

PROMISES, PROMISES

Text: [Matthew 24:36-42 & 25:1-13](#)

Opening: Lets lay down a foundation

John 14:1-3 (ESV)

¹ “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Would you say Jesus talking about Heaven here? Absolutely

Story Andy Stanley's s book, *How Good is good enough?*(in our welcoming packet)

A Sunday school teacher was trying to explain what a person had to do to go to heaven. So he asked the children, a few questions to see what they already knew.

- If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into heaven? NO!!! answered the kids
- If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into heaven? NO...
- What if I was kind to animals and gave candy to all the children and loved my wife, would that that me into heaven? NO ...
- Well then how can I get into heaven?!
- A boy in the back row stood up and shouted, “YOU GOTTA BE DEAD!”

Jesus' parable in [Matthew 25](#) deals with getting to heaven but in this case you don't have to be dead!

[Matthew 24, 25](#) Jesus is talking about the Last Days – what Bible scholars call *eschatology*

In [John 14](#) Jesus is telling his disciples about his death, resurrection ... but as is so often the case in scripture, there's more than one meaning: there's much more here - if you're willing to peel back the top layer.

Example: 19th century poet Edwin Markham wrote a poem he called: *Outwitted*

He drew a circle that shut me out-
Heretic rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win;
We drew a circle that took him in!

When you read this amazing poem you might feel like you know what it means, but at the same time, you're not sure you've gotten all of it – there's something that doesn't fit.

Chew on that for awhile – we'll come back to it later.

Jesus' promise wasn't limited to His death and resurrection **He was also referring to His second coming –**

He promised He'd return in three days ... but He was also promising He'd return a second time in the Last Days at the appointed time (held only in his Father's keeping)

I believe we're living in those last days now.

Read: [Matthew 24:36-42](#) NKJ

³⁶ “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two *women will be* grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

[Matt. 25: 1-13](#) NLT

“Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ The five who were foolish didn't take enough olive oil for their lamps, ⁴ but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. ⁵ When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶ “At midnight they were roused by the shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!’

⁷ “All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. ⁸ Then the five foolish ones asked the others, ‘Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.’

⁹ “But the others replied, ‘We don't have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.’

¹⁰ “But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. ¹¹ Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’

¹² “But he called back, ‘Believe me, I don’t know you!’ ¹³ “So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.

These two passages are connected

One is a **parable** the other a **description** of the signs of the times and Jesus” (the Bride Groom) imminent return.

We’ve made the point now several times that Jesus used parables as a teaching tool –using what was familiar and applying it to something unknown – heavenly

But these teachings have a sense of urgency: warnings to be alert and ready

Let’s start with the elephant in the room ... it’s been 2 thousand years since Jesus made that promise ... what’s taking so long? Is He really coming again?

Peter dealt with that question his second letter way back in the first century

2 Peter 3:3-5 (KJV)

³ Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,⁴ And saying, **Where is the promise of his coming?** for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. ⁵ For this they willingly are ignorant

Uniformitarianism: "the present is the key to the past" (nothing really changes – everything continues just as it did from the beginning of the universe)

Matt: 24: ³⁶ “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

If we had the time this morning we could examine all the signs and prophecies that have already been fulfilled in the last sixty years beginning with the year 1948 Israel becomes a nation right in front of the whole world – in details that were exactly as prophesied in scripture -undeniable unchallengeable!!!

We’re still waiting ... but perhaps the wait is almost done!

People with Roses ... Max Lucado

Look consider the elements of

Matthew 25: 1-13 NLT the 10 bridesmaids or virgins



“Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

¹³ “So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.

To give you a better handle on this lets look Wedding customs in Jesus' day – Fiddler on the Roof

We know that the ceremony is held with the couple and the rabbi under a canopy or *chuppah* / *Huppah*, and that the groom crushes a glass under his foot at the end.



The Betrothal or engagement was binding and could only be undone by a divorce

The young man prepared a marriage contract (or covenant) which he presented to the intended bride and her father. Included in this was a “Bride Price (Book of Ruth)

Acceptance

The Grooms’ proposal had to be accepted by the woman, the man would pour a cup of wine for his intended. The cup represents a blood covenant.

Can you see Jesus at the last Passover meal with his disciples (communion?)

If the woman drank the cup she accepted the proposal and they would be betrothed. The young man would then give gifts to his beloved, and then take his leave. **The young woman would have to wait for him to return and collect her.**

Before leaving the young man would announce, “I am going to prepare a place for you”, and “I will return for you when it is ready”. The usual practice was for the young man to return to his father's house and build a honeymoon room there. This is what is symbolized by canopy that is characteristic of Jewish weddings.

If the groom was asked the date of his wedding he would have to reply, "Only my father knows."

The Wedding

When the wedding chamber was ready the bridegroom could collect his bride. He could do this at any time so the bride would make special arrangements. It was the custom for a bride to keep a lamp, her veil and her other things beside her bed. Her bridesmaids were also waiting and had to have oil ready for their lamps.

When the groom and his friends got close to the bride's house they would give a shout and blow a *shofar* to let her know to be ready.

Pretty amazing isn't it?

The Jewish wedding is a model of Jesus Christ second coming - his return to take His bride (and set in motion the wheels for the "Last Days scenario."

The Groom's return to take his bride away with him to his father's house, speaks of a catching away – a rapture of the church (his bride). That's one segment, one part of his second coming

Will you be ready to meet Him when He comes a second time as a thief in the night?

Eugene Peterson writes: *Come* is a gospel verb. The distinctive biblical and Christian message is not that God is but that he comes. And he's going to come again, because that's the very nature of God – to come. That's his basic character – he comes.

This is what God does: He's not a professor who delivers ideas to us; he's not a social worker who arranges discussion groups to help us raise our standard of living; he isn't a government agent bringing the latest set of regulations so that we can stay out of jail. He comes. He arrives. He shows up. He comes the way a neighbor arrives at our door, knocks. Enters our house, and sits down with us over a cup of coffee. ...

We look for his coming in the sensational. But he keeps surprising us in the ordinary. He comes to us in our pain, in our doubt, in our families, in our work. There's no place where he may not turn up, no time when he may not sneak in. Christ the thief. And every time he comes to us and we received him, we're further and better prepared to meet him at his final coming - the arrival that will complete everything we understand and history. **EP**

The main thrust of the parable of the 10 bridesmaids/virgins 5 of which were taken and 5 left

And the workers in the field and mill going about daily business when suddenly one is taken the other left is **to be ready** – because you don't know the day or hour of Jesus' return.

How can we be sure we'll be ready when Jesus returns? (Keep your relationship fresh with the Holy Spirit)

The Unselfish Service *Daily Bread* July 26th entry

A small collection of people stood together, dwarfed by the sheer size of the huge tree lying on the lawn. An elderly woman leaned on her cane and described watching the previous night's windstorm as it blew down "our majestic old elm tree. Worst of all" she continued, voice cracking with emotion, "it destroyed our lovely stone wall too. My husband built that wall when we were first married. He loved that wall. I loved that wall! Now it's gone; just like him."

Next morning, as she peeked out at the tree company workers cleaning up the downed tree; a big smile spread across her face. In between the branches she could just make out two adults and the boy who mowed her lawn carefully measuring and rebuilding her beloved stone wall!

Isaiah 58:6-9 (NIV)

⁶“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice ...
to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?
⁷Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
⁸Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
⁹Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

He drew a circle that shut me out-
Heretic rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win;
We drew a circle that took him in!

Let's Pray