

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 21 September 2025. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Faithful and Wise Servants

Matthew 24:42-51

About ten years ago, my good friend, Pastor McKinley, told me a story of something that had recently happened at Good News Baptist Church. A short time earlier, he had gotten a ring from an RTE representative, who had asked him if his church would be interested in being presented in a one-minute TV broadcast called “i-witness.” (This program was doing brief “spotlights” on local churches and religious bodies.) Of course, Pastor McKinley gladly accepted their offer; and he was put on notice that very soon, some guys from RTE would drop in to get some video clips of their church service.

Well, Pastor McKinley put the church members on notice that RTE would soon be coming to film them; and finally, on a Saturday, he got the notification that RTE would be coming the next day. He sent out a text to all the church members, to let them know that RTE would be coming the next morning to church; however, some of them didn’t get the memo. In fact, some of them didn’t seem to be aware that RTE would be coming at all. (They must have been daydreaming during the announcements!) And so, that Sunday morning, as everyone was standing around chatting, drinking tea, and eating biscuits, some were surprised to see someone with an RTE insignia was standing over in the corner with a camera.

Now, how do you think those who were unprepared reacted when they realised that an RTE guy was filming them? Well, let’s just say that Good News B.C., just like our church, has its share of “livewires”; and they had been cutting up and joking around, as usual. But the second they realised that the RTE guy had arrived, all horsing around ceased. They suddenly quieted down, and became proper and serious. Why? Because they knew they were being watched and recorded! If they had known that an RTE crew would be there that morning, they would have been prepared, and would have acted differently.

So, what is the point of this story? The point is that this is the way it will be for many people when the Lord returns: they will be caught unprepared. Many people have heard that Christ is coming to earth someday; and though they are *somewhat* inclined to believe that Jesus is coming back, they don’t *really* believe it—at least, not enough to prepare themselves. They say, “Well, I’ve got plenty of time to think about repenting and believing on Christ; but right now, I’m going to have my fun.” They fail to consider that Christ is *already* fully aware of everything they are doing, and that they will be judged not just for what they’ll be doing at the moment of His return, but for *everything* they have done! That is what we will be talking about this morning, in this message which I’ve entitled ***Faithful and Wise Servants***.

Read Matthew 24:42-51.

I. The watchful homeowner (vv. 42-44)

Over the past months, we've been studying through the **Olivet Discourse**, which Jesus delivered to His disciples while they were sitting on the Mount of Olives. The disciples had just asked Jesus the question, ***"What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"***; and Jesus gave them a detailed answer to that question. First, Jesus said that there will be devastating wars, earthquakes, and pestilences, as well as shocking cruelty, treachery, spiritual deception, and murder of believers, in the first half of the Tribulation period. Jesus then foretold of **the Abomination of Desolation**, which the Antichrist will commit at the midpoint of the Tribulation period. He warned the Jews who will be living in Israel at that time to flee into the wilderness as soon as the Antichrist sets up that abominable image of himself in the Temple. From that point forward, the Antichrist will launch a genocide on believers, such as the world has never seen before. Jesus then described what it will be like **when He returns to earth** at the Battle of Armageddon. As He is descending in the clouds with all His saints and angels, every eye on earth will see Him, and will mourn for Him, because they will know that the day of God's wrath has come. Jesus then gave an illustration of the *timing* of His return. He said that when you see a fig tree blooming, you know that summer is near; and likewise, the generation that is living when these signs begin to unfold may be sure that His return is ***"at the doors."*** After we church-age saints are snatched out of this world in the Rapture, the Antichrist will broker a seven-year peace treaty between Israel. From that point, the clock will be ticking, and the Tribulation period will be in progress.

Now, in the past weeks, we've visited several passages in **Daniel** and **Revelation**. As we've examined **Daniel 9**, and **Revelation 11** and **12**, we've seen that the Tribulation will be seven years long. But here's the rub: if the Tribulation will begin when Antichrist makes the peace treaty with Israel—and if the Tribulation will be exactly seven years long—then why did Jesus say that ***"of that day and hour knoweth no man"***? Obviously, *we church-age saints* can't calculate the day or the hour of Christ's return to earth, because we don't know when the *Rapture* will be, either. (You can't calculate the one without the other.) But what about the believers who will be saved *during* the Tribulation? In this passage, Jesus is addressing the believers who will be living during the Tribulation; yet, He makes it clear that these Tribulation saints *will not know* the day or hour of His return. But why *wouldn't* they be able to know it? If they know that the Tribulation will begin with Antichrist's covenant with Israel, and that it will be seven years long, and that Christ will return immediately *after* the Tribulation, shouldn't they be able to pinpoint the exact day when Christ will return to earth?

From our perspective, this almost seems like a contradiction; but it is not. God's Word is *always* true, even when we can't understand it. As the Tribulation unfolds, this mystery *will* be cleared up. It may be that by some point during the Tribulation, people literally won't be sure what day it is anymore! As God pours out His judgments, there will be massive convulsions not only on earth, but throughout the cosmos. In **Isaiah 24**, Isaiah says that during the Tribulation period, ***"The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage."*** In **Luke 21**, Jesus said that ***"there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea***

and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

Apparently, the sun, moon, stars, and planets will literally be shaken out of course, and the earth will be moved out of place—thus causing the length of days, weeks, and months to fluctuate radically. There will be several times during the Tribulation when the sun, moon, and stars will be blackened for a while; and toward the end of the Tribulation, there will be a time when there will be intense darkness throughout Antichrist's kingdom. "But satellites and electronic devices will still let people know the correct day, right?" Not if the electric grid is destroyed, and the world is knocked into the stone age! There are many aspects of the Tribulation that we simply don't know yet, since God commanded the Apostle John *not* to write down some of the things that he had seen in his vision. However, you may be sure of this: when the Tribulation comes, *everyone* will finally understand why the day of Christ's return was a mystery.

So, what's the takeaway from all this? First of all, the takeaway for those believers who will be living during the Tribulation is that they must be prepared for Christ's return to earth! Let's read Christ's parable again. **(Read Matthew 24:42-44 again.)** In these verses, Jesus warns those who will be living during the Tribulation to be on "***watch,***" as though they were a homeowner who knows that a thief will invade his house soon, but who doesn't know in which watch of the night it will happen. Since he doesn't know when the thief will strike, he must stay up, and watch, and be prepared. He dare not say, "I'm getting tired, and I'm sure the thief won't strike at *this* hour of the night; so I'll just take a little nap." If he dare shut his eyes and sleep, the thief will strike; and he will suffer loss of his goods. Likewise, as the days of the Tribulation are winding down, it will not be time for the believers to say, "I'm tired of this intense spiritual warfare. I'm tired of constantly putting my life on the line. I'm tired of trying to witness to family and friends who, for all I know, might decide to take the mark, and turn me in to the authorities. I want to be able to think about my future in *this* world just a little bit. I think I'll just shut my mouth about Jesus, and play it safe." If Tribulation believers start sleeping on the job, they will be greatly ashamed when Christ appears, and they are found spiritually sleeping; and they will suffer loss of rewards in the Kingdom.

Read Mark 13:32-37.

Brethren, we are not living in the Tribulation period; and, thank God, we *won't* be here on earth during the Tribulation period. However, it isn't hard to see how Jesus' warning to the Tribulation saints applies to *us*, too. The principle of *watching and waiting* is still the same. The prophetic event that *we* are waiting for is the Rapture; and, just as the Tribulation saints will be required to watch for Christ's *descent to earth*, so we are required to watch for Christ's *appearing in the clouds*. On the day of the Rapture, you don't want to be ashamed because you were spiritually sleepy and lazy, and were caught up with things of this world, instead of

serving the Lord. If you are saved, you cannot lose your salvation; but you *can* lose reward in the Kingdom, if you are caught sleeping. And this leads me to the next point.

II. The wise servants (vv. 45-47)

(Read Matthew 24:45-47.) Christ has made it abundantly clear that He will return at a day and hour when many people are not expecting Him; and in light of this fact, Christ now asks a rhetorical question: ***“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?”*** Now, what, exactly, does Christ mean by this? Who is this ***“faithful and wise servant”***? And what does He mean when He says that this servant has been made ***“ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season”***?

Well, let’s begin by identifying who the ***“faithful and wise servant”*** is *not*. The ***“faithful and wise servant”*** is *not* some religious organization that has all power to dispense and interpret truth to people. There is one organization, in particular, that uses **Matthew 24:45** to claim such power for themselves; and that is the Watchtower Society (the governing body of the Jehovah’s Witnesses). Actually, in the early days of this cult, **Charles Russell**, the founder of the organization, claimed that *he* was the ***“faithful and wise servant”*** whom Christ had foretold in **Matthew 24:45**, and that God had given him the sole power to dispense truth to people, through his publications. Now, for a little while after Russell’s death in 1916, the Watchtower continued to claim that Russell was the ***“faithful and wise servant.”*** For example, in a publication called *The Harp of God*, in the early 20’s, the Watchtower said, “Without a doubt Pastor Russell filled the office...and was therefore that wise and faithful servant, ministering to the household of faith meat in due season.”¹ However, as the 1920’s wore on, the Watchtower began to distance themselves from Russell, as their new leader, Joseph Rutherford, made huge changes in the organization. Then, in the 15 February 1927 edition of *The Watchtower*, the Watchtower suddenly denied that Russell was the “faithful and discreet slave” of **Matthew 24:45**. In fact, they *denied that he had ever claimed to be the “faithful and wise servant”* (even though their recent publications had said otherwise).² From that point onward, the Watchtower has claimed that *their organization* (and not any one person) is the “faithful and discreet slave.” What this means is that *their organization alone* can dispense and interpret truth. They say that the Watchtower Society is the “sole visible channel, through whom alone spiritual instruction [is] to come.”³

Brethren, this is *not* what the ***“faithful and wise servant”*** is; and when a Jehovah’s Witness comes to your door, you need to be prepared to show them with love, from Scripture, that they have been deceived. The context of this passage, as well as many other Scriptures, makes it clear that the ***“faithful and wise servant”*** is *not* any organization. The ***“faithful and wise servant”*** is *each and every believer* who obeys the charge that Christ has given him. A ***“faithful and wise servant”*** is a believer who is *faithful* in managing the things that belong to

his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a “steward”—one who oversees and manages the things of his Master’s household; and as a steward, he is *faithful*.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2.

Throughout the Bible, God gives us examples of faithful stewards. Take **Joseph**, for instance. Joseph faithfully served his father Jacob, then Potiphar, then the prison keeper; and because he was faithful with every task, God entrusted him with authority over a great nation. What, then, has God entrusted to *us*? Well...*everything*! Our money, resources, time, and talents have all been given to us by God, to use for His glory. But that’s not all. The foremost thing that God has entrusted to us is *His Word*. You’ll notice that Jesus said that the “faithful and wise servant” has been made ruler over the Lord’s household, to render “*meat in due season.*” What does this mean? Christ is talking, first of all, about the Apostles, prophets, and evangelists who laid the foundation of Christ’s churches through their preaching. He is also speaking about pastors and teachers who, to this day, continue to feed God’s people with the “meat” of God’s Word. In **Ephesians 4:11**, Paul says, “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*”

Now, before you think, “This doesn’t apply to me, since I’m not a pastor or teacher,” think again. The Bible says that *every* believer is a “priest” before God! In **1 Peter 2**, Peter says that believers are “*an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*” Peter also says, “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*” Priests were the teachers of God’s Law to the people of Old Testament Israel; and likewise, in this New Testament age, *every* believer is a priest before God, with the responsibility of teaching God’s Word to others. Yes, God has ordained pastors to lead and guide God’s people; but *every believer* is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and is thus able to understand all things that God has revealed in His Word.

In **1 John 2:20**, as John was writing to the members of the church of Ephesus, he said, “*But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*” John wasn’t saying that these believers were omniscient, as God is: he was simply saying that they had the ability to understand *everything God has revealed in His Word*. John went on to say, “*But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*” Obviously, John isn’t saying that pastors aren’t needed, or that the local church isn’t needed: he is saying that, ultimately, the Holy Spirit is the Teacher of *every* believer. And what are we to do with the knowledge that God gives us? Are we to hoard it for ourselves? No! We are to impart it to others! In **Hebrews**

5:12, Paul rebuked many Christians in his audience, because he said that *“When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.”*

In other words, they *should* have been able to instruct others by this time, because they had known the Lord for years; yet, they were still having to be taught the “ABC’s” of the faith.

Christian, don’t be satisfied to be “spoon fed” the ABC’s of God’s Word. Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ! Christ promises to give rich rewards to those who will be found *“so doing”* when He returns. Doing what? Keeping, obeying, living, and teaching God’s Word to others! Preaching the Gospel to the lost, and instructing believers in God’s Word, isn’t merely a mandate for pastors and “full-time Christian workers”; it is mandate is for *every* believer. Every home should be a place where fathers and mothers teach their children the things of God. Every church should be a haven of learning, where elder men teach younger men soundness of faith, love, and patience, and where elder women teach younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, and obedient to their husbands. Christians who are found “so doing” will receive crowns and positions of authority in the Kingdom.

Read Revelation 2:26-27 / 22:12-13 / 3:11.

That warning in **Revelation 3:11** (about “no man taking thy crown”) reminds me of something that happened when I was in fifth class. During that schoolyear, I competed in a statewide spelling contest; and as the contest was in progress that day, everyone else fell out one by one, except for myself, and a girl named Ann. I was given the word “lovable”; and I spelled it “loveable.” I was told that this was incorrect; and Ann was declared the winner. However, I was sure that “lovable” *could* be spelled with an “e”; so, a couple friends and I looked it up in the dictionary. It turned out that “loveable” (with an “e”) *was* a legitimate secondary spelling; thus, we went to the judges, to show them this information. The match was reconvened: and this time, I won! The prize that would have been Ann’s became someone else’s. (And I still have the prize to this day!) Now, my point in telling this story is *not* that Christians are “rivals.” There will be *no* quarreling about “who should have been granted this position,” because we will have no more sinful, prideful nature; and we will *all* know that whatever reward we received from the Lord was a gift that we didn’t deserve in the first place. My point is that rewards that you *might* have had, and with which you *might* have served the Lord during the Kingdom, and have brought honour to Him, will be given to someone else—if you be caught sleeping when Christ appears.

Now, we mustn’t forget that in the context of **Matthew 24**, Jesus is speaking to the believers who will be living during the Tribulation period. However, we must also realise that there is an *application* for us in this passage. The command to be a *faithful and wise servant* applies

to *every* believer, in every age. Christian, you have a commission from your King. Don't let *anything* of this world, or any sinful pleasure, prevent you from serving the Lord—whether it be the pursuit of money, jobs, houses, cars, relationships, or recreations. Don't allow any hidden sin to put a wall of separation between you and the Lord. Set up safeguards in your life, and remove all avenues of temptation. If you have anger or bitterness in your heart toward anyone, let Christ put that anger to death. In His might, slam down every wicked thought, and fight manfully against your flesh and the devil. Spend time in God's Word every day, and talk with the Lord throughout the day. Tell others of the wonderful message of salvation, and edify your brothers and sisters in Christ. Be a faithful and wise servant!

III. The wicked servants (vv. 48-51)

(Read Matthew 24:48-51 again.) We've seen what the reward for "*faithful and wise*" servants will be: they will be made rulers in the 1,000-year Kingdom of Christ. However, in these verses, we find that there will be a very *different* kind of "reward," for a very different kind of "servant." Those "servants" who, during the Tribulation period, get it into their head that the Lord won't be back for a long time, and that they are therefore free to live wickedly, will be surprised by Christ's coming. At the Judgment of the Nations, they will be condemned, slain, and appointed their portion with the "*hypocrites*." The "portion" for hypocrites is *hell*—the place where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, forever.

Now, just who are these "servants"? Are they believers who have lost their salvation? Is Jesus saying that people who were once saved will *lose* their salvation if they start living for sinful pleasures? No, He isn't. Those who are truly saved *cannot* lose their salvation. How do we know this? Well, let's go back to **Leviticus**, and see what God's definition of a "servant" was.

Read Leviticus 25:55.

In this Scripture, God is speaking to the nation of Israel; and He makes a very important statement. He says that *every* Jew is His servant. Does this mean that all Jews are saved? Obviously not. It means that *God's purpose* for every Jew is that he (or she) would serve Him with his life. However, the fact that God *intends* for every Jew to serve Him doesn't mean that every Jew *will* serve Him. Sad to say, most Jews, to this day, are still rejecting Jesus as their Lord and Messiah. Who, then, does this wicked servant represent? He represents **a Jewish person living during the Tribulation**, who is trying to sit on both sides of the fence. He has heard the Gospel from the preaching of the 144,000 witnesses, or from Jewish friends or family who have believed on Jesus; and although he knows, in his head, that Jesus must be the Messiah, he thinks he has too much to lose by following Him. He wants to enjoy the pleasures of this world now, and worry about his soul later. He puts off the decision to

surrender his life to Christ; and as he puts it off, he begins to doubt that Christ is even coming. He begins to think, “Is Jesus *really* going to come back in a few more years? People *say* that He’s the Messiah; but it surely doesn’t appear that *He*’s the one in charge of this world. Maybe Jesus is coming back, and maybe He’s not; but for now, I’m going to enjoy whatever things of this life that I can.” This so-called “servant” is not a believer at all: and his wicked life is the proof.

Now, once again, I ask the question: is this passage applicable to our present age? Yes, it is! You see, if, during the Tribulation, when death is on every hand, there will actually be some people who are complacent and non-committal about Christ, how much easier is it for people in *this* age of relative peace and prosperity to put off the decision to believe on Jesus? It is *very* easy. Many people’s hearts are like the “thorny ground” in Jesus’ parable. At some point, they hear the Gospel, and receive the “seed” of God’s Word with excitement. However, they never truly surrender their hearts to Christ: and as time goes by, the small “plant” of supposed faith, which had begun to spring up, is choked to death by the “weeds” and “thorns” of sinful pleasures, and the cares of this life. They made a *profession* of faith; but it wasn’t real.

Now, perhaps what you’re hearing this morning is scaring you. Perhaps you’d say, “Pastor, I can’t say that I’ve ever truly had any desire to serve God. *I’m* like that servant that wanted to party it up, and think about his soul later. What can I do? I know I’m not worthy of salvation; and I’m afraid that if I were to die, I wouldn’t go to Heaven.” If this be where you are thinking, take courage. In order to be accepted by God, you must *humbly acknowledge* that you aren’t worthy, and that you need His gift of salvation. Let’s look at one more Scripture.

Read Luke 21:34-36.

What did Jesus mean when He urged us to “*watch*” and “*pray*,” so that we may be “*accounted worthy to escape all these things*”? What are these “things” that we can escape? The judgments of the Tribulation period! All who place their faith in Christ will “*escape*” the horrors of the Tribulation by being caught up to Heaven in the Rapture, just before the Tribulation begins. And *how* can you “*escape*” these things? Jesus says that you must be “*accounted worthy*.” But how is *that* possible? The Bible says that *none of us* is worthy. We *all* deserve the “*wages of sin*,” which is eternal death in hell. How can *any* of us be counted “worthy,” then? It’s simple: you must have *Christ’s* righteousness stamped on *your* account. When you place your trust in Jesus, He removes *your sin* from the books, and stamps His own perfect righteousness on *your* account, and declares you “righteous.” You are then a child of God—which means that when Christ returns, you will be accepted into His Kingdom!

In the meantime, Jesus urges believers to “*watch and pray, that ye* (meaning “*all of you*”) *may be counted worthy to escape*.” Is Jesus saying that you must earn you way into Heaven

by watching, praying hard, and afflicting yourself? Absolutely not! Jesus isn't addressing *individuals*; He is addressing *all who profess His name*. He is urging *professing Christians* to pray *for each other*, lest there be some among them who are not really saved. You see, not everyone who attends church, sings hymns, and talks Christian talk, is a child of God. Christian, if you are not sure that the person sitting in the pew next to you is truly saved, pray for him. Pray that God will give you wisdom to share the Gospel with him, so that he might be saved, and escape God's judgment, and be caught up to meet the Lord when He appears.

Conclusion: In closing, I would ask: Are you saved? If you aren't sure that you are a child of God, but you *want* to be sure, just call out to Jesus right now! Stop thinking you're good enough to make it into Heaven, because you're not. Admit that you are a sinner, and that you can't save yourself; and in your heart, believe that what Jesus did on that cross is *all* you need. Surrender your heart to Him, and let Him come in, and be Lord and Master! The Bible says, ***“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”***

¹ Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993), p. 26.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.