

MATTHEW 25: CALL FOR PREPARATION

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By the manner of life the majority of the people live, one might get the idea there is no need to be prepared for death. The vast majority of people live as if they will never stand before God and give account of the lives they have lived (or wasted). In fact, this country has successfully taught a whole generation there is no God and there will be no reckoning on the day of judgment. They were taught this as they were taught evolution in our government-supported, tax-funded public school system. There is little doubt as to why we have a gun-crazed, moral less, society running around shooting and robbing. The answer to our problem is simple and straight – **teach once again the fear of God to people and put it into practice ourselves.** There will be no need for more policemen – the fear of God will take care of that. There will be no need for the necessity of legislating public prayer in school – the fear of God will take care of that. There will be no need to seek ways to help single moms and dads rear their children – the fear of God will keep both parents in the home.

While the majority of people see no need to be prepared, the Bible teaches us we need to be ready at any minute because we do not know when the Lord will return. Jesus himself said: ***"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."*** -- ***Mat 24:36.*** In the context of Matthew 24, Jesus was speaking of the end of time. The Bible pictures His return as sudden and surprising. That day is pictured as a thief in the night: ***"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."*** -- ***1 Th 5:2.....But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."*** -- ***2 Pet 3:10.*** A thief comes unannounced and in the same manner will Jesus appear. When Jesus appears in the skies there will be noise - 1 Thes 4:13-18 - but that will be the end. There will be no prior announcement or sign given of His return. When He returns all will give account of their lives: ***"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."*** -- ***Rom 14:12.....For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."*** -- ***2 Cor 5:10-11.*** All will be gathered together, no matter which type of life they chose to live: ***"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."*** -- ***John 5:28-29.***

The Lord told a series of parables to impress upon our minds the need and necessity of being prepared for His return. Many of these are recorded for us in Matthew chapter twenty-five. To set the context, we remember the Lord had answered the disciples' question(s) regarding the tumbling of the temple and the end of time – Matthew 24:1ff. Having told them there will be no sign of the end of time (24:36), the Lord delivers a series of illustrations to help us see the need to be prepared. We

will notice the three given to us in chapter twenty-five. We will see how they alert us of the need.

The choice of being prepared (1-13)

Jesus tells a parable centering upon a Jewish wedding. In this parable there are ten virgins - five wise and five foolish. The wise are those who are prepared for the bridegroom's coming at midnight. They are wise because they have enough oil in their lamps to burn until He returns. The foolish are those who did not make the preparation it took to have enough oil. The lesson is we should always be prepared because we do not know when the bridegroom (Christ) will appear.

Let us notice that all ten had the choice to be prepared. It appears they all had lamps, showing they had the same opportunity to be ready. This also shows they had to make a choice to either be prepared or not. The foolish chose not to make the effort to be ready to meet the bridegroom.

There are various reasons why men choose not to be prepared. *First, some love this present world too much.* Demas was a Bible example of one who fell because he loved this present world: ***"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."*** -- ***2 Tim 4:10.*** There may be various ideas as to how this loved was expressed, but there can be no doubt as to the fact he loved this world and forsook Paul. We are warned about loving this world: ***"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*** -- ***1 John 2:15.*** The love of worldly things can cause one to choose not to be prepared. *Second, one may be too ashamed to be prepared.* Many could be ready if they were not ashamed of what the Bible says. Jesus said about such people: ***"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*** -- ***Mark 8:38.*** May we never be ashamed of what Jesus said. *Third, one may be too lazy to be prepared.* We are taught that we must work to be prepared: ***"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."*** -- ***1 Cor 15:58.*** We are to always be laboring in the work of the Lord. Many do not labor because they are just too plain lazy to work. The apostles taught a physical principle which should be observed in this life and applied to the next life: ***"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."*** -- ***2 Th 3:10.*** While it is true this verse applies to physical life, the same is true spiritually. One who does not work and prepare himself while he has time and opportunity, will not enjoy the life in heaven.

The criteria for being prepared (14-30)

Jesus next spoke a parable about a man who handed out talents to three different men. These talents (money), were given according to the ability of each man - 25:15. The man took a journey and expected the men to use these talents for him and to increase them according to the ability of each man. After a while, the man returned and called the three before him to account as to how they had used their talents. The five-talent man used his five talents and gained five more. The two-talent man likewise. However, the one-talent man buried his talent because he feared. When the three were brought before their master, the five and two-talented men were rewarded for using their talents. The one-talented man was condemned for burying his talent. The criteria for their being rewarded or condemned was whether or not they used their talents for the good of the master.

Likewise, the criteria of our being received or rejected will be whether or not we use our talents. Today many claim to be the one-talent man, but they will not even use their one talent!! Most say this to try

and justify their lack of work and diligence for the Lord. If we do not use what talent we have for the Master, we, too, will be rejected. Some contend that the talent given was money and argue because we apply it our personal talents. We note again that the Lord said the man gave to them according to their ability. The principle would be exactly the same regarding our personal talents. The Lord doesn't expect anything from us we do not have, but He expects all that we do have!

The consequences of being or not being prepared (31-46)

The Lord next pictures for us the judgment scene. All nations are gathered before Him. All are called before Him and examines their lives. Some visited Him while He was in prison, some gave Him drink, some fed Him, others clothed Him and took Him in. These asked when they saw Him like this. His answer was: ***"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."*** The opposite was also true with some. When asked when they saw Him like that, He answered the same way as He did to the righteous. Whether or not we work and serve others, thereby serving Him, will determine whether He receives us or rejects us. The consequences of either being prepared or not being are clearly set forth by the Lord: ***"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" -- Mat 25:34.....Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" -- Mat 25:41.***

The consequences are either we will be in heaven or hell. We need to remember we determine that. It is not predestined from all eternity. It doesn't matter what anyone else does or does to us. It matters whether or not we work and prepare ourselves for that day.

Conclusion

Are we ready and prepared? We can rest assured of one thing – Jesus is coming!! It might be soon or later, but He will appear. We will be judged according to what we have done. Have we obeyed the gospel? Have we been walking in the light, correcting the mistakes as we go? Have we been actively working for the Lord? Have we buried our talent(s)? If we have, we had better get the shovel and dig it up, and get back to work!!