

The Coming Of The Bride Groom

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 March 2021

Preacher: Chad Bennett

[0 : 00] If you'll please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25. And while you're turning there, let me just say that we've been working through the Olivet Discourse, and some of what we looked at has been deep, and I feel like I've spent a lot of time just teaching through what has been there.

And in some ways I feel like we're moving past the more difficult part. I think it's going to become more and more clear and hopefully fit together better as we move forward. So that being said, I realize my sermons have been longer than normal.

I especially realized when they moved the worship service up 15 minutes that I've been going too long. That's not really why they moved it up, okay? And I'm glad they moved it up. It's for a good reason. But more than likely, you're always scared when you say this because then it ends up being really long, but I think we'll be back more to a normal time as we look at this passage.

It's just a little bit more clear and probably require considerably less teaching. Even as I say that, though, let me remind you that if you have any questions about anything we looked at the Olivet Discourse, please submit those to the church office or you can email them to me.

And the elders want to try to give answers. We're going to kind of base our response based on how many questions we get. How long do we need to devote to answering questions? We've had just a few verbally, but if you have any you'd like to submit, please do so and we'll seek to try to answer those.

[1 : 23] As I said from the beginning, this is not that we have some official stance in the church. We're trying to teach God's word faithfully. And the reality is we're dealing with things that are really difficult.

And great men have interpreted many different ways. And we're trying to do the best we can. And if you have questions, we want to try to make things as clear as we can for your sake and for the sake of the church. So please feel free to submit those.

Right. We're moving now to Matthew 25 and we're looking at verses 1 through 13 today. The parable of the 10 virgins. Look there with me as we read together.

Then the kingdom of heaven will be like 10 virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flask of oil with their lamps.

As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry. Here is the bridegroom. Come out to meet him. Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

[2 : 33] And the foolish one said to the wise, give us some of your oil for our lamps are going out. But the wise answered saying, since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.

And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast and the door was shut. Afterward, the other virgins came also saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

But he answered, truly, I say to you, I do not know you. Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. Let's pray together.

Oh, Lord, we do again thank you for your word and pray, asking for your spirit's help in understanding this. Although we've acknowledged in some ways this seems more easy than what we've seen already in the Olivet Discourse, yet you're still speaking in parables or Christ spoke this in parable.

And so we need help to discern what is the meaning of the parable. And we pray for your spirit's help in that. Lord, apply the truth to each heart here, we ask in Christ's name. Amen. Now, you may

remember last week we began really a transition in the Olivet Discourse.

[3 : 46] I argued that starting in chapter 24, verse 36, we see Jesus answer the disciples' second question, which was concerning his return and the end of the age.

And unlike the destruction of the temple, which he spoke about previously, no one will know when he will return and bring an end to the age, because no signs will be given. That's what we've been seeing all along.

Before I'm even jumping into the passage, you see again in verse 13, you know neither the day nor the hour. And so again, we see that same message being repeated here. And we saw that last time Jesus teaches us about this by using historical events, parables, and illustrations.

We saw three such examples, historical examples previously. Today we're looking at just one of the parables, the parable of the ten virgins. And so I'm really going to spend the time just trying to explain the parable.

I want to be careful at the same time, because we know not everything in the parable is meant to have meaning. There may be things that are necessary to help make the parable fit as a story. But try as best we can to understand, what is Jesus communicating in the parable?

[4 : 51] And then again, Jesus gives us application in verse 13 that I want us to try to flesh out again. All right, so the parable explained. Let's look at the parable. Just to begin with, we see there at the very beginning, then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins.

And so the subject that Jesus is addressing is the kingdom of heaven, or we might translate that and say Jesus' kingdom or kingly rule. And so the subject of this is the kingdom of heaven, or Jesus' kingly rule.

And what we begin to see is that the kingdom is only for those who belong to Christ. I think that's one of the messages we see here in this parable of the ten virgins. The kingdom, not everyone gets into the kingdom.

The kingdom is only for those who belong to Christ. Just as we try to understand this, we might ask, what's the meaning of ten virgins waiting? Because that's not something that happens in our culture.

We don't have weddings. We don't, when we have weddings, we don't have ten virgins sitting out waiting for the bridegroom to show up. So this is completely foreign to our culture. I thought Matthew Henry did the best job of the places I looked in explaining this.

[5 : 55] He says, It was a custom sometimes used among the Jews on that occasion that the bridegroom came, attended with his friends late at night to the house of the bride, where she expected him, attended with her bridesmaids, who upon notice given of the bridegroom's approach were to go out with lamps in their hands to light him into the house with ceremony and formality in order to the celebrating of the nuptials with great mirth.

So that's Matthew Henry's language. To say it just another way, you get the idea that the groom is coming with his groomsmen. And he's coming to the house of the bride.

We could translate it any way we want to. He's coming into the church, wherever the wedding might be held. And the bridesmaids are the ones that are waiting for him, not the bride. She's inside. The bridesmaids are out there waiting. And when they come, they light the way for him.

It's just symbolic. They're making the way, showing him, here's how you make it to the bride. And so they would light the way for him. And so this was a custom that they would have been familiar with that's completely foreign to us.

But hopefully you get the sense of what was going on and why Jesus uses this as a parable. And so as we try to understand the parable then, who's the bridegroom? It's Jesus, right?

[7 : 08] We understand what Jesus is speaking of in this passage is his return. And so Jesus is the bridegroom that's spoken of. He's already spoken of himself as a bridegroom previously in Matthew 9.

Matthew 9, verse 15 says, Jesus said to them, Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

This was, of course, when the Pharisees were criticizing Jesus' disciples for not fasting the way their disciples did. Jesus said, The bridegroom's here with them. So there we see him referring to himself as the bridegroom.

Of course, we could go further and say, You know, there are many illustrations to God being betrothed to the church, God's people, or the bride of Christ.

And so we see many illustrations of that. But here in Matthew, Jesus has already referred to himself as the bridegroom. Now in this parable, he's speaking of himself as the bridegroom who's coming to enter into the kingdom.

[8 : 07] And then the ten virgins may represent professing believers, or what we would call the visible church. I think this is important here that we understand. We talked before about, last week we saw the illustration of two people working in the field.

One taken and one not taken. Here, I think it's even more narrow in the sense that I think what's communicated is Christians here professing, I should say, professing believers. Those that we would say are part of the visible church.

So that would include all of you who are in this room. You're here in the church. You visibly are a part of this church. But those who would profess to be believers. Maybe that's not true necessarily of everyone in the room professing to be a believer.

But I think what's spoken of here is those who would profess to be believers. Those who claim to be Christians. In 2 Corinthians 11, 2, Paul writes, So Paul has this idea that he's married, he's engaged the church to Christ.

And so they're waiting for them as a virgin would wait for him to come. And so the virgins here are witnesses or what we might call bridesmaids. Now, again, this is one place I think we don't want to press the parable too far.

[9 : 31] Because we know that the church is the bride of Christ. And so if we really are very specific, we'd understand that the bridesmaids, the virgins that go into the house, are also the bride.

And Jesus doesn't mention the bride, I think, particularly because you don't want to complicate the parable or confuse things too much. So in this example, he's not speaking specifically of the church as the bride of Christ because he's illustrating something different.

I think that's why no mention is made of the bride, probably to prevent such confusion. I probably, I realize now I didn't expand too much on why I would argue that this is the visible church.

But we're going to see as the parable moves on. Let me just briefly say that what we see illustrated for us is that all 10 of these people are waiting for the return of the Lord.

They're expecting him. And then when he finally comes, they want to be led into the kingdom. So I think what we have represented here are Christians in particular. There's a sense in which all the world ought to be expecting Christ's return, but they're not waiting in this sense.

[10 : 36] These are the ones who have gone out to wait for the return of the Lord. And there's some distinction that's made between them. And we'll talk about that distinction in a minute. But I think what's communicated is even within the visible church, there will be some who are ready for Christ's return and some who are not ready for Christ's return.

And then the marriage feast that's spoken of here is what we might call the kingdom consummated. It's the full revelation of the kingdom or the kingdom coming to its full realization.

I would further clarify that we're going to see that happen or when that happens is when we have the new earth and the new skies and where we dwell with Christ forever. So when it says that this is speaking of the kingdom of heaven, what we have to understand is what's being communicated is when the bridegroom returns, when he comes, he will carry his people into the new earth to dwell with him forever.

And so I think that's what's being communicated to us with the marriage feast. This same marriage feast is described in Revelation 19, 6 through 9. Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory. For the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.

[12 : 04] For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And so I think we have a picture there in Revelation of what this will be like and how blessed is the situation of those who are invited in, who are welcomed into that.

Remember Jesus as well as given the parable already of the wedding feast. And remember the invitation goes out. And even though the invitation goes out to those who should receive it, the

Jews, they reject it.

And so then it goes out to the street and they gather people into the kingdom. And so we have something very similar demonstrated already in Jesus' words. But I think you can note from Revelation 19 that the only people who attend the marriage feast are those who belong to the Lord. The bride of Christ is who's welcomed into the wedding feast. And so again, we see that distinction made in the two sets of virgins, five foolish and five wise.

And so the responsibility of the virgins, and again the professing believers, is to meet the bridegroom when he comes and enter into the wedding feast with him.

[13:12] Pretty simple. The responsibility of Christians is to be ready when Christ returns and then enter into the kingdom realized with him. Enter into the wedding feast or to eternity into the new earth and the new skies with the Lord.

But notice something about all ten virgins. What do they have in common? This will be fun at Sunday school. Let's see if you're paying attention. What do all ten virgins have in common? They all got drowsy and fell asleep, didn't they?

Right? There's no distinction made here. Jesus is saying, be careful not to fall asleep. He could have, perhaps. But the realization is that all ten of them become drowsy and fall asleep.

Now, I've argued all along that as we see the distinction between these two events, one is spoken of as happening soon, and one is spoken of as being delayed. Here again, we see the bridegroom is delayed, and the delay leads to, universally, the church becomes sleepy and drowsy.

They're not really expecting him to return the way they ought to. And so they get out there originally. They're ready for him to come. And as it lingers, they become drowsy, sleepy. They're no longer attentive the way they are until the cry comes.

[14:24] I think Jesus is speaking to us of the reality of the fact that his delay will cause the church universally to be more drowsy, to be less expectant than they were originally, to think it's not going to come in our lifetime.

And I think even as I've encouraged you that we ought to eagerly expect Jesus' return, I think there are ways in which we as Christians say, yes, I want to do that. And at the same time, we think, what are the odds? You know, we like to play odds, right?

What are the odds that it's going to happen in my lifetime? Eh, you know, it's already been 2,000 years. It's probably not. There's ways in which we all become drowsy and sleepy, and maybe we don't anticipate it to happen.

Even if we affirm the truth, Jesus is returning, and it's going to be soon, we think, well, the soon has already been rendered 2,000 years. Could it be longer? Yeah, it could be.

Even maybe we're very theological. When we go back and we say, the first giving of the gospel, the seed of the woman would crush the head of the seed of the serpent. Yeah, they only had to wait about 5,000 years for that to come true.

[15:26] How long will we have to wait for Jesus' return? Will it happen in my day? And so there may be ways in which we justify it or we ourselves become drowsy and sleepy. I think that's typical. And Jesus is acknowledging that there are ways that we're going to not expect it, at least not the way the early church may have longed for it or expected it.

And while they become, or while they're drowsy and sleepy, well, let me say it this way. When Jesus returns, when the bridegroom shows up, we see the distinction between the wise and the fool.

The foolish ones didn't have the oil necessary. They weren't able to light their lamps. The wise did. Now, how do we interpret that?

What does it mean here that they didn't? What we see from the very beginning, they went out in verse 3. For when the foolish ones took their lamps, they took no oil with them. And then we see verse 7.

Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish ones said to the wise, give us some of your oil for our lamps are going out. I think that the key there, verse 8, our lamps are going out. Right?

[16:42] Don't misunderstand. It's not saying that they went out with lanterns and brought no oil originally. I know we don't use lamps, probably a lot of oil lamps.

Maybe some of you have them in your house. We have some for emergencies. But you understand that there's a reservoir at the bottom. When that's used up, you have to take a bottle with you to

refill it.

So what I see, for those of you who are still looking at me clueless, let's put it this way. You have flashlights that have batteries in them. The batteries at some point run out. You have to put new batteries in if the flashlight's going to work.

Right? The wise ones brought a reservoir. They brought extra batteries. They brought the oil necessary. And it seems as though the foolish ones went out. They had their lamps.

They fell asleep. Their lamps were burning. It looked good. But when the cry comes and they trim the lamps, there's no oil left to relight the lamp. There's not enough left. So how do we interpret that? Again, we don't want to carry this too far.

[17 : 38] What is the oil? What is it symbolic of? And what did they have? And what did they lose? And that kind of thing. I think the best way that we are going to interpret this is with Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed.

Do you remember the parable of the sower and the seed? Some of the seed fell on rocky ground. And what did it do? It sprouted up quickly. It looked legit. Until the sun came.

Until the worries of life came. And then it was gone. And so I think what's being communicated is that the five foolish ones initially have things that look like faith.

They believe they have genuine faith. They look like they're Christians on the outside. They have the beginnings of faith. But it doesn't last. It doesn't endure. And when Jesus comes unexpectedly, there's not faith in them.

They don't have faith. The reality is they never did. But they had something that looked like it. The lamps gave awesome light. They looked like they were genuine Christians. But the reality is when Jesus returns, they're not ready for it.

[18 : 44] And of course we can understand as well the same is true for many who die. Having not ever resolved this. Even though they looked outwardly like Christians. But when the bridegroom comes, there's a clear and final separation.

We see that in verse 10. While they were going to buy, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast and the door was shut. So again, in this parable, five of them get in.

Five of them will never get in. There's no hope for five of them. The other five are completely assured in the presence of their Lord. I've talked about this some last week.

But I want to stress again that what I see communicating in all these is that when Jesus returns, there's no hope for a change in state at that point. Jesus' return will bring the final separation.

And we talked about why is Jesus delayed. And we said Jesus is delayed so that there would be time for repentance. But when he returns, the time for repentance is over. There's no chance for them. And so if we want to try to make as much of this as we can, how do we understand what's happening here?

[20 : 03] Some are wise and some are foolish. This doesn't mean that it's going to be a 50-50 split. But don't overemphasize the parable and say, well, that means half of the visible church isn't saved.

That's not what Jesus is saying. It could well be more than half. It could be less than half. We don't really know. But the point is that even within the visible church, there's a mixed nature in which we don't know who's saved and who isn't.

But the Lord does. So don't go too far with that. But what distinguishes the wise from the foolish is that the wise are prepared for Jesus' return.

And the foolish are not. They were all called to be ready. Yet some were ready and some were not. And there at the end, the ones who were not ready, they ask for what they need from the wise.

But they cannot get it. They can't receive it from them. So again, I don't want to carry it too far, but what are we to interpret, I think, the oil to be? Well, faith. Maybe Christ's righteousness.

[21 : 07] And there are ways in which the unwise profess that that's what they were holding to. They profess faith, but they didn't really have it. Maybe they profess to be covered in the righteousness of Christ, but they weren't really.

And if we take that further and we say, and when Jesus returns and those who have faith are going to go into him, and the others say, wait, now, I didn't realize this. I want in. There's not one of us who can lend our faith to another.

Right? We don't have, I don't know what you want to say. We don't have 120% faith. We'll loan you that's your 20 we have. If you can get it from four other people, maybe you'll be good to get in. Faith

isn't transferable.

Right? I know there are ways in which we wish sometimes we could have faith for other people. Maybe a child or someone in your family. You wish that you could believe and somehow give that faith to them, but it's not untransferable.

So, again, without carrying it too far, they say go to those who basically are the ones who give that out. But it's too late at that point.

[22 : 11] Maybe it's go to the pastors, the missionaries, the Christians who share the gospel, but it's too late to believe at that point. Jesus has come. It's final.

There's a separation. And if I want to clarify even further that we don't make too much of what Jesus is communicating in the parable, clarify this further in terms of theology, we know as well that there's no one who wants salvation who will be denied salvation.

The fact that anyone desires salvation is the fact that God has worked in their heart to make it alive. He's given life to those who are spiritually dead, which is why we desire salvation.

And so, again, we don't want to carry this too far. I think what we see in this is that there were some who were in the church who professed faith in Christ, that when Christ returns, it's clear they're not really Christians, and there's regret.

There's a realization that I messed up. But it's too late to make it right. Maybe even we used to, I remember being communicated to me when I was much younger, what's called fire insurance.

[23 : 11] You ever heard this? There are people who present the gospel this way. Just believe in Jesus so you won't go to hell. And there's probably some realization when Jesus returns and all that they've heard taught, and they're not getting into the kingdom, that there's some realization that that means I'm headed for hell.

And I don't want that. Even if I don't want Christ. If I don't want salvation, I know what hell means. I don't want that. And that's not salvation. And I can say that for all of you in this room.

What I was communicating to me at one point is gospel, presenting the gospel in that way. Scare people out of hell. And I'm saying there may be a place that you understand the seriousness of hell and that you ought to fear that, but that's not really believing the gospel, is it?

The gospel is not just a get out of hell ticket. And it seems that maybe when Jesus returns, they realize, I messed up. But it's too late.

Their faith still isn't in Christ. Maybe another way of saying this is that we each will be judged by God based on our own faith or lack thereof, and not based on the faith of another.

[24 : 17] We can't go to someone else and say, lend me your faith in that moment. It's individual. It's on us whether or not we have believed and trusted in the gospel. It cannot be borrowed from someone else. So when the bridegroom comes, I said there's this clear separation, just as we saw last time.

And the only ones whom Christ knows are those who come into the wedding feast. Look at verse 12. But he answered, truly I say to you, I do not know you. So these foolish ones, he doesn't know. And we understand from the gospel what that means.

It's not, we know God's omniscient. He knows all things. This knowledge is a relational knowledge. That knowledge he knows the believer. It's a loving knowledge.

It's almost, although not with the physical implications of this, but Adam knew his wife Eve. There's a change in relationship when that marriage takes place. And so we've been united to Christ.

And there's a change in relationship where there's an intimate knowledge of one another. There's a relationship beyond just the external academic or head knowledge. And that's not true for all people.

[25 : 25] God knows some, and there are some he doesn't know. Maybe we can see this communicated for us in John chapter 10, where Jesus says, I am a good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me.

Just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

And so Jesus really makes this distinction as a good shepherd. That there are sheep who know his name, and they follow him. I think in this passage as well, he distinguishes them from the goats, those who are not a part of the sheepfold, that don't know him, that don't follow his voice.

And we're going to see even that same distinction that's made later in verses 31 through the end of the chapter. So, Lord willing, two messages in Matthew further on.

We're going to see him make that same distinction. But Jesus is communicating to us here, who are the ones who know him? And who does he know? His sheep. His sheep know him.

[26 : 31] They're the one who hears voice, who follow him. And they're the one who enter into his kingdom, the ones whom no one can snatch from his hand. And so what does it mean then for these foolish ones to knock on the door and for God to say to them, I don't know you.

What does that mean? It means no matter what evidence there may have been externally, there was really never any genuine faith. They never had truly trusted in Christ. They were without faith. And it's remarkable, you see in verse 11, that those foolish ones expect to be let in. Right? They knock on the door.

Afterward, the other virgins came also saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. They have every expectation they're going to be let in. And I think we could say they're surprised when they're not let in.

They expect to be let in. They expect to be let in. I'll touch on that again as we, I want to transition to the application.

[27 : 36] First, the application that I've been trying to communicate all along to us in the Olivet Discourse. That what we see as we move toward Jesus' second coming and the end of the age is that Christ is returning, but we do not know when.

No clues given to us. You know neither the day nor the hour. And so we said along, avoid those who profess that they know the day or the hour. Because we know they're liars.

Right? I love that God's word gives us very clear ways to test the prophet. You test the prophet by, does the word come true? So when a prophet says something that doesn't come true, you know they're a false prophet.

Well, we're already told in advance that no one knows the day or hour. We don't have to wait for those who predict the return of Christ to miss the date for us to know. When they do, we obviously ought to know. But we know already that what's told to us is that no one knows the day or hour. So we cannot know when Jesus will return and when this world will be consumed in fire. And no sign will be given to us to help us to even guess as to when that will be.

[28 : 41] And yet we know that that day and hour is decided by God. It's determined by him. It will happen at his appointed time even though it seems to us as though it delays. And his return here, like we saw last week, is sudden and unexpected.

Look at verse 6. But at midnight there was a cry. Here's the bridegroom. Come out to meet him. At midnight we can interpret really just the middle of the night when it was least expected. Just like the thief that broke in.

And we're told already that those who are waiting for him have fallen asleep. They're drowsy. They're not expecting it. They're not ready. They haven't prepared. He sneaks in.

It's when they don't expect it. Like the flood that came upon the world. Like the thief in the night. Like the master who was unexpected and shows up again. All the three illustrations that we saw last week we see communicated to us here again.

He comes in the middle of the night while they're asleep when he's not expected. And so, again, the message that we're going to see throughout is that Jesus is second coming. There will be no sign, no clue given. Again, if we contrast that with the stretch in the temple, we saw that there were signs given for when that would happen.

[29 : 49] Secondly, in terms of application, again, I love it. Jesus has given us the application, hasn't he? Verse 13 is our application of the passage. Jesus draws some teaching, some conclusion to this.

Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. So watch because you don't know. This is the point. Right?

I said my first point was to say we're not going to know. Okay? Since we're not going to know, what does that mean for us? It means that we're always to be ready. We're not to put it off thinking, well, that's going to happen in my great-grandchildren's generation.

It's not going to happen during my day. I don't have to worry about it. The reality is because we don't know, we always have to be ready. I said before, it's the idea of preparing the house when you have guests over. You know, you do the mad house cleaning, knowing that the guests are coming.

You want the house to be ready so when they get there they think, oh, wow, your house is always so clean. You know, but the reality is you always keep the house clean because you don't know because this is that random guest that stops in unexpectedly.

[30 : 51] You know, you always like to know when they're coming, right? Could you give me about when you're going to be here? Let me know what time you're going to be there so we know that we'll be ready. But Jesus says because you don't know, you always have to be ready.

If I can carry my illustration a little further, you keep the spiritual house clean all the time. Spiritually, you're always ready because Christ could return at any moment. And really, this is a repetition of what we saw last week in verse 42 of chapter 24.

Jesus says, therefore, stay awake for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. So there we see stay awake. Here we see watch, therefore.

So stay awake and watch. Same message being communicated to us in both places. Jesus is teaching the same thing. I think I said there were seven illustrations, parables, historical examples. He repeats the same teaching seven times. I know that that probably doesn't make you real excited to hear the next few sermons, but Lord willing, he'll bless them. The message is the same, though.

[31 : 54] We're to be watchful. We're to be ready for Jesus's return. So what does it mean to be ready? Well, here's what C.H. Spurgeon wrote. He says, And so Jesus is concluding.

The truth is that we watch, that we prepare, that we're ready for Jesus's return. What does that look like? If I summarize what Spurgeon said in the clearest possible way, you must be a Christian. You have to have faith. And he elaborated on what that means in greater detail. But we must be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We must be children of light. We must belong to him if we're going to be ready for when he returns.

And as I said before, let's assume that that's true for you, that you're a Christian already. Then there are ways in which we're to eagerly await Jesus's return. We're to be expectant of his return.

We're to be hopeful for it. We're to even, as I said last week, to hasten his return. I won't go through that again, but let's just say that as Christians, we're to be prepared for it.

[33 : 51] We're to love our Lord. We're to be waiting for him. We're to be looking for him and longing for his return. If we love him, we're glad to see him return. If we love him, we understand the truth of God's word.

When he returns, there will not be any time in between. We will be brought into his presence to dwell with him forever. Yes. Who doesn't want that? Which of us doesn't understand that in this life, even as good as it is, we miss out on the blessings of eternity.

We get a taste of it here, but the reality is yet to come. And so we're to eagerly look forward to that. And we can, we are, sorry.

So watch means to be spiritually await for him, to be spiritually prepared for him. Fourthly, I just want to question you, are you ready for his return? Are you prepared for Jesus's return?

Have you prepared for his return by trusting in him now? I think this is a major point of this. Is it Jesus saying he's going to return any moment?

[34 : 56] And even there will be some in the church who will say they're Christians who really aren't. And maybe that's some of you in this room. And Jesus is saying, are you really ready for his return? If he came here and there was that line made, if there's a distinction made between those who are his sheep and those who are the goats, those who belong to him and those who do not, his church and those who only pretend to be his church.

Which group would you fall into? Have you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ now? I think the reality communicated to us is that it could come, that Jesus could come at any moment and when he does, it's too late.

Right? Maybe there's some of us who think, well, I'll settle that when he comes. Maybe you think, I'm about 90% sure that this is all true. And when he shows himself, then I'll know for sure. And what's communicated to us is it's too late.

Faith is something that has to be dealt with now. And so I encourage you to settle that issue now. To resolve for yourself if you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

And then I want to encourage you if you have. Here's the reality. Those who are ready will enter into the wedding feast. Prepared for them. They will dwell with the Lamb forever.

[36 : 11] Here's what Revelation 21 says. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new

Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who is seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.

So there's the reality of what's going on. Even now, Jesus is making all things new. You are in the process of being sanctified. When we die, we'll be glorified. But we await something far greater. When Jesus returns, we'll be the marriage feast. It will be the new earth and the new heavens. And we will dwell with him forever in his presence.

[37 : 16] Let's praise the Lord. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for the truth, the reality that's presented to us in this passage. Lord, we thank you that there's coming a day when your people will dwell with you forever.

And we pray for all in this room that they will have settled that issue. That they will know this day whether or not they belong to your people. Whether or not they are your bride.

Whether or not they will enter into your presence for all eternity. Lord, we pray if there's any in this room who have not trusted in Jesus Christ that they would do so today.

That they put their faith in him. Lord, we pray for those who have that this passage and what we're seeing in this would be of great encouragement to them as they long for not only Jesus' return, but the day when they will dwell in his presence forever.

Lord, give us a heart that yearns for that. More than the stuff of this world. More than all the things that so consume our mind each day that our thoughts throughout the week would be focused upon. Jesus is returning.

[38 : 20] And I want to be ready for that. And that we would long to be in his presence forever. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Our closing hymn is number 546.

The sands of time are sinking. It's really a hymn of the wedding.