

Week 12:
The Truth of the Kingdom and
Christ's Second Coming

Weekly Reading Materials

(All reading materials are available at: <http://www.ministrybooks.org/alphabetical.cfm>)

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Week 12 Day 1

- Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- Matt. 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

The Reality of the Kingdom of the Heavens

Reading: *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, msg. 243, sec. 1, par. 2-3

6. Its Three Aspects

According to the Gospel of Matthew, there are three aspects of the kingdom of the heavens: the reality, the appearance, and the manifestation. The reality of the kingdom of the heavens is the inward content of the kingdom of the heavens in its heavenly and spiritual nature, as revealed in chapters five through seven. The appearance of the kingdom of the heavens is the outward condition of the kingdom of the heavens in name, as revealed in chapter thirteen. The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens is the practical coming of the kingdom of the heavens in power, as revealed in chapters twenty-four and twenty-five. Both the reality and the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens are with the church today. The reality of the kingdom of the heavens is the proper church life (Rom. 14:17), which is within the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens, known as Christendom. The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens will be the heavenly part of the coming millennial kingdom. If we have a full understanding of these three aspects of the kingdom of the heavens, we shall know the truth of the kingdom of the heavens in a very thorough way.

a. Its Reality as Revealed in Matthew 5—7

Matthew 5—7 reveals the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. The word spoken by the Lord Jesus in these chapters is the revelation of the spiritual living and heavenly principles of the kingdom of the heavens.

The Reality of the Overcoming Church Life / Existing within the Church in the Church Age / An Exercise to the Seeking Believers

Ibid., par. 4-6, 8, 10, 12-13

(1) The Reality of the Overcoming Church Life

The reality of the kingdom of the heavens is the reality of the overcoming church life. The record of Matthew 5—7 gives us a view of a certain kind of reality, the reality of the high standard of the divine life. This is the overcoming church life.

(2) Existing within the Church in the Church Age

The reality of the kingdom of the heavens exists today within the church in the church age. However, there is not much of the reality of the kingdom of the heavens in today's Christianity. We hope that among us in the church life the reality of the kingdom of the heavens will increase continually.

(3) An Exercise to the Seeking Believers

A number of verses in Matthew indicate that the reality of the kingdom of the heavens is an exercise to the seeking believers. Matthew 5:3 says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." The spirit here refers not to the Spirit of God but to our human spirit, the deepest part of our being, the organ for us to contact God and realize spiritual things. To be poor in spirit is not only to be humble but also to be emptied in our spirit, in the depth of our being, not holding on to the old things but being unloaded to receive the new things, the things of the kingdom of the heavens. We need to be poor, emptied, unloaded, in this part of our being so that we may realize and possess the kingdom of the heavens. According to the Lord's word, if we are poor in spirit, the kingdom of the heavens is ours. This means that if we are poor in spirit, we are in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens now in the church age.

Anyone who is not poor in spirit but instead is proud and full in his spirit is not under the exercise of the kingdom of the heavens. If we are poor in spirit, we shall say, "Lord, I know nothing. Have mercy on me. Lord, I am poor in my spirit and I am hungry after You." If we pray in this way, being poor in spirit, we shall be under the exercise of the kingdom of the heavens. Matthew 5:10 says, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." The whole world lies in the evil one (1 John 5:19) and is filled with unrighteousness. Every aspect of the world is unrighteous. If we hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6), we shall be persecuted for the sake of righteousness. This indicates that we need to pay a price for the righteousness we seek for the kingdom of the heavens. If we are righteous, we shall be condemned, opposed, and persecuted. This is another aspect of the exercise of the kingdom of the heavens in its reality.

In 5:10 the Lord tells us that those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness are blessed, "for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." If we seek righteousness at a cost, the kingdom of the heavens becomes ours. If we suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness, ours is the kingdom of the heavens. This indicates that suffering for the sake of righteousness is a condition for participation in the kingdom of the heavens. If we do not remain in righteousness, we are outside the kingdom. But if we stay in

righteousness, we are in the kingdom because the kingdom is absolutely a matter of righteousness. As we seek righteousness, we should be prepared to confront persecution. We shall be persecuted for the sake of righteousness. If we are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, we are truly under the exercise of the kingdom of the heavens.

In Matthew 5:20 the Lord Jesus says, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens.” The surpassing righteousness is the condition of entering into the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens in the millennium. By keeping the highest law to the highest standard, we fulfill the condition for entering into the coming manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens.

In 5:20 righteousness does not refer to the objective righteousness, which is the Christ we receive when we believe in Him that we may be justified before God (1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 3:26). The Lord’s word in Matthew 5:20 refers to the subjective righteousness, which is the indwelling Christ lived out of us as our righteousness that we may live in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens today and enter into its manifestation in the future. This subjective righteousness is not obtained merely by fulfilling the old law, but by completing the old law through the fulfillment of the new law for the kingdom of the heavens, the law given by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5:17-48. This righteousness of the believers according to the new law of the kingdom surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees according to the old law. It is impossible for our natural life to gain this surpassing righteousness; it can be produced only by the divine life, the resurrection life of Christ.

To enter into the kingdom of God requires regeneration as a new beginning of our life (John 3:3, 5), but to enter into the kingdom of the heavens demands surpassing righteousness in our living after regeneration. To enter into the kingdom of the heavens means to live in its reality today and to participate in its manifestation in the future.

In Matthew 7:21 the Lord says, “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens.” To enter into the kingdom of the heavens we need to call on the Lord and do the will of the heavenly Father. To call on the Lord suffices for us to be saved (Rom. 10:13), but to enter into the kingdom of the heavens we also need to do the will of the heavenly Father. Because entering into the kingdom of the heavens requires doing the will of the heavenly Father, it is clearly different from entering into the kingdom

of God by being regenerated (John 3:3, 5). This latter is by the birth of the divine life; the former is by the living of that life.

Week 12 Day 2

- 1 Cor. 5:7 Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened; for our Passover, Christ, also has been sacrificed.
- 8 So then let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
- Matt. 13:43 Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

The Appearance of the Kingdom of the Heavens

The Appearance of Christendom

Reading: *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, msg. 243, sec. 2, par. 1-2

b. Its Appearance as Revealed in Matthew 13:24-43

through the Parables of the Tares, the Mustard Seed, and the Leaven

(1) The Appearance of Christendom

In Matthew 13:24-43 the appearance of Christendom as the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens is revealed through the parables of the tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven. The parable of the tares (13:24-30, 36-43) reveals the establishment of the kingdom and its false constituents. Verses 24 and 25 say, “The kingdom of the heavens was likened to a man sowing good seed in his field. But while the men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares amidst the wheat and went away.” The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man (v. 37), the field is the world, the good seed are the sons of the kingdom, and the tares are the sons of the evil one (v. 38). Both the tares and the wheat grow in the field; that is, the false believers and the true ones live in the world. The kingdom of the heavens was established with the sons of the kingdom, the wheat, but the sons of the evil one, the tares, grew up to alter the situation. Hence, a difference has arisen between the kingdom of the heavens and its outward appearance. Whereas the sons of the kingdom constitute the kingdom, the sons of the evil one have formed the outward appearance of the kingdom, which today is called Christendom.

In 13:31 and 32 we have a parable telling of the abnormal development of the outward appearance of the kingdom. “Another parable He set before them, saying, The kingdom of the heavens is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which is indeed smaller than all the seeds, but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches.” The church,

which is the embodiment of the kingdom, should be like an herb to produce food, but it became a tree, a lodge for birds, having its nature and function changed. (This is against the law of God's creation that every plant must be after its kind—Gen. 1:11-12.) This happened when Constantine the Great mixed the church with the world in the first part of the fourth century. He brought thousands of false believers into Christianity, making it Christendom, no longer the church. Hence, this parable corresponds to the third of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, the church in Pergamos (2:12-17), which signifies the church in union with the world through Constantine's influence. Multitudes of unbelievers were baptized and the "church" became monstrously great. The mustard is an annual herb, whereas the tree is a perennial plant. The church, according to its heavenly and spiritual nature, should be like the mustard herb, sojourning on the earth. But with its nature changed, the church became deeply rooted and settled in the earth as a tree, flourishing with its enterprises as the branches to lodge many evil persons and things. This has formed the outward organization of the outward appearance of the kingdom of the heavens.

Existing along with the Church in the Church Age

Ibid., par. 4

(2) Existing along with the Church in the Church Age

The outward appearance of the kingdom of the heavens exists along with the church in the church age, but it does not exist within the church. As a principle, we do not allow tares in the church life, and we do not allow the big tree with its abnormal growth or the leaven with its corruption to be in the church.

The Manifestation of the Reality of the Kingdom of the Heavens / The Kingdom of the Father, the Heavenly Part of the Millennium / A Reward to the Overcoming Saints

Ibid., sec. 3, par. 3, 5-6

(1) The Manifestation of the Reality of the Kingdom of the Heavens

The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens will be the manifestation of the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. This means that in the next age the reality of the kingdom will become the manifestation of the kingdom. During the present age, the reality of the kingdom and the appearance of the kingdom progress simultaneously. However, when the Lord Jesus comes back, the reality of the kingdom will be transferred into the manifestation of the kingdom, and the appearance of the kingdom will be burned away. The Lord's angels will bind the tares into bundles and cast them into the fire

(Matt. 13:40-42) because the tares have done much damage to the Lord's kingdom. Therefore, at His coming back, the Lord will deal first with the appearance of the kingdom, and then He will transfer the reality of the kingdom into the next age to become the manifestation of the kingdom.

(2) The Kingdom of the Father, the Heavenly Part of the Millennium

The manifestation of the kingdom will be the kingdom of the Father, the heavenly part of the millennium. The millennium will have an earthly part and a heavenly part. The earthly part will be the kingdom of the Messiah (2 Sam. 7:13), the tabernacle of David (Acts 15:16), the kingdom of the Son of Man (Matt. 13:41; Rev. 11:15). The heavenly part of the millennium will be the kingdom of the Father (Matt. 13:43). This will be the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens as a reward to the overcomers. In the millennium the overcomers in the heavenly part of the kingdom will reign with Christ over the earthly part, which will be the restored kingdom of David, where Christ as the Son of Man, David's royal descendant, will be the King over the children of Israel.

(3) A Reward to the Overcoming Saints

The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens will be a reward to the overcoming saints. Paul says, "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18). The heavenly kingdom is the kingdom of our Father (Matt. 13:43), the kingdom of the Father (Matt. 26:29), the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5:5), and the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:11), which will be a reward to the overcoming saints. The heavenly kingdom in 2 Timothy 4:18 equals the crown of righteousness in 4:8, and it is an incentive to the believers to run the heavenly course.

Week 12 Day 3

- Rev. 1:7 Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen.
- 3:10 Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial, which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth.
- 11 I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown.

Definition of Christ's Second Coming

Reading: *Truth Lessons*, level 4, vol. 1, lesson 11, sec. 1, par. 2

I. CHRIST'S COMING BACK—HIS PAROUSIA

Concerning Christ's coming back, the New Testament uses the Greek word *parousia*, which means "presence" and is used in reference to the coming of an honorable person. The New Testament uses this word to refer to Christ's coming, indicating that His coming back is His presence as the most honorable person with His believers. In relation to time, Christ's coming will begin from His throne in the heavens before the great tribulation, the last three and a half years of this age (Matt. 24:37-42; Rev. 12:5; 14:1-5; Luke 21:36), it will continue with His remaining in the air during the great tribulation (1 Thes. 4:15-17; 1 Cor. 15:23; Rev. 10:1), and it will end with His coming from the air to the earth at the end of the great tribulation (2 Thes. 2:8).

The Signs of Christ's Coming and of the Consummation of the Age

The Restoration of Israel

Reading: *The Up-to-Date Presentation of the God-ordained Way and the Signs Concerning the Coming of Christ*, ch. 6, sec. 2, par. 5-6

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

In Matthew 24 the Lord gave a clear revelation concerning the restoration of Israel. In verse 32 the Lord said, "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." To the saints, the fig tree is a sign of the consummation of the age. In Matthew 21:19, during His last visit to Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus cursed a fig tree because He could not find any fruit on it. The fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel (Jer. 24:2, 5, 8). Because Israel was stubborn and rebellious and had no fruit that could satisfy God, she was rejected by God. In A.D. 70, Titus, the Roman prince,

brought with him a great army to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, as prophesied by the Lord when He said, "A stone shall by no means be left upon a stone which shall not be thrown down" (Matt. 24:2). From that time, the children of Israel were scattered among the nations. Not only did their nation fall, but even their homeland was lost. Humanly speaking, there was truly no hope for the nation of Israel to be reformed. However, the Bible contains a prophecy saying that one day the cursed and dried up fig tree would become tender and put forth leaves.

When I was newly saved, shortly after the end of World War I, many books concerning Bible prophecy were published. After studying the prophecies, I had doubts in my heart, wondering how it could be possible for the nation of Israel to be reformed. The Holy Land belonged altogether to the Arabs, and the site of the temple had been occupied for seven centuries. However, since this prophecy is the word in the Bible, I dared not be unbelieving. In 1948 I was working in Shanghai. One day the newspaper carried a report on the front page: the nation of Israel had been restored! When I heard the news, I almost jumped up in great excitement. The fig tree truly had "become tender." Then, after another nineteen years, in 1967, during the six-day war, Israel seized Jerusalem; that was the fig tree "putting forth leaves." At that time I was even more excited. I knew that the summer was near, right at the door; it would not be long before the full restoration of the nation of Israel would take place.

The Rebuilding of the Temple / The Great Tribulation

Ibid., sec. 3, par. 1-3

THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Concerning the rebuilding of the temple, first we need to see the two halves of the last week. The last week will be cut into two halves by Antichrist's abolishing of the seven-year covenant he will make with Israel. In the first three and a half years, Antichrist will support the children of Israel, permitting them to freely worship God; in the latter three and a half years, Antichrist will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease (Dan. 12:7; 9:27) and replace them with an idol of himself. In Matthew 24:15, the holy place in which Antichrist's image will stand refers to the sanctuary within the temple (Psa. 68:35; Ezek. 7:24; 21:2) and the abomination refers to the image of Antichrist as an idol. In other words, the idol will remain in the temple for three and a half years until Christ will destroy Antichrist by the manifestation of His coming. Therefore, first the temple will have to be rebuilt; then the children of Israel will be able to worship God and offer sacrifices to Him, and Antichrist will be able to set up his image.

Since A.D. 70, when Titus destroyed the temple, the temple has never been rebuilt. Israel has regained Jerusalem and is actively making preparations for the rebuilding of the temple. All the materials that will be needed for the rebuilding of the temple and all the utensils needed for the sacrifices have been prepared according to what is recorded in the Bible. Now they are waiting for the suitable time to come, and the rebuilding of the temple will be completed.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The second half of the last week, the last three and a half years of this age, is the period of the great tribulation, such as has not occurred from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:21). This period will begin with the supernatural calamities in the sixth seal of the seven seals (Rev. 6:12-17) and will end at the seventh bowl of the seven bowls (Rev. 16:1-21). It will be "the hour of trial which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10). This great tribulation will come from three directions—from God, from Antichrist, and from Satan—upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth (Luke 21:35). At that time God will judge the entire universe with supernatural calamities, so that the earth will not be suitable for man's existence. It seems that God will say to the men on earth, "I created all things for your existence, and My purpose is that you would fear Me, serve Me, love Me, and pursue after Me; yet you cooperate with Satan to oppose Me and reject Me. Now I am shaking the earth and the heavens; see if you will still be able to live peacefully." Furthermore, Satan will be cast out of heaven to the earth by the overcomers, and knowing that he has a short time, he will collaborate with Antichrist, and the two will do their best to destroy and injure the human race, and they will severely persecute the Jews and the Christians (Rev. 12:7-13, 17). However, for the preservation of His people, God will limit the time of the great tribulation to only three and a half years; otherwise, no flesh would be saved.

Week 12 Day 4

- Luke 21:34 But take heed to yourselves lest perhaps your hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day come upon you suddenly as a snare.
- 35 For it will come in upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth.
- 36 But be watchful at every time, beseeching that you would prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man.

Antichrist 24

Reading: *The Up-to-Date Presentation of the God-ordained Way and the Signs Concerning the Coming of Christ*, ch. 6, sec. 2, par. 1-4

ANTICHRIST

Matthew 24:3 says, "And as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us,...what is the sign of Your coming and of the consummation of the age?" In His reply in the succeeding verses, the Lord first spoke concerning Antichrist. In verse 15 the Lord said: "When therefore you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him who reads understand)." This will definitely be fulfilled in the last three and a half years of the present age, the time of the great tribulation, the second half of the last week. At that time Antichrist's image will be set up as an idol in the temple of God.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Paul also said, "Let no one deceive you in any way; because it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or an object of worship, so that he seats himself in the temple of God, proclaiming himself that he is God." This shows us that before the consummation of the age, Antichrist must first appear; he will play a leading role in the last week.

Revelation 13:1 points out that a beast, which signifies Antichrist, will come up out of the Mediterranean Sea. This beast has seven heads and ten horns. Revelation 17:8-11 tells us the origin of this beast. The seven heads of the beast are seven Caesars of the Roman Empire. According to historical records, the Roman Empire had a total of twelve Caesars, but only six of them were referred to in Revelation, because all these six were "fallen" (Rev. 17:10 and note); that is, they all died unnaturally—they either committed suicide or were murdered, their throne being usurped. Antichrist,

the seventh Caesar, will come from one of the Gentile nations around the Mediterranean Sea. He will have the support of ten kings, and they will unite to form a great empire, which will be the revived Roman Empire. He will make a covenant with Israel for seven years and permit them to freely worship God. After three and a half years, Antichrist will be slain temporarily; then the spirit of the fifth Caesar (Nero) of the Roman Empire will come up out of the abyss and enter into the dead body of Antichrist to resurrect him to be the eighth Caesar. Antichrist will break the covenant and begin to persecute the Israelites and the Christians. He will also set up his image in the temple (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:4), until the complete destruction that is determined will be poured out upon the desolator, that is, upon Antichrist (Dan. 9:27).

Antichrist will be the Caesar of the revived Roman Empire. Once he makes a seven-year covenant with Israel, that will be the beginning of the last week. Today, this last week is not yet manifested because the Roman Empire is not yet revived; but as we observe the world situation, it seems that the restoration of the Roman Empire will take place soon. In the previous two years we all have seen the great change in the world situation, a change that is beyond our imagination. First, the Soviet Union is proceeding with a reformation and has declared her renunciation of communism. Then a number of her satellite countries have risen up to copy her action. Now East Germany and West Germany are unified. Thus, the entire situation in Europe is pushing toward the direction prophesied in the Bible for the restoration of the Roman Empire. When that time comes, Antichrist will appear.

The Rapture of the Saints

Ibid., sec. 3, par. 4;

THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS

Before the great tribulation, the overcomers will be raptured, leaving the majority of the believers, those who are not yet mature, on the earth to pass through the great tribulation. Matthew 24:40-41 says, "Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left." This indicates that while the worldly people are befuddled by material things, with no sense of the coming judgment, some of the sober and watchful believers will be taken away. To the befuddled and senseless people, this should be a sign of Christ's coming. Therefore, we should take heed to ourselves, lest at some time our hearts be weighed down with debauchery and drunkenness and the

anxieties of life (Luke 21:34), and we miss the rapture and become like Lot's wife.

Life-study of Revelation, msg. 48, sec. 1, par. 2

Week 12 Day 5

- Matt. 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.
- 2 And five of them were foolish and five were prudent.
- 3 For the foolish, when they took their lamps, did not take oil with them;
- 4 But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
- 14 For the kingdom of the heavens is just like a man about to go abroad, who called his own slaves and delivered to them his possessions.
- 15 To one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability. And he went abroad.

The Believers' Attitude toward the Coming of Christ

Being Watchful in Life and Preparing Oil in Our Vessels

Reading: *Life-study of Matthew*, msg. 64, sec. 3, par. 1-2;

3. The Five Prudent Ones Taking Oil in Their Vessels

Verse 4 says, "But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps." Man is a vessel made for God (Rom. 9:21, 23-24), and man's personality is in his soul. Hence, vessels here signify the soul of the believers. The five prudent virgins not only have oil in their lamps, but also take oil in their vessels. Having oil in their lamps signifies that they have the Spirit of God dwelling in their spirit (Rom. 8:9, 16), and taking oil in their vessels signifies that they have the fullness of the Spirit of God saturating their souls.

We need to be very clear about the lamps and the vessels. According to the Hebrew text, Proverbs 20:27 says that the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord. Within the lamp is the oil, the Holy Spirit. The New Testament reveals that our spirit is the place the Holy Spirit indwells. According to Romans 9, we are vessels made by God. Our being, our personality, is in our soul. Therefore, the vessel in this verse signifies our soul. Through regeneration we have the Spirit of God in our spirit. This causes our lamp to burn. But the question is whether or not we have the extra portion of the Holy Spirit filling our soul. Although we have the oil in our lamp, we need the extra portion of the oil in our soul. This signifies that the Spirit must spread from within our spirit to every part of our soul. Then in our soul we shall have an extra amount of the Holy Spirit. If we have this extra portion, we are

prudent. If we do not have it, we are foolish. In other words, if we are indifferent to the infilling of the Holy Spirit, we are foolish. If we are wise, we shall pray, “Lord, have mercy on me. I want to have Your Spirit not only in my spirit, but also in my soul. Lord, I need the infilling of the Spirit. I need the extra portion of the Holy Spirit to fill my entire being.” Without this extra portion of the Spirit, we cannot be watchful or ready. In order to be watchful and ready, we need the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the spreading of the Spirit Himself from our spirit to every part of our inward being.

sec. 4, par. 12

13. Watching

Verse 13 concludes, “Watch therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour.” Chapter 24:40-44 refers to the rapture only of the living believers who are ready. Chapter 25:1-13 is needed to cover the rapture of the dead and resurrected ones. When we read this portion of the Word, we see how watchful we need to be. To be watchful and ready is a very serious matter. No other book warns us as often as the book of Matthew does. I can testify before the Lord that for more than forty years I have been warned by this book. Whenever I have been a little careless, I have remembered the warnings contained in Matthew. Yes, we all are virgins, but are we foolish or prudent? We all need to answer this question for ourselves. Whether we are prudent or not depends on whether or not we have the extra portion of the Holy Spirit in our vessel.

Being Faithful in Service and Exercising Our Gifts Given by the Lord

Ibid., msg. 65, sec. 2, par. 5-6, 8-9

Verse 14 says that the man gave his slaves his possessions, but verse 15 says that he gave them talents. This indicates that the talents in verse 15 are the possessions in verse 14. In other words, the Lord uses His possessions as talents for us. For example, the gospel is the Lord’s possession. But when it is given to us, it becomes our talent. Likewise, the truth is the Lord’s possession. But when the truth is given to us, it becomes a talent. In the same principle, all the believers are the Lord’s possessions. When the believers are given to us, they become our talents. Without all the believers, my talent would not be very big. Furthermore, the church is the Lord’s possession. When the church is given to us, it becomes our talent. The more of His possessions the Lord gives to us, the more talents we shall have. In like manner, the more the Lord burdens us, the more talents we shall have. Many Christians know that in this parable the talents are gifts. However, they do not know that the source of the gifts is the Lord’s possessions.

Today the Lord's possessions primarily are the gospel, the truth, the believers, and the church. If you do not care for these things, you will not have any talents. The gospel needs to become our possession. The same is true of the truth, the believers, and the churches. My talents are not natural. Rather, they are the gospel, the truth, the believers, and the church. If you took all these things away from me, I would have nothing left. I have a strong talent because I have not only the gospel and the truth, but also thousands of believers and hundreds of churches. This is the reason this ministry has had impact.

If you want to receive more talents, you must have a heart to care for the saints. For example, when someone is unemployed, you need to pray for him and bear his burden. This will be a proof that the Lord has given that one to you as a talent. However, not to bear the saints or care for them means that you forsake the Lord's possession. Every dear saint is a precious part of the Lord's possession. It is not a small matter to be concerned for the saints, for they are the Lord's possession.

When the Lord's possessions are in His hand, they remain His possessions. But when they are delivered to us, they become our talent. Do not drop any burden that the Lord has given you. No matter how busy I am, I cannot drop any talent, for to do this is to drop the Lord's possession. The Lord has a vast work in His recovery. For this work, He needs thousands of young brothers and sisters to be raised up to bear the responsibility.

Week 12 Day 6

- 2 Tim. 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.
- 2 Pet. 1:19 And we have the prophetic word made more firm, to which you do well to give heed as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

Loving It, Awaiting It, and Taking It as An Encouragement

Reading: *The Up-to-Date Presentation of the God-ordained Way and the Signs Concerning the Coming of Christ*, ch. 7, sec. 4, par. 2-3

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 (2 Tim. 4:8). 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 afterwards, 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, "Senseless 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.

In 2 Timothy 4:1 Paul said to Timothy, "I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom." This is an exhortation from Paul immediately before his martyrdom. He said that he had fought the good fight, he had finished the course, and he had kept the faith, and that at the judgment seat he would be awarded the crown of righteousness, which would be awarded to all those who have loved His appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8). He reminded Timothy, and also us, by the Lord's judgment and kingdom that we should have a living that loves the Lord's appearing. This will cause us not to be discouraged, not to backslide, not to become weak, but to remain faithful to the end.

Watching and Being Ready for It, Beseeking to Prevail
Ibid., ch. 6, sec. 3, par. 7-8

GIVING HEED TO THE PROPHETIC WORD

After we have seen and are clear about all these prophecies, we need to be watchful and to 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). Prior to His open appearing as the sun, the Lord will appear as the morning star in the darkest hour of the night to those who are longing for His appearing. The prophetic word of the Scripture, as the shining lamp to the believers, conveys spiritual light to shine in their darkness, guiding them to enter into a bright day until the day of the Lord's appearing.

The time is short. By studying the prophecies in the Bible and checking with the world situation today, we know that the day of the Lord's coming is very near and that the last week is approaching. The crucial question today is this: Do we want to bury ourselves in the world or put ourselves in the Lord's hand? We should know that once we bury ourselves in the world and become rooted in it, it will not be easy to be uprooted. In the few remaining days, we should get ourselves ready. Let us be those who love and serve the Lord, who are revived and are overcoming every day, and who let the world go and are waiting with all our heart for the Lord's coming.