

Matthew Lesson 25

Matthew Chapter 25

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Memory verses for this week: *Rev 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; Rev 7:10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

Introduction: In last week's lesson, Christ told of the upcoming destruction of the temple, and how we would know the time of his soon return when we saw various things begin to happen, such as rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, famines, pestilences and earthquakes in divers places. All of these things point to Christ's soon return.

The 25th chapter of Matthew continues to detail the Olivet Discourse. In this section, two parables of the kingdom are set forth. The first deals with Israel being prepared when their King returns. The second deals with God's people in general (the church and Israel) serving the Lord in the meantime. The final portion of Matthew 25 provides a glimpse into the events at the conclusion of the Tribulation and immediately prior to the beginning of the Millennium. It is helpful to remember that these events deal primarily with Israel. The church is not in view here. Some of the clearest descriptions of hell in the Bible are found in this chapter.

I. Parable of the Ten Virgins

Mat 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

Mat 25:2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

Mat 25:3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

Mat 25:4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Mat 25:5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Mat 25:6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

Mat 25:7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

Mat 25:8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

Mat 25:9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

Mat 25:10 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.

Mat 25:11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Mat 25:12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Mat 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Jesus set forth another kingdom parable which more often than not is improperly understood. In the parable of the ten virgins, it is helpful to understand some of the cultural practices of Jewish people of that day. It was the custom for the bridegroom to go to the home of the bride on the appointed wedding day to get his bride.

At the bride's home would be her bridesmaids who would accompany her and the groom in a festive procession to his home. They typically would carry lamps or torches to light the way as they went, particularly if the procession took place at night. Once at the home of the groom, the marriage would be accomplished and then the wedding feast would begin.

The lamps of that day were fueled with olive oil. Here, half of the wedding party was prepared for the eventuality of a night procession and half were not. The immediate application of the parable is to be ready for when the bridegroom came.

In the greater scope of biblical eschatology, the bridegroom clearly is Jesus Christ. See Ephesians 5:25-32 and Revelation 19:7-9. The bride clearly is the New Testament church. The difficult matter is who the ten virgins are.

In collating the various parables and passages in the New Testament in which a wedding ceremony is presented in an eschatological sense, it seems that *Israel* is represented at the wedding party as the *friends* of the bride and groom (i.e., the bridesmaids and groomsmen).

In that light, the application of the parable is as follows. The ten virgins are representative of Israel (though not all of Israel). The Groom, Jesus Christ, comes for His church in preparation for the wedding of the ages. Israel is invited to the great festivities which will commence with the Millennium.

When the Groom and His bride prepare to enter the marriage feast, only half are ready. The parable may be a reference to when Christ returns prior to the Millennium, a certain proportion of Israel will be prepared to enter into the festivities (the kingdom) with Him and the rest will not.

The proportion who are prepared and waiting are those Jews who during the Tribulation heard the gospel, repented, and received Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Savior. Again, recall that the context of the Olivet discourse is for the most part Jewish in character. Jesus thus said, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

Even as the church is enjoined to be watching for the Lord's return in the rapture, believing Israel in that day is enjoined to be watching for their returning King. Clearly implied is that a sizeable proportion of Jews worldwide turn to Christ during the Tribulation and are allowed into the wedding feast of the Millennium while the rest are shut out.

For them it will be a time of great bitterness indeed. Jesus urges His own people, the Jews, to be ready for the return of their King who also is the Bridegroom of the church.

We see a parallel here in this chapter to the prior parables we studied about the tares in the wheat, the leaven in the meal, and the bad fish in the net. These 10 virgins are a parable concerning Christendom in the world. Christendom is made up of all 'so called' Christian churches, and it embraces both the true and the false... the believers and those who just profess to be believers. The fact that the five foolish virgins took no oil with them (v. 3) is proof that they were not saved. Oil in the scriptures typifies the Holy Spirit, and if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Rom 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Several things need to be noticed about the **foolish virgins**:

- a. They were foolish
- b. They took no oil in their lamps
- c. They were unprepared when the bridegroom came.
- d. They waited too long to be concerned about entering into the marriage.
- e. They asked for entrance but were denied.
- f. The Lord declared that He knew them not.

The Five Wise Virgins:

- a. Ready when the Bridegroom came.
- b. They entered in.
- c. They took oil in their lamps.

II. The Lord's Return Tests the Servants

Mat 25:14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

Mat 25:15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Jesus presents another parable which clearly is of end-time events and particularly of the rewards and rank within the kingdom. The scene is simple enough. A wealthy man (i.e., a lord) entrusted to his servants varying amounts of his assets to invest on his behalf in his absence according to their respective abilities. He then departed.

After a lengthy time, he returned. Upon returning, he sat down and took stock how his servants had invested on his behalf. To those who had wisely and diligently invested for their lord, there was reward. For the one who had been careless and lazy, not only was there no reward but even loss of what he otherwise could have received.

The greater application would appear to be how our Lord has entrusted us with time, resources, and abilities. As we in this life wisely use and invest those assets there will someday be rewards in His kingdom. Let us look more closely. In verse 14, the word translated as goods (uparconta *huparchonta*) could also be translated as 'wealth.'

A *talent* was a measure of gold or silver which was of significant value. In today's terms, a talent of gold would be money into six figures. The lord of the parable gave to each of his servants according to their ability to handle the assets committed to them.

The man in this verse is a picture of Christ, who has entrusted His possessions with His servants, we who are Christians. He called His own servant and delivered goods unto them. (The servants that belonged to Him.) Not all had the same ability and not all received the same amount of the master's goods.

Mat 25:16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

Mat 25:17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

Mat 25:18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

In verse 16, the word translated as traded (*ergazomai ergazoma*) in this context has the sense of working with or investing that money. In other words, the servant invested it. So also did the second servant in verse 17.

The third servant did nothing with the asset entrusted to him. There was not only a lack of dedication to his lord, the servant was also lazy. The first two servants doubled their lord's money. The third earned nothing.

The Lord gave money to each one. The one who received five talents gained five more. The one with two also gained two more. But the one with only one talent went and hid his Lord's money and did not bring forth anything for the glory of the Lord.

Mat 25:19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

Mat 25:20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

Mat 25:21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Mat 25:22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

Mat 25:23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

In verse 19, the clear parallel to our Lord's return is evident. In that day, He will *reckon* with His servants. The word translated as *reckoneth* (*sunairw sunairo*) in this context has the sense of settling accounts.

The profitable servants in that day will hear their Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

In Luke's account of the same or a similar parable, Jesus spoke of the first having rule over ten cities and the second being over five cities (Luke 19:17-19).

The clear implication of the parable is that those who have faithfully served the Lord and invested their lives in this age (in His absence) will be rewarded in His kingdom with rank and honor then. Also implied is that faithful servants of God in this day will rule and reign with Him in that day.

Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Rev 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Rev 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The man returning speaks of the Lord's return when He will reward His saints for what they have done in this life. These rewards will be given at the judgment seat of Christ. No doubt, there will be positions of authority given as rewards during the 1,000 year Millennial Reign of Christ.

Mat 19:27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

Mat 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Mat 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Mat 25:24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed:

Mat 25:25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

Mat 25:26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed:

Mat 25:27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Mat 25:28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

Mat 25:29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

Mat 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In merging these related passages together, it seems clear that those who have faithfully served the King in this age will be given rule over portions of His kingdom in the Millennium and on into eternity. There *is* a reward for the righteous (Psalm 58:11).

If put in contemporary terms, those who have faithfully served Jesus Christ in this life will be appointed as governors, presidents, mayors, and ranking officials in the His kingdom when He returns. Finally, we come to the slothful servant. He was called “wicked and slothful.” He had opportunity to serve the King of kings who had given him the privilege of investing His assets. In his carelessness and laziness, this fellow did nothing with his Lord’s trust.

The application of him losing what little he had may be a reference to how in that day, he will have no reward in the kingdom. Some say this may be reference to believers who have squandered their lives pursuing their own interests and advancement rather than serving the King will in that day find their lot on the outskirts of His Royal blessings and rewards. Remember that when the King appears, all will fall prostrate before Him, all will be subject to Him and His rule. This in no way implies that all are saved. Their fruits will reveal them.

Those who have faithfully served the King in this life will receive even the assets of the unprofitable servants in that day.

Mat 13:12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

The servant with the one talent gives his excuse for not doing anything with it. He said he knew the authority of the Lord and was afraid to put the talent to use lest he misuse it. He had nothing to show for it when the Lord returned. He is called a wicked servant.

J. Vernon McGee said this about the talents the Lord gives us.

Notice that the “talents” were sums of money. They do not represent talents in the sense of the natural endowments of a person such as a musical talent. The application to us is that whatever God has given to us, we are to use for Him.

There is a great principle in this parable for us. And it was given in the light of the fact that all of us—you and I included—are going to have to stand in the presence of God and give an account of how we have used what He has given to us. The Lord is not going to ask us how much we have done for Him but how faithful we have been to that which He wanted us to do. For the child of God there are two important things: (1) Find out what God wants us to do; that is, determine what the talent is that He has given us, and then (2) be faithful in the use of it. To some of us God gives a very small ministry, and that may be upsetting to us; but if we are one-talent people, God expects us to be faithful with that.

III. The Judgment of the Nations

Mat 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

Mat 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

Mat 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Jesus moved onto another major eschatological event. The time of these events is clearly established here— “when the Son of man shall come in his glory.” This is not a reference to the Rapture, but rather to the appearing of our Lord at the end of the Tribulation.

Also, Jesus mentioned that *all* the holy angels will be with Him then. What an awesome sight that will be. “Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” This is a clear reference to Jesus Christ establishing His throne on this earth.

When the Lord returns, He will be over all political and military power.

Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

It is helpful to recall that many will survive the Tribulation. The word translated as nations (eynov *ethnos*) is also translated as 'gentiles' and 'peoples.' It may be that God will ordain this judgment of all surviving people individually but by nation. Also consider that the judgment maybe of actual nations. In any event, this judgement clearly is of gentile peoples.

In that day, the Lord will separate these who survived the Tribulation into two groups: the sheep and the goats. A likely Old Testament passage related to this event is found in Joel 3:2, 12-14. There in a parallel text, Joel foresaw how God would "gather all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat."

The Hebrew words in Joel translated as nations and heathen (mywg *goyim*) is again the basic Old Testament word for 'gentile.' It is still used by the Jews to this day. The Valley of Jehoshaphat is not clearly defined in the Bible geographically, but most likely is adjacent to Jerusalem. It is assumed by modern Jews to be the valley of Hinnom or Kidron.

In verse 14 of Joel 3, there is the ominous statement: "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision." Throughout the Bible, God's people have routinely been referred to as His flock or His sheep. See Psalm 100:3 and John 10:11.

Here, the church has already been raptured. But the text clearly is of gentiles. Therefore, by process of elimination, the sheep referred to here evidently are gentiles who were saved during the Tribulation and who survived the same.

Goats in the Bible usually refer to those who are not God's people. See Zechariah 10:3. The sheep are thus placed on His right hand and the goats on His left hand. Implied is the reception of those on His right hand and rejection of those on His left.

Notice when Christ returns, it says that he comes in His glory. This is at the end of the tribulation when he comes to take the throne of His father David. All nations will be gathered before Christ and he will divide them. The sheep nations will be on his right, whereas the goats will be on his left. There shall be a judgment in that day of the nations. This is not to decide whether they have accepted Christ as Savior, since this is about nations, not individuals.

W. A. Criswell in the Believers Bible commented this on these verses:

25:31–46 The sheep and goat judgment should not be confused with other judgments (cf. Rev. 20:11–15, note), e.g., the judgment seat of Christ (□□□□□□□□Gk.) for believers only, which occurs immediately following the departure of the church at the revelation of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:13, note); or the Great White Throne judgment for unbelievers, which occurs at the conclusion of the millennial age (Rev. 20:11–15). This judgment of sheep and goats is at the conclusion of the Great Tribulation to determine who may enter the millennial or kingdom age. The basis of the judgment is the relationship of men to Christ, as demonstrated by their treatment of Israel during the Great Tribulation (vv. 34–46). Those who are saved (the “sheep”) enter the kingdom prepared for them (v. 34), while the lost (the “goats”) are turned away into eternal punishment (v. 46). The kingdom consists only of the saved at the outset of that final age.

Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Jesus continued, Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Notice that He who is called the “Son of man” in verses 31-32 is now called the “King” here. And indeed, He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Those on His right hand (the sheep) are now invited into His kingdom. The promised kingdom has been in preparation since before the foundation of the world. It will be the capstone of human history.

Jesus as King will rule the earth and the inhabitants thereof. The church will have returned with her Groom to rule and reign with Him. It will be paradise on earth.

Mat 25:35 For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Mat 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Mat 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Mat 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Mat 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

Mat 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

The key to understanding this text is recalling the context and the participants at this judgment. Jesus said such compassion on His brethren was as unto Him.

There is a lesson here that, even in this dispensation, we as believing gentiles ought to be kind and compassionate to our wayward, though as yet unbelieving, spiritual cousins, the Jews.

The sheep nations are those that have treated the Jews correctly and with care. The entrance of these nations into the kingdom appears to be related to how they have treated the brethren. (the Jews) Apparently this judgment may cover the treatment of the Jews by all nations in all ages, but it clearly speaks of how they have been treated during the 7 years of tribulation. The children that have not reached the age of accountability will enter into the kingdom in their natural bodies as will these nations labeled as 'sheep'. Jesus says that if you have done it to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me. While this is in reference to the Jews, we need to always remember that to cut down the church that Jesus died for is to be turning against Christ. We need to remember that Jesus shed his blood for the church, and it means so much to him. People may fail us, but the Lord will never fail us.

Mat 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Unbelieving gentiles who survive the Tribulation will be summarily summoned to the Valley of Jehoshaphat for this awesome event. If the Rapture took place now, unbelieving people of *today* who survive the Tribulation in seven years will be summoned to this awful pronouncement.

Then, Jesus Christ, the King of kings, will utter to each of them, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Though the word *hell* is not used here, clearly this is what is in view. Several things are of note.

(1) The word translated as cursed (*kataraoimai kataraoimai*) could also be translated as 'doomed.'

(2) Hell is a place of everlasting fire.

(3) It was initially prepared for the devil and his angels.

When mankind rebelled and became as Satan, hell also became their destination.

Mat 25:42 For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

Mat 25:43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Mat 25:44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Mat 25:45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

Mat 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

In converse fashion of verses 35-40, unsaved, godless people of the world exemplify no compassion on the suffering Jews during the Tribulation. The King will use the same standard as He did for those who were found just as evidence against them revealing their lost condition.

In verse 46, though hell is not so named, clearly it is hereto referred. In addition to the other descriptions of hell above, it also here is called “everlasting punishment.” In stark contrast, the *righteous* can look forward to life eternal.

In comparing the greater overview of Scripture to this verse, the righteous clearly refer to those who have been justified (or declared righteous) by faith in Jesus Christ. See Romans 5:1.

Rom 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

We see the results of being one of the ‘goat’ nations in these verses. They have treated the Jews poorly, and they pay a dear price for this. These nations will be punished and destroyed for the wrongs they have inflicted upon the Jews. The sheep nations will be the ones that Christ and all his saints will reign over during the 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth.

As I read through my various commentaries, I found a lot of conflicting teachings on these verses. So there is considerable debate as to what these verses in Chapter 25 mean. It appears to me that these are in reference to the treatment of the Jews during the tribulation (and possibly in all ages).

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.