

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

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two

**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

- 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).**
- 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.
  - 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 miseries 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.

**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.

**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.
- 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 musing 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 re-

warded 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.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1990*, vol. 3, “The Up-to-date Presentation of the God-ordained Way and the Signs concerning the Coming of Christ,” pp. 574-579

*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1990*, vol. 3, “The Up-to-date Presentation of the God-ordained Way and the Signs concerning the Coming of Christ,” pp. 585-588