

## MATTHEW 24:45-25:30

Introduction: As we start in on this lesson it is important that we do not lose the flow of the argument. We argued last time that chapter 24 was built around the three questions that were asked by the disciples. The key thing we must remember is that Jesus answered these questions in reverse order. When we left that portion of Scripture we left with a warning to the individual who would be taken to heaven in a translation similar to the translation of Enoch. The Lord warned that individual that they were to be careful because there was a possibility of the loss of treasure in the event that they were not watching for that unexpected arrival of the Lord. All this was discussed in verses 36-44. What follows then are three parables and the teaching in the end of the chapter about the sheep and goats judgment.

### 1. The Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Servant. (45-51)

1 A. Verse 45. There are several things to notice as we start our discussion. Remember we are using the language of metaphor. Therefore we must search for a deeper meaning. As an illustration we are told in verse 51 that the servant is “cut in two” or in other translations he is “cut into pieces”. Since the servant under discussion would be in a resurrection body this would be impossible to do, so there must be a figurative meaning going on in the story. Verse 45 opens with the inferential word “therefore”(Greek word **ara**). This links the parable to the preceding warning about loss of treasure. The indefinite word “who” implies that it is uncertain whether anyone will both be “wise” and “faithful” but the promised blessing is there for any servant that the Lord “ordained, installed“(compare the usage in 7:24) to give food at the appropriate time. This parable seems to be directed at church leadership. However, the issues involved are “faithfulness” and “wisdom”. The word for “household” is used in Hebrews 3:6 for “the new believing community “ over which Christ is the High Priest.

### 2A. Verse 46. The Promise of Blessing for Obedience.

There are several things to notice in this verse. First of all is the concept of blessing. Certainly you and I as Christians have been blessed by every "spiritual" blessing in Christ if we understand Paul rightly in Ephesians 1:4. However, that does not eliminate all other blessings that God promises for obedience. Notice also that the translators have supplied the little verb "is" in verse 46. You can always tell this because the translator's words are in a different print. In view of the fact that we are dealing with something future we should probably translate it "blessed (will be) that servant whom his master will find "THUS DOING".

### 3A. Verse 47. The Content of the Blessing.

Here we have a standard expressed by Christ throughout His ministry. If God finds that you are faithful to Him in small things in this life, then in the Kingdom over which Christ

rules, He will entrust you with much. We must insist here that the issue is gaining or losing rulership privileges, not the issues of heaven or hell in this particular parable.

4A. Verse 48. The Problem of the Delay.  
Concepts of “delay” occur in each one of these three parables. This cannot be accidental. We must be dealing with the interadvent period of nearly 2000 years. Here we are told that the servant has an internal problem which will later give rise to external actions. He says in His heart “My master is delaying His coming.” This of course is conditional “if” so he doesn’t have to do it. He is characterized as an “evil” servant which is not a description of his essential nature but his thoughts and actions. We could best translate it as a “disobedient” servant. He is being disobedient to the task to which he has been assigned, that of feeding his fellow servants at the appropriate time.

5A. Verse 49. Relationships to other believers. If this servant is first of all deceived in the inner man, then his thoughts lead to actions. He begins to beat his fellow servants (a violation of the commandment to love) and he “eats and drinks with the drunkards.” This marks him according to the Old Testament standard. Moses says in Deuteronomy, if a man has a **stubborn and rebellious** son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a **glutton and a drunkard**'. Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil person from among you.

It seems obvious that the servant in Matthew 24:49 is a stubborn and rebellious son. The master's actions are found in verse 50. First, the master arrives at the day and the hour that the servant does not expect. This relates nicely to the same expression in verse 36. Next, the master "cuts him in two" (symbolism of a covenant curse ritual transferred to a person; see Gen. 15:10; Jer. 34:8) "sets aside his portion (of the inheritance) with the hypocrites. Then (not there) shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So in summary we have a warning that because of the unexpected coming of the Son of Man those who have been given ruling authority in the church have a responsibility to continue doing what they have been assigned until the return of the Lord. If they falter, and begin to disobey the terms of the New Covenant with its requirements to love and serve, then they are setting themselves up for the direst consequences.

## 2. The Parable of the Foolish and the Wise Virgins. (25:1-13)

The number ten is important because it required ten people to have a legal ceremony such as a wedding. We also see it in Luke 19 in the parable of the ten servants with the minas. It is symbolic of the entire believing community. Virgins also stand for the believing community as we see from Paul’s discussion in 2 Cor. 11:2. So the issue under discussion

in relationship to the kingdom of heaven is the existence of “wisdom” or “foolishness” in the believing community.

In verse 3 we have one of the major interpretive problems of the parable. What does the olive-oil represent? There is a quick answer that suggest that the olive-oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. However that interpretation must be resisted because the Holy Spirit is a gift and cannot be bought. The instructions to go and buy some more would make no sense at all in the case of the Holy Spirit. I think the answer must be found in seeing that the oil is only important when it is set on fire. In other words when it is giving light. The symbol of light rather than oil helps us because then we realize that Jesus is talking about the good works of the believer which he/she does before men which constitutes them the light of the world. The foolish virgins had no oil therefore they had no works with which to greet the bride-groom.

In verse 5 we find an interesting thing. All of the individuals both wise and foolish dozed off and slept. The bridegroom delays a long time. The word for “delay” is a participle indicating indefinite continuous time. So far its been almost two thousand years that the bridegroom is delaying. It appears to this interpreter then that “sleep” must be a metaphor for physical death although the same word is used in 26:45 for physical sleep which in the context is equal to prayerlessness. However, having the word symbolize physical death agrees with what we have argued, that the Olivet Discourse answers the question of the disciples in reverse order and that because of grammatical linkage and the use of the figure of speech “inclusio” we are talking about the interadvent period.

In verse 6 the situation is quickly changed. There is a command to go out and meet the Bridegroom. The word “to meet” is the same one Paul uses in 1 Thess. 4:17. A cry goes out which is equivalent to the “shout” of 1 Thess. 4:16. All this happens “at midnight” which agrees with the motif of the Rapture “like a thief in the night.. In the sleeping/rising up motif in verse 7 we see a picture of the rapture/resurrection. This is further complicated by the word for "trimming their lamps" which is the same word used in Revelation 21:2 to refer to a "bride adorned for her husband." The foolish have no oil so they cannot "trim their lamps." In verse 9 we find out that credit for good works cannot be transferred. The command to the foolish "to buy" some good works reminds us that we as Christians have to sacrifice something of ourselves in order to do a good work. We are also reminded of the Lord's words in Revelation to "buy gold and white garments and anointing salve for our eyes" so that we might have things of eternal value.

In verse 10 the title of the "wise" is changed to the "prepared". Thus we have the main issue of concern. The issue is the preparation of the church for the return of the Son of Man. The prepared ones enter into the "wedding hall" in the In Messiah's kingdom where they rule and reign for a 1000 years. The door to the Messiah's palace is then shut.

Unfortunately the remaining "virgins" come later and request entrance to the "wedding hall". However, the king does not allow them entrance because he does not "know" them. This is the same word that Peter said when challenged for His knowledge

of Christ. He did not know Christ even though he did. We should see here a classic illustration of what Christ said about "denying us if we deny Him." Of course He knows us because He is God the Son and omniscient but in that day He will not know us, that is, He will not recognize us when it comes to being admitted into His presence and eating at His table.

In the summary implication in verse thirteen we see the warning to His people which is to "WATCH" for His return which will be without warning. There will be no time to do anything additional when He returns. In this parable we have discussed the second term in verse 45. We have seen what it means to be a wise servant. In the next parable we will discuss what it means to be a faithful servant.

### 3. The Parable of the Talents. (25:14-30)

When we come to this familiar parable we will have a little easier interpretation since we have finished two other parables in this series. Jesus had just given a command to the listeners to "be watchful". Now this concept is going to be defined for us. We can tell that by the first word in verse 12 "for". This means that the parable is some explanation of a verse in the preceding context.

Finally, "after a long time" the lord of the servants returns to require an accounting from them. Again we see the concept of a "delay." It is time to check the books. Report number one is contained in verse 20. Basically the servant received a 100 % return on his investment activity. This is in keeping with the principle that the Lord is never debtor to anyone. All money invested in his work bears a 100 % rate of return. The Lord's valuation is found in verse 21. It is probably better to translate GOOD as OBEDIENT. "Well done, obedient and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord." Psalm 16:11 says "In Your Presence is fullness of joy." So we could just as easily say, "Enter into the presence of your Lord." The same response and report is found with the individual that has been entrusted with two talents. He receives a reward in keeping with his talents and trustworthiness.

In verse 24 we receive the first inkling of the bad news. The servant's description of the master is exaggerated and has all the marks of an excuse. Compare what Adam said to the Lord. "The woman YOU gave me to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate." The servant's description contradicts what the parable of the sower says in Matthew 13. Our lord is not a hard man. He was a man of compassion. He sowed the seed widely and never reaped where he did not sow. Verse 25 should give us pause. It is apparent that the Lord is not happy with only saving us and taking us to heaven. He wants a return on his investment.

Verse 26 should be translated "You knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered DID YOU? If this statement would have been true, then the logical action would have been to deposit the money at interest which

could have ranged up to 48 percent in the days of Jesus and then the lord could have had a return.

Verse 28 then documents the loss of reward of the disobedient and lazy servant. The basic tension of the Christian life is found in verse 29. The one who has fruit will be given a reward for his labor. But the one who does not have fruit will lose whatever reward that he has. Again we see the unprofitable servant cast away from the presence of the Lord. Then there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth which of course is sorrow for the loss of reward.

Here we conclude three parables of judgment. The first one dealt with how we love our brother, the second was how we make preparation for the Lord's return, the third dealt with how we use our money, all measures of our wisdom and faithfulness.

#### 4. The Sheep and Goats Judgment. (25:31-46)

The Old Testament saints were saved by faith (Heb. 11); the New Testament saints were saved by faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-10). People are saved today the same way. The gospel of "doing good" is not a scriptural message. It is right for believers to do good (Heb. 13:16; Gal. 6:10), but this is not the way for unbelievers to be saved.

Summary: As we look back at the Olivet Discourse, we should review several facts that it teaches.

First of all, there is no evidence that God is forever finished with the nation of Israel. Jesus makes it clear in this discourse that Israel would be purified and brought to faith in her Messiah. God has not cast away His people either totally or finally (Rom. 11:1ff).

Second, the Old Testament promises of the kingdom of God upon the earth will be fulfilled. The future Tribulation period will be a very difficult time for the people on earth. But it will be "travail" in preparation for the birth of the kingdom. The suffering will lead to glory.

Third, God is going to judge this world. He is not sending overwhelming judgments today because this is a day of grace when His message is, "Be reconciled to God"(2 Cor. 5:14ff). The heavens are silent because man's sins have already been judged at the cross. God has spoke once and for all through His Son, and He will not speak to this earth again until He sends forth His judgments during the Tribulation.

Fourth, we as Christians and members of His church are not looking for signs. "The Jews require a sign" (1 Cor. 1:22). There will be no signs given prior to the sudden return of Christ in the air for His church.

The Olivet Discourse by John Sweigart  
InTheBeginning.org

Finally, no matter what view of prophecy we take we, know that Jesus is coming again. As Christians, we must be alert and ready. We must not waste our opportunities. God is interested in our productivity.