

## Matthew 24H

- Believe it or not, we have only reached the halfway point of the Olivet discourse in Matthew, but already we've learned so much
  - Jesus outlined the signs and the major events associated with the destruction of the Jewish temple and the end of the age
    - He gave us a summary of the events of Tribulation leading up to His Second Coming
    - Then He introduced us to a special day called the coming of the Lord, which we now call the Rapture
    - And on this day, Jesus said the Church saints will be received off the earth, resurrected and taken to Heaven with Jesus
  - We've been studying the Rapture for the past couple of lessons, and I said we would cover this topic in three sections
    - First, we looked at the circumstances that will surround the day when it comes
    - Then last week we studied the manner in which the day would unfold and how we will experience it
    - We also looked at a couple of passages by Paul to understand the details of how we receive our new bodies
    - And today we study the third section: the purpose of this day and why the Lord has chosen to make His return so dramatic
  - Last week we already learned one reason why the Rapture exists: it's our resurrection day
    - On the day of the Rapture, all saints in the Church will receive new, eternal, glorified bodies which we will live in forever
    - Paul gave us that reason last week in the passage we studied in 1 Corinthians 15
    - Let's jump back there again by re-reading the passage

**1Cor. 15:50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.**

[1Cor. 15:51](#) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

[1Cor. 15:52](#) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

[1Cor. 15:53](#) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

[1Cor. 15:54](#) But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

- Paul explained how the rapture will work in a future moment, when instantly believers exchange their old, dying body for a new eternal body
  - He said our old body, being corrupted by sin and under a sentence of condemnation, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God
    - Paul is speaking about the moment we are raptured...the moment we leave earth and enter in the presence of God
    - Paul says that journey cannot happen while we are still occupying these dying, corrupt, sinful bodies
  - Because if sin enters the presence of a holy and just God on that judgment day, it must be condemned...justice requires it
    - Having even just one sin disqualifies us from living in the presence of God
    - Remember, Adam committed just one sin and that was enough to bar him from the Garden and from God's presence
    - So in order to redeem us and welcome us back into His presence, the Lord must correct for all our sin
    - He must pay for it on the cross and He must eliminate it from our very person
  - That correction requires two steps: first, God must remove sin from our spirit and then He removes sin from our physical body
    - Our spirit is born again and made new when we come to faith in Jesus Christ
    - But because we still inhabit a sinful body of flesh, the Lord sends the Holy Spirit to accompany us until the day we are resurrected

- He lives in us to give us the knowledge and strength to crucify our flesh and obey our new, perfect spirit
- But eventually if we are to enter in the presence of God, He must replace our corrupt and sinful body with a new, eternal and sinless body
  - That's what Paul is talking about here in 1 Corinthians 15 when He says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God
    - And the perishable does not inherit the imperishable, meaning our corrupt body will not enter into eternity
    - Our old body, our flesh and blood, is perishable, because it is condemned to die for sin, and therefore it can't enter Heaven
    - We need an imperishable body so that we can enter the Kingdom of God...we need to be resurrected
  - So one reason we have a rapture coming is because we need to be resurrected into a new body to live in the Kingdom
    - But why does the Lord conduct this day in such dramatic fashion raising the entire Church in the same instant?
    - And why make the saints who die wait to be raised at the Rapture with those who are still alive
    - What purpose did the Lord have in the design of this day?
  - We find that answer in the last section of this chapter

**[Matt. 24:42](#)** "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.

**[Matt. 24:43](#)** "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

**[Matt. 24:44](#)** "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

- Jesus says that He designed this day to be a surprise so that we will have incentive to be on alert at all times
  - The Greek word for alert means to remain awake or watchful and it's the command given to a night watchman or guard

- It calls for us to fight against forces trying to lull us to sleep, and to not get distracted or complacent but to remain attentive
- And the fact that this day could happen at any time means we can't afford to let our guard down
- Jesus uses the example of a man guarding his home from a thief, saying if the man knew when the thief was coming, he could get ready
  - Imagine how differently you would approach the security of your house if you could know beforehand when it would be robbed
  - If thieves sent you a calendar invitation in advance, you could wait until that moment to enact your security plan
  - You would lock the doors, turn on all the lights, call 911, buy a big dog, and maybe grab a weapon...you would be ready
- Likewise, the rest of the time you would let your guard down because you have no reason to expect a robbery
  - You wouldn't lock your doors or worry about security lights, etc.
  - You wouldn't pay for an alarm company to monitor your home, you might not pay for insurance on your possessions
  - You wouldn't need to be alert or watchful...you could take it easy because there would be no surprise
- And Jesus says in v.44 that is exactly why the day of our resurrection has been left a surprise for us all
  - Jesus says "for this reason" we must be ready, because the Rapture is coming like a thief in the night, at an hour that will surprise you
    - God has planned the coming of the Lord in such a way that we have to treat everyday as potentially our last day on earth
    - And that means we have to spend every day carefully, thoughtfully, with great care
  - If we knew the exact day of our resurrection, the day the Rapture would happen, we could take a break in our preparations
    - We could take our foot off the pedal and coast for a time, allowing our dedication to the disciplines of the faith fall off

- We could set prayer and study aside, we could skip out on the church gathering, and we could get cozy with our secret sins
- Until the appointed day approached, and then we would start to get serious about our walk with Jesus knowing the Lord was near
- That's why Jesus is keeping us in the dark about the timing of His return for the Church at the Rapture
  - In fact He says specifically that He is going to come at a day and on an hour when you don't expect Him to arrive
  - It will be a day that no one will see coming, He says
  - That means if someone tries to predict the day, they merely guarantee it *won't* be that day
- So we are to remain alert for that day, watchfully waiting and expecting the Lord to return at any moment
  - And since it comes instantly, without warning in the blink of an eye, don't think you can "get right with Jesus" at the last moment
  - Whether you are an unbeliever thinking you can confess Christ on your death bed
  - Or you're a believer thinking you can get serious about obeying Jesus when you see the rapture coming, stop fooling yourself
- Don't think you can outsmart God, because you will be disappointed
  - Unbeliever, today is the day of your salvation, but if you play games with God, you may wake up one day in fiery judgment
  - And believer now is the time to obey your Master, and if you delay your obedience, you be like that unprepared homeowner
  - You will be caught off guard and you will lose your possessions
- And this leads us to the final and most important purpose for why the timing of our rapture remains a mystery...to encourage us to protect our possessions

**[Matt. 24:45](#)** "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?"

**[Matt. 24:46](#)** "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes."

**[Matt. 24:47](#)** "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions."

[Matt. 24:48](#) "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,'

[Matt. 24:49](#) and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards;

[Matt. 24:50](#) the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,

[Matt. 24:51](#) and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- Jesus now gives us a parable to explain why we need to be ready at all times for His return for the Church
  - Jesus uses the relationship of slaves to a master, which is one of His preferred illustrations for our relationship with Him
    - And as usual, Jesus is the Master, and we are His slaves, and just as Jesus left earth for a while, this master has left the slaves
    - All slaves have duties they are expected to accomplish diligently under the Master's authority
    - Some of the slaves possess rank over other slaves in the home, so they have the added responsibility of managing other slaves
  - And while He is away, the Master expects the slaves to do their duty in His absence no different than if He was still present with them
    - Every slave is expected to keep up with their assigned work
    - And the slaves in charge of other slaves are expected to make sure the work is done, and that meals are prepared, etc.
    - The whole operation should continue uninterrupted as if the Master had never gone anywhere
    - It's the opposite of the saying, "when the cat's away, the mice will play"
- Why do the slaves remain diligent in the Master's absence? Because they know the Master will return one day unannounced
  - And when He does return, He will take note of how the slaves did their work in His absence, and He will respond to each accordingly
    - And this brings us to the main point of this parable...when a master returns to his house, he comes with expectations

- He expects His commands to be obeyed, and those who meet His expectations will be rewarded for their obedience
- Notice in v.46 Jesus says there is a blessing for the slave who is doing as the master commanded when the master returns
  - In the context of the parable, that might mean the slave receives an increase in food rations
  - Or it might mean a day released from work, or a reduction in the debt the slave was working to pay off
  - Whatever it was, the slave knew rewards were on the line, and if the slave failed to serve well, those rewards never materialized
- And in the worst case, a slave could reject the Master's authority entirely and become the master's enemy and an enemy of other slaves
  - In v.48 Jesus describes a slave who beats the other slaves, leaves the master's house and prefers the company of society's lowest
  - That slave doesn't just lose opportunity for reward...the master will punish him
  - That slave will be caught off guard when the master returns and he will be rejected from service and left with hypocrites
- What is the meaning of this parable? You may remember a couple of weeks ago I gave my own example from growing up
  - I described nights when we were left at home while my parents went out for the evening
    - When they left me and my siblings, they told us what they expected us to do in their absence
    - If we did as we were told, then we expected to be praised and maybe even rewarded in some modest way when they returned
    - On the other hand, if we neglected our duties, we knew we risked negative consequences and at the very least, no reward
  - And since we didn't know for sure when they might come back, we were watchful and diligent in completing our responsibilities
    - Because we knew their return would bring an evaluation of sorts, a moment of judgment

- And we wanted that moment to go well...my parents' approaching return was incentive for us to do our best
- And that's exactly the situation Jesus is describing for believers at the coming of the Lord, or as we now call it, our Rapture
  - The purpose of the rapture isn't only to give us new bodies...it's also the moment that we receive our report card from Jesus
  - Following the rapture, Jesus will evaluate the works of believers done in service to Him so we may be rewarded for that service

**1Cor. 4:5 Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.**

- Paul says that we shouldn't judge our fellow believers in how they live or how they serve Jesus...leave that judgment to the Master
  - And Jesus will bring to light everything hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts
  - Paul is saying one day everything we've done in service to Jesus and the reasons we did it will be made public
  - Jesus will disclose these things so that He might praise us for what we did in service to Him
- This is the evaluation or judgment that comes for the believer, and Paul says it happens at the coming of the Lord
  - Simply put, there is a judgement moment for the believer and that judgment happens after we are resurrected
    - Now the concept of a judgment for believers may be new to you, and if so I encourage you to study up on this truth of Scripture
    - But for our purposes this morning, let's cover a few points briefly
  - First, this is not a judgment moment to determine if we are saved or if we go to Heaven
    - The Bible is clear about how to be saved: confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that He was raised from the dead
    - If you do that, you are saved and no service or good work is ever required because you cannot earn what comes by grace alone



- But secondly, there is still a moment of judgment planned for every believer, and Paul tells us that moment is for the purpose of reward:

**2Cor. 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- All believers will experience a judgment in which Christ considers the work we did for Him while living in this body
- Service that He considers good will be recompensed or rewarded, and service that He considers bad will not be rewarded
- When Paul says “good and bad,” he’s not referring to our sins or righteous deeds...he’s referring to the quality of our service
  - So what constitutes good service? Jesus gives us that standard in His parable
  - In the parable, the Master assigned a work to every one of His slaves in His absence
  - The slaves didn’t determine their own assignments...they were required to do what they were told
  - Then each slave was recompensed or rewarded based on how well they did what was assigned
- That’s how we will be evaluated as well...Christ has assigned each of His disciples a place and role of service within the body of Christ
  - Some of us have individual assignments to serve Jesus and others have been assigned to care for other disciples
    - We cannot decide our own assignments...we are called to serve in the station Christ assigned to us
    - And depending on how well we carry out that assignment we will be rewarded
    - Our reward doesn’t depend on the type of work we do...Jesus decided that for us, so everyone can be equally rewarded
    - It only matters how well we carried out our assignment

- Back in 1 Corinthians 4, Paul said Jesus' judgment will take into account things hidden in darkness, meaning service we do out of view of others
  - And Paul also said Jesus will judge the motive of our hearts as we go about that service
  - So when you enter your prayer closet and intercede for fellow believers out of view of others, Jesus will take notice
  - And when you clean bathrooms at church or write letters of encouragement to other believers or share the Gospel with your children, the Lord sees
- And even better, the results of our service are not being judged...never does Scripture say that we must succeed in our work
  - Because the success of our ministry is also on Jesus
  - As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:

**1Cor. 3:5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.**

**1Cor. 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.**

- The Lord gives opportunity to our service and He determines the growth of ministry
- So Jesus judges our obedience and effort and the intentions of our heart, not our results
  - Such that even when your ministry fails in some particular endeavor, the Lord still credits you for the effort and the intentions of your heart
    - Conversely, the way to lose reward is to not serve, to not try, to not have pure motives
    - We can't be like that slave that pretends the Lord will never return, who thinks that a judgment will never come
    - Jesus wants us to serve Him diligently for His glory and for our reward
  - And that's why Jesus is keeping the day of the Rapture a secret, because it ensures we will be ready for our report card moment

- The Rapture is like a pop quiz...when you can't know for sure when the test is coming, you have incentive to study every day
- And when you don't know when your judgment is coming, you have incentive to serve Jesus well everyday
- When our Master returns, we should be found doing what the Master commanded us to do
- So by keeping the day a mystery, Jesus is helping us maximize our reward when that day comes
- But if you're saying to yourself, I don't know what Christ has assigned to me, then you realize that you aren't ready for that day, are you?
  - Because if you don't even know what it is Jesus has called you to do in service to Him, then you are unlikely to be found doing it
  - So the first step to serving Jesus is to know how He wants you to serve, and how do we determine that?
- Well the answer is simple: you pray for His guidance and you step out in some direction and you expect Him to steer you to the right place
  - That's how it works for everyone who has ever served Jesus
  - The apostle Paul didn't wake up one morning and decide to become the apostle to the Gentiles
  - He began walking with Jesus and the Lord showed him how to serve
- Martin Luther wasn't born knowing the Lord would use Him to start the Reformation
  - He began reading the word of God, seeking to serve according to what he read, and the Lord directed his steps
  - The next thing Luther knew, he was nailing a document to a wooden door and the rest is history
- How does any Christian find their place of service to Jesus? They pray for guidance, they start moving and they expect God to steer them
  - But here's the thing...the Lord can't steer a stationary object
    - If you chase the world or live only for yourself or make excuses for why you can't obey Christ, you will never go anywhere

- Jesus doesn't force His servants to serve...He just doesn't reward a lack of service
- And the test is coming, the coming of the Lord will happen, and it will surprise you so you want to be found ready
- That's why Jesus saved this topic for the end of the questions, because it's the one and only day that Christians should be thinking about
  - It's interesting to see the signs of the end of the age and to know that the last days are upon us
  - And it will be important for those who live in Tribulation to understand that the Second Coming is approaching
- But for Christians, those events don't matter much because they don't impact us
  - The end of age will take place with us in Heaven before the end is reached
  - And the Tribulation is God's wrath appointed for the unbelieving world, not for His Church
  - So as interesting as these events are for us, they are not to be our focus
- Jesus told His disciples about the Rapture at the end of this discourse because that's the day we are supposed to be focused on
  - The resurrection of the Church is the next thing scheduled to happen in God's program for the end and it's coming suddenly
  - That's what we should be focused on, that's the day we should be prepared for
- And being prepared means going about the work of the Master, being found engaged in what He asked us to do
  - Using the spiritual gift He gave you, serving the brothers and sisters He has placed around you
  - Living with eyes for eternity knowing that when He appears we want Him to be pleased with the service we rendered to Him
- Christian, don't play games with God...get ready for the Lord's coming, because you know it can't be far off

- And even if you should die before that day comes, you will still be evaluated based on the deeds you did in this body
  - As the writer of Hebrews says:

[Heb. 9:27](#) And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

- And Peter says that the Church will be judged before God judges the world

[1Pet. 4:17](#) For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

- Peter says that judgment comes to the Church first, referring to the moment of the resurrection or Rapture
  - And so we must be ready for that moment, and we get ready by being diligent to serve Jesus well while we await His return
  - But notice also Peter says, what will happen to those who do not obey the Gospel (referring to unbelievers)?
  - What kind of judgment will they see?
- Jesus told us that too in the parable...the slave who left the Master's house was a picture of the fate of the unbeliever
  - The parable can be a bit confusing on this point, because the unbeliever is called a "slave" which is the picture of a believer
    - But in parables, it's not uncommon for characters to be exposed as frauds at a point in the story
    - So in this case, the actions of the slave reveal that he was never truly under the master's authority
  - For example, the slave left to consort with drunkards, which is a way of showing he was not truly a member of the master's household
    - He rejected the master's authority and did not want to be associated with the master's family
    - And he beat the other slaves, which is a picture of persecution, demonstrating that this slave was an enemy of the other slaves

- These details tells us that this man was not truly a slave of the master... he was an imposter, a man who had no relationship with the master
  - And so when the master returned, he judged that man harshly for having become his enemy
  - He cut him into pieces and assigned him a place with the hypocrites, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth
- That is the Bible's way of describing eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire, or we could simply call it Hell
  - It's the home of all who reject the authority of Jesus and that judgment will likewise be sudden and unexpected
  - Like the Rapture for the Church, the unbeliever cannot know the day of his or her death
- So they too would do well to get ready, and it's the easiest preparation of all...it only takes a moment, and it only takes faith in Jesus Christ