
Watch and be Ready for the Return of Jesus Christ

by: Ronald L. Dart

I don't suppose that any of you have seen any driverless cars lately. At times there are people who predict the rapture is to take place on a certain date. If any of these predictions were true, then one should be rather careful about it. Driving your car could be rather dangerous especially on two lane roads. The theory of this is that a person could be driving their car along the road one minute and the next minute the car could be continuing down the road with no driver in it. You could be sitting in your office or work place with a number of people at their desks doing their work one minute and the next minute two or three of them could be gone, disappeared, right out of the clear blue sky. The whole idea is that those who belong to Christ will be taken away from the world seven years before the return of Jesus Christ. I would like to hear some honest discussion from the person who made such a prediction on the day after when he forecasted the time of one of these Biblical events, because it seems that they are always disappointed. I can't help but wonder that if someone was able to really figure it out, were able to get right down and through the Bible and were able to discover with some precision some aspect of prophecy, I am led to wonder if God would not change it, so that he would be wrong, because Jesus said: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36.)

Don't Set Dates

When you precisely start dating some of these things, such as the return of Jesus Christ, even though you are very sincere, you really do go out on a limb. A person who is not sincere will put it far enough into the future so that they can make a couple of bucks on it before people find out that it was not true. (Remember the Y2K predictions of year 2000.) Doesn't this make sense?

This article is about the time to get ready, because we are all aware of the fact that Jesus told us to watch (Luke 21:36), to be vigilant about His return. I can't help but wonder what would happen if I don't watch? What will happen if I try to live a Christian life, be obedient to God, but I don't worry my head very much about times or dates or places or prophecies or world events and I am just trying to keep my nose clean and live a good life and do what God says as far as my way of life is concerned but I just don't watch. What will happen? What difference does it make? Does it make any difference at all?

If You Could Talk to Jesus

Now if you could actually take Jesus aside, by the coat sleeve as it were, and ask Him a few questions about these things, what do you suppose He would have to say to you? The disciples had a chance like that. They were showing Him the buildings of the Temple and they were ooing and awing over the workmanship that had been done there and it was staggering and beautiful. As He went over to a quiet place with them and they sat down together He said: "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2.) His disciples ask Him as they came over the Mount of Olives, they came to Him privately and they said: "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3.) Now, why would they ask that? The obvious reason is just curiosity, naturally they wanted to know. Jesus had made a startling statement to them, when He had said that "there is not going to be one stone here in this Temple edifice that will be left upon top of one another that will not be thrown down." They didn't have anything else to say and finally when they had gotten Him aside, they wanted to know two things, when are these things going to happen and what is going to be the SIGN of His coming?

Now what they are asking for in this situation is some sort of a feeling for the time and the seasons of things and beyond that, is there something that is going to happen that we will see it and we will know that it is coming so that we can be ready. Whatever 'being ready' might entail. Jesus spends a lot of time answering these questions. In fact, there doesn't seem to be anything anywhere in the entire New Testament where somebody came to Him and ask Him a question and where He spent anywhere the amount of time answering the question that He did here.

What Shall be the Sign of Your Coming and of the End of the World?

The whole of Matthew chapter 24 and whole of chapter 25 are all given in reply to these two simple little questions: When shall these things be and what shall be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world?

The very first thing that Jesus told them was "Take heed, that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4.) Now think about that for a minute. "Take heed, that no man deceives you." The implication of this is that there is going to be at least a small effort made at deception. Not a small opportunity whereby we might be deceived. As a result of things having to do with this, right here, He said: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5.) Not a few but many.

Now you have to stop and think about this for a moment as to how He meant that to be taken. Did He mean by that, that there would be people coming claiming to be Christ saying, "I am Christ". Now I want you to think for a moment, how much of a chance do you suppose someone coming on the scene, walking down the street in a robe with a sign saying "flee from the wrath to come" with a long beard and saying: "I am Jesus" or someone who comes dressed in a dress suit of pen stripes and handkerchief in his pocket and a nice neck tie on and he says "I want you to

understand something and I know that you are not going to believe me, I am Jesus Christ." Would this person be likely to deceive very many people? I will tell you that he will deceive a few, because it seems that no matter how outlandish the claim, no matter how far out, or no matter how weird, there will be some poor people here and there who are always ready to follow any piped piper who comes along. But Jesus said: "That this one would deceive many" and even to such extent that He had to warn His own disciples and specifically the twelve apostles not to be deceived themselves by this because we are not talking about some wild-eyed prophet coming in off of the streets claiming to be Christ.

There is another way that we could understand this. That these are people who come claiming to represent Christ. They come in His name. They come in His authority. They come bearing His name saying that Jesus is Christ. They actually will say Jesus is Lord and will deceive many. It is in this latter sense that He intended this to be understood. I don't want you to be mistaken on this because there are going to be many people in the years to come who are going to come in Jesus' name, who are willing to admit that He is Christ, who are quite happy to tell you that Jesus is Lord, who are going to have a scheme of prophecy that you are going to have to listen to, it is going to be very convincing and an awful lot of people are going to believe what they say. Jesus said that they will deceive many.

Wars and Rumors of Wars

Jesus said: "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet (Matthew 26:6.)

I remember from just a child growing up, hearing that one of the signs of Jesus Christ's return was war and rumors of war. Whereas Jesus said don't be disturbed by reports of wars and rumors of war, this is all going to happen, but the end is not yet.

"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in all sorts of places. {8} "All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:7-8.) All these are the beginning, not the end or even a sign of the end, they are the beginning, perhaps the beginning of the end.

Then Jesus said: "They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (Matthew 24:9.) Now this began to happen shortly after His departure, this was not long in coming. You also have to bear in mind that the typical fulfillment of this prophecy, that is of the casting down of the buildings of the Temple took place at 70 A.D. within the lifetime of virtually all of the men standing in front of Him hearing this statement. The persecution that He warned of took place almost immediately, but everybody knows that His coming did not take place, that His coming as part of this is far in the future.

Time of the End

Jesus continued: "Many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. {11} "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. {12} "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." {13} "But he who endures to the end shall be

saved" (Matthew 24:11-13.) Now all of this is so familiar, it almost gets to the place when you go over it several times, you get to where you don't hear it anymore, and yet buried down in these words is the sense of the 'time of the end', that Jesus wanted His disciples to have. He wanted them not to know the day or the hour, not to have some kind of a date set, not to have people running off into the wilderness and storing up and stockpiling food, but He wanted them to have a sense of the 'time of the end' and an awareness when things were changing and times were happening. He tries to help them to understand it and He says: "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14.)

Abomination of Desolation

Jesus spoke of an abomination of desolation that would have to be placed in the Holy Place that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Verse 15.) This is something which everyone who has ever read this scripture has tried to understand. One of the reasons why we do not understand it is because it is not there. It's not there, it was there. There was a fulfillment of this before Jesus ever spoke these words. You see Daniel originally spoke these words about the abomination of desolation. It was actually fulfilled by the man named Antiochus Epiphanes who actually went in and desecrated the altar and the Holy Place, and he burned swine's flesh upon that altar trying to wipe out and stop the worship of God in the Temple. It had happened, it was history.

Now Jesus says that it is going to happen again. That has not happened up until this day, but anyone who has read this prophecy, anyone who has studied the book of Daniel is going to have a sense of the 'time of the end' in which this particular item will play a role and when it happens you will know that it has happened. It will be plain what it is, it will not be something that you will have to figure out or guess at, it will be there, and you will know it. Now many people in the world may not, but if they do not, it is because they are not paying attention.

Watch

This word 'watch' that Jesus told His disciples about, what does it mean? Oddly enough, the Greek word is the word in which we get the name 'Gregory' (gregoreuo, gray-gor-yoo'-o), it basically sounds like the word Gregory, and it comes from the root word 'to rouse from sleep.' You know, you shake somebody and wake them up. The whole idea of the Greek expression that is translated 'watch' is not so much standing on their ramparts with binoculars and looking at the far horizon, as it is being alert, being awake, paying attention, knowing what is going on. LOOK is what it says, look, watch, be awake, be vigilant. Find your own synonym for it, but it isn't just watching the far horizon with binoculars, it is paying attention to what is going on. I have to conclude, because of what Jesus said, that it is important that we pay attention. It could be a matter of life or death. It could be a matter of pain and suffering. It could be a matter of safety and protection. It could be a matter of salvation for some. And so, Jesus said "You need to know." He actually warned His disciples, He said, then when you see the abomination there, those that are in Judea should flee into the mountains, the person who is on the housetop should not even go down into the house, he is not to try to turn back into the field to get an extra change of clothes (Matthew 24:17-18.) He is not supposed to do anything when he sees this happen, he is supposed to leave and be gone, because the time element that he has to get out of there is very,

very short. Now I don't have any idea what God has in mind as far as our protection is concerned. I do know that it is His intent that many will undergo severe tribulations that are coming upon all men upon the face of this earth. I do not know how he is going to get us out, I do not know specifically what He is going to do, but I do know that He has told me to pay attention, to watch, to be aware. Now I don't live in Judea, and when Jerusalem is encompassed with armies and the abomination of desolation is placed, it may not be necessary for me to flee into the mountains, but on the other hand there may be some considerations that I need to think about when that happens. I can only conclude that is so because all of that is preserved here for us to read, and to understand and to take warning from.

Great Tribulation

He tells us that things are going to be difficult for many people, "Woe to them that are with child, and to them that nurse their babies in those days! {20} But pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day {21} "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. {22} And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:19-22.) This little prophecy tells us that there is a time of trouble coming upon the earth, it will be unique, there has never been a time before like it, there will never be a time like it again, it is one unique time in all of history. There are three or four references in the Old Testament that use almost the same words having to do with that particular time of trouble and there are many more references that make reference to that time without using necessarily precisely the same words, without the restrictions of saying there was never a time before, there will never be a time again, there is one time. The prophets of old referred to it, Jesus referred to it, He said it is a time that if that time was not shortened there would be no flesh saved alive (Verse 22.). He is not talking about saved in terms of salvation, He is talking about flesh being saved. This is talking about the possibility for the destruction, not only of all human life from the face of the planet, but all animal life as well.

Now reflect on that, comprehend that, it is a little hard for me. I realize that it is getting easier by the days, it seems, for that kind of thing to happen.

When I was just a boy growing up, I could read some of these things in Revelation and Matthew and I wondered about them, but I knew nothing of an atomic bomb, I knew nothing of hydrogen bombs, my whole idea of chemical warfare was using mustard gas as was done in World War One and killing off a few people in a given area. I had no idea of biological warfare which could destroy all of the basic food crops across an entire continent. I didn't know anything about those things. I had no idea about the possibilities of chemical warfare that could wipe out whole cities with one shot. I had no idea about certain chemicals that being transported by ship across the ocean, if they were dumped would destroy all life in that quadrant of the ocean completely. I had no idea that you could have chemicals in a tanker and if you ripped the bottom out on the shores of Great Britain it would smother Great Britain to death not by gas, but from a lack of oxygen because it killed off all of the oxygen producing plants in the ocean around Great Britain. I didn't realize that Great Britain depends more on the ocean for its oxygen than it does on the trees and grass that grows on the Island. I never knew any of these things. I had no idea.

Destroy All Human Life

Even in our lifetime, even now as I speak to you, someone could set out to deliberately destroy all human life off this planet. I don't really believe that we would do it accidentally, I don't believe necessarily a nuclear war between Great Britain and Russia would do that. We would have a nuclear winter in the northern hemisphere that would absolutely destroy all life up here, but the southern hemisphere would survive and would be changed. You would have to do more than that. But you see I don't know what they are working on. I don't know what they have back in the back closets in the skunk works out at Lockheed. I don't know what they have going on in the steps of the Urals in the area of the old Soviet Union. I don't know what kind of weapons are being developed at this point in time.

The implication of this is, that we are going to come to a time when unless something happens and God steps in, there would be no flesh living on this planet. The more I study history, the more I see man living his life, the more I see the way we attempt to solve international problems, the less argument I have with this scripture. I can't see us solving it. You know we have made some great strides in the past, we have made a lot of progress, it seems, we have broken up a whole class of nuclear weapons, but I am not naïve enough to believe that that will solve the problem. All you have done is to take a thin slice out to the middle of part of the things that threaten human life on this planet, and it is a relatively small one at that.

It is not a simple problem, and human nature being what it is, there is no special indication that it will ever be solved. Of course, when I look in the Bible, I can see the only way it can be solved is by the intervention of almighty God.

The Elect

Jesus said: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; don't believe it {24} For there shall arise false christ's, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:23-24.) We have a tendency to lean on that and maybe we lean on it too much, I am not exactly perfectly sure how He meant that. Did He mean to say that if you are the 'elect', in other words, you keep the Sabbath, the Holy Days, don't eat unclean meats and you have God's Holy Spirit in you? I can identify myself as the 'elect'. Now from this time forward as a member of the 'elect', no matter what I do, no matter how I live my life, if I just sort of keep on keeping God's Law and keep on doing what is right that it is absolutely impossible for me to be deceived. Is that what that means? I hope so.

But suppose that is not what that means. Suppose what it really means is that if it becomes possible through negligence or what have you, on the part of one of the 'elect', that even the 'elect' could be deceived, because every implication here is, that these false christ's, these individuals that come in Jesus' name are going to be extremely convincing. People who write books that says that the rapture is going to take place today or tomorrow is not going to deceive very many people, there are few people who will get excited about these kinds of predictions, but

when the time comes that was predicted and nothing happens then that will be that. But if someone comes on the scene and begins to perform signs and wonders of one kind or another and makes predictions that come to pass and then begins with some kind of plausibility to present certain Biblical ideas in a new way, do you think it is possible that the 'elect' could be deceived? Do you think that some people would be deceived in larger numbers? You bet they could. One can't help but wonder that for the 'elect', who are not paying attention, who are not watching, who are not intent upon what they are doing, if it is not possible for one of the very 'elect' to be deceived.

Jesus continues: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. {27} For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and flashes even unto the west; so, shall also the coming of the Son of man be. {28} For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matthew 24:26-28.) What He is saying is, when Jesus Christ comes back, if you are one of the 'elect', you are going to know it. Someone is not going to have to come to you and say, "Christ is here", if they do have to come to you and say "Christ is here" it will be too late. Don't worry.

Jesus Will Return

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: {30} And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:29-30.) Jesus is going to come back to the earth and we shall behold Him. Every eye shall behold Him.

Jesus says that life will go on as usual like in the days of Noah, that they will be marrying and giving in marriage (Verses 37-38), they would be going about their daily affairs just like always and then all of a sudden, it's here.

Wake Up!

Jesus then says in verse 42: "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." You can't know and therefore it is important that you watch, whatever watch means. As I said before, is it not just a matter of getting upon the walls and watching the far horizon, nor is it just enough of getting up and reading the newspaper in the morning. The word 'watch' means 'to be awake, to pay attention'. I can only conclude that it is a question of being alert and awake, it is because there is some element of activity on our part that might make a difference when we come down to that point in time. Wouldn't you conclude that? If it makes a difference if you are awake or not, then presumably if you are awake you can do something, but if you are asleep you can't.

You Must Be Prepared

Presumably there is some aspect of preparation involved in all of this, and in fact He says in verse 43: "Know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would

come, he would have watched, and would not have permitted his house to be broken up. {44} Therefore be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man is coming." Now I don't believe for a moment that you can maintain an extremely high level of readiness at every moment of your life for all of your life. In military terms you come on alert and you can be on alert for so many hours and then after that it doesn't make any difference how hard or how much you want to try, you are just not alert anymore. One of the reasons why the Japanese were so successful at Pearl Harbor is because we had in the few days before December 7th. so many false alerts, there were several occasions where there was an alert and everybody had gone on an alert, and they kept them out there for a while and then they had to stand down, and then they had another alert and they stood down and they had another alert and they stood down, and after a while nobody is taking alerts seriously anymore. It is one of those things that is so damaging about when someone make a prediction about the return of Christ and nothing happens. But one of these days the real alarm will come and nobody will pay any attention.

One of the prophets made the statement that the trumpet would be blown, and no one would respond (Jeremiah 6:17.) That's an interesting thought, isn't it? When you understand all of these repeated references, all of these people coming in Jesus' name, claiming that they represent Christ, that Jesus is their Lord, and they come up with false prophecies, false information and lead people astray. I don't know how many they would lead astray, but the most effectiveness that they have is in dulling peoples' senses to where they don't respond.

Now Jesus talks about preparation, things that you are supposed to do, things that are supposed to be ready, He talks about servants that didn't get ready.

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins

Now let's go over to Matthew 25, which is often not considered as part of the Olivet Prophecy, but really it is at this point that Jesus gets down to brass tacks about what it means to be ready, why it is that He wants you to be alert, what it is that He wants you to watch for, in other words, why does it make a difference whether you are ready or whether you are not. The twentieth- fifth chapter contains three parables. The first is the parable of the ten virgins. The second of the talents and the third is of the judgment of the nations.

We will start first of all with the first parable beginning in verse 1 of Matthew 25: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. {2} And five of them were wise, and five were foolish." Now I don't want to get to technical with an analogy or a parable, you can make a mistake if you do that. But it is hard to miss the point of this. Virgins, you are talking about ten people who are a part of the Church, people who are supposed to be Christians. He says that five of them are wise and five of them were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps and they took no oil with them (Verse 3). In other words, there was no preparation of any kind.

Be Prepared

The question is, does it make any difference? Whether I am watching, whether I am thinking about this thing, whether I am prepared for it, whether I am alert or not. They were still virgins,

they hadn't defiled themselves with men, with false religions of men, they were still obedient in their way, they just didn't bother doing any other preparation.

The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps (Verse 4). Now you can spend a lot of time digging around in the meaning of oil, oil being the Holy Spirit, and how do you get the Holy Spirit and how can you get more, and with this you may miss the point. The point of this parable is not that complex and not that detailed.

Keeping Your Nose Clean

It is simply the awareness that there are things that you are supposed to be doing, that are just a little bit more than keeping your nose clean. It is marvelous if you keep your nose clean, and if you are obedient and if you don't do wrong things, that is all very good. But it is not enough!

That is one of the messages of all three of these parables, is that keeping your nose clean is not enough. There is more.

The wise virgins were to take oil in their vessels with their lamps. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slept" (Verse 5.) You can't maintain continual alertness, not even the wise can maintain that alert status constantly. They all slept, but there were five of them that were ready and were prepared. "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go you out to meet him. {7} All those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. {8} The foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out. {9} But the wise answered, saying, We can't do that; there is not enough for us and you: but you go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. {10} And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and *they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.*" And I gather, the door was locked.

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. {12} But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I don't know you. {13} *Watch* therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man is coming." There is a necessity to be awake, there is a necessity to be alert, there is a necessity to be prepared, apparently there are things that we are supposed to be doing about some of these things.

The Parable of the Talents

Then Jesus said: "The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called all of his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. {15} To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several abilities; and straightway took his journey." Once again, you could easily wonder off in a lot of different analogies that could be drawn out of this parable. I am not going to be distracted by those, I want to go right to the core of it.

"Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them and made another five talents. {17} "And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. {18} "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground and hid his lord's money. {19} "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them."

Now you have to keep in mind that this servant did not lose the talent, he didn't give it away, it was not stolen from him, he just protected it.

You Must Perform

"So, he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' {21} "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' {22} "He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' {23} "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' {24} "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. {25} 'And I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'"

The third servant didn't take it away, he didn't waste it, he didn't lose it, it wasn't stolen, it was protected. You might well expect him to say, well, you didn't do as well as the others, you weren't as faithful of a servant as they were, but at least you did that, be a ruler over one city, but look at the reply.

"But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed. {27} 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. {28} 'Therefore take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents. {29} 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. {30} 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

Now when you think about that, it almost seems unfair, because the third servant didn't lose anything, he didn't give it away, if he had given it to the bankers they could have gone belly up, and he wouldn't have a thing to show at that point. On the other hand, he wouldn't have been worse off either. In a sense, he kept his nose clean, he took no chances. Why did this happen to him? I don't know if I can explain everything to you, but I can tell you that this parable underlines what the first parable did and what we have read before.

It is not enough just to keep your nose clean. It is not enough just to keep the Sabbath. It is not enough just to keep the Holy Days. It is not enough just to be obedient in keeping the Ten Commandments. Folks, it is not enough. Oh sure, God says, my grace is sufficient for you (2 Corinthians 12:9), we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), I can quote those scriptures to you as long as I want, probably as long as any of you can, then I come back to this scripture where Jesus makes it very plain, that it is not enough! You are to watch, you are to be ready, you are to prepare and to perform, and He says without any equivocation here, I expect more of you than that, doesn't He? There is just now getting away from it in this parable. Jesus Christ expects more of you.

The Son of Man Will Judge the Nations

Now the next parable will not give us all of the answers again, and one need not to look at to many details again. But we must take the pattern that we read. He said: "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. {32} "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. {33} "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. {34} "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:'"

Do Good Works

Now, the message that follows here, I am sorry to say, is not merely a message of 'grace', I can preach 'grace' to you, and I have done so, and I will do so again. But the message that you read here has to do with works that are expected of you, works that if they are missing are going to cost you something. Won't they? Isn't that what this is all about? Read it with me, please.

Jesus then said: "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: {35} 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; {36} 'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' {37} "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?'"

Verse 40: "'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' {41} "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: {42} 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; {43} 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' {44} "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'"

They called Him Lord, didn't they? They knew who He was? There was no indication that they were dirty rotten sinners more than anybody else that had been around this world. But there is every indication that they had done something, or rather had failed to do something.

Then He answered them saying: "'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' {46} "And these will go away into everlasting or permanent punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'"

I want you to think about this long and hard, because I do believe as we come up to a day like this, and we are coming to the Feast of Trumpets, God's annual Holy Day that pictures the return of Jesus Christ, and it appears from all indications in the world at large that this is not the Feast

of Trumpets, when Christ will return. And so, we have time, we have time to get prepared, we have time to watch, we have time to do things. Now it is clear isn't it that Jesus insists that we watch, whatever that means for you. It is clear that Jesus insists that we be ready, whatever that means for you. It is clear that Jesus insists that just keeping your nose clean is not enough that you must do more, whatever that means, for you.

I don't really know what God expects of you, beyond some of the little obvious things that He mentions in these parables, but you should, and you can, and if you will watch, you will know what those things are, and what should be done.

It is sobering to read again and again and again in your Bible the warnings about being lukewarm, the warnings about being lazy spiritually, the warnings about being careless, drowsy, about not being alert, about failing to watch, they are there again and again and again. And keeping your nose clean is not enough.

And so we have another year, in which to watch, may God give you the grace, and the knowledge, and maybe more important the drive to do it.

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. What are your thoughts about the belief of the rapture?
2. Does date setting bother you?
3. Do you ever wonder if you could be easily deceived?
4. Have you ever experienced a time where you may have or nearly have been spiritually deceived?
5. If you have, how did you 'prove all things,' so that you weren't deceived?
6. How do you 'watch' to be ready for the return of Christ?
7. What do you think Jesus meant about His statement that "if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect"?
8. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart's point that keeping "you nose clean" is not enough to prepare you for Christ's return?

9. How do you keep from becoming 'lukewarm' in your faith?

10. What does 'do good works' mean to you?