 2. We must not revile or criticize our brothers but consider them more excellent than ourselves—Phil. 2:2-4, 29; Rom. 12:3.
 - 3. We must not lord it over our fellow believers but serve them as a slave to feed them with the resurrected Christ as the life-giving Spirit—1 Pet. 5:3; Matt. 20:25-28; cf. Num. 17:8.
- F. To eat and drink with the drunken is to keep company with worldly people, who are drunk with worldly things—Matt. 24:49b; cf. Eph. 5:18:
 - 1. Because of their divine nature and holy standing, the believers should not be yoked together with the unbelievers; this should be applied to all intimate relationships between believers and unbelievers, not only to marriage and business—2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 15:33; cf. Prov. 13:20.

2. We must flee youthful lusts and pursue the all-inclusive Christ with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:22.

II. Matthew 25:14-30 reveals that we must be faithful in service in the Lord's gifts to make a profit for Him that we may enter into the joy of the Lord in the coming kingdom:

- A. The Lord likened Himself to a man going abroad (into the heavens) and delivering to his slaves his possessions; *his possessions* signifies the church (Eph. 1:18) with all the believers, who constitute God's household (Matt. 24:45).
- B. To one of His slaves He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one—to each according to his own ability—25:15:
 1. Talents signify spiritual gifts (spiritual skills and abilities)—Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4; 1 Pet. 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:6.
 2. All the members of the Body of Christ are gifted, and all are gifts—Rom. 12:6a; Eph. 4:7-8.
 3. *Own ability* signifies our natural ability, which is constituted of God's creation and our learning—Matt. 25:15; cf. Acts 7:22.
 4. Trading with talents signifies using the gift the Lord has given us—Matt. 25:16-17; cf. 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6.
 5. Gaining other talents signifies that the gift we received from the Lord has been used to the fullest extent, without any loss or waste—cf. 4:5b.
- C. The one-talented one went off, dug in the earth, and hid his master's money—Matt. 25:18:
 1. The earth signifies the world; thus, *dug in the earth* signifies becoming involved in the world to bury the gift we have received from the Lord.
 2. *Hid his master's money* signifies rendering the Lord's gift useless, letting it lie waste under the cloak of certain earthly excuses; to make any excuse for not using the Lord's gift is to hide the gift.
- D. In the coming kingdom the Lord's gift will be taken away from the slothful believers, and they will be cast into outer darkness, but the faithful believers' gift will be increased, and they will enter into the uttermost enjoyment of Christ—vv. 21, 23, 26-30.

III. "All the problems in the church today issue from the one-talented ones. The Lord has shown us that there is not one whose gift exceeds five talents. For a span of twenty years the church may have only one with five talents, but every day the church can have five persons, each with one talent. Any one of the children of God, even the one in the poorest condition, still has one talent; and when you put five of the one-talented ones together, it equals one who has five talents. If all the one-talented ones in the church today would bring forth their talents, there would be no need of so many great gifts among us. Just by the coming forth of the one-talented ones, let me tell you, the whole world will be conquered"—W. Nee, *Further Talks on the Church Life*, p. 143.