

## **Matthew's Gospel – Chapter 25: Parables about the future**

*[Please note : New King James version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Today's Talk on Matthew Chapter 25 concludes the prophetic teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ gave on the Mount of Olives concerning His Return to this earth. Related aspects on the subject were discussed in previous Talks on this chapter, e.g., Talk no. T1337 and Talk no. T0426. It is true to say that Bible prophecy is not on everyone's daily conversation, yet our lives are governed, to one degree or another, by announcements concerning forthcoming events and we respond and plan accordingly.

In Bible prophecy we have a declaration of the mind of God about "the events that must soon take place" (Revelation 1:1, NLT). Many people are concerned about the current world situation and wonder how it will all end. But the Bible gives us assurance amidst all the uncertainty: As it says in Revelation chapters 1 and 21 "He blesses all those who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near" (Revelation 1:3, NLT). And "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone for ever" (Revelation 21:4).

The Lord Jesus engaged with His disciples concerning the future on more than one occasion and the basis of His return was stated in His promise which we read about in John's Gospel Chapter 14 verses 1 – 3, We read this:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me... I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

The Lord Jesus began His public ministry with the message about the kingdom of heaven. Matthew's Gospel tells us in chapter 4 verse 17:

"From that time, Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.""

The word kingdom occurs 55 times in Matthew's Gospel and 35 of them are as "kingdom of Heaven" – this expression is found nowhere else in the Gospels. Almost all of the parables told by our Lord in this Gospel begin with, "The Kingdom of heaven is like..." (Matthew 13:24,33,44). But Matthew Chapter 25 starts with the words, "The kingdom of heaven **shall be** likened", (verse 1). This is because it concerns, "The day...**in which the Son of Man is coming**" (verse 13). Therefore, the parable relates to the form of the kingdom, future of the Lord's words.

In this Talk on Matthew Chapter 25, I would like to look at the three parables as part of the message that began in Chapter 24, but also as teaching us three more important lessons concerning the times preceding the King's return to earth.

We often speak about the return of the Lord Jesus under two headings of His Coming and His Appearing, rightly distinguishing between His coming to take believers out of this world to be with Himself, and His appearing with those believers to rule over this world. The following simple timeline might be helpful in placing these two events in the wider setting of God's plan for the future. There are many Bible references to it, but I shall mention just one or two as I go along:

1. The Lord's Second Coming, also referred to as The Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4 :13 – 17 ; 1 Thessalonians 1 :10);
2. The Tribulation (Jeremiah 30 : 7; Daniel 9 : 24 – 27; Revelation 6 – 18);
3. The Judgement Seat of Christ (Romans 14 :10 – 12);
4. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19 :7 – 9);
5. Armageddon (Revelation 16 : 14 – 16 ; 19 :14 – 20 );
6. The Appearing (Matthew 24 :30; Romans 8 :18 – 23 ; Colossians 3 :4; 1 Timothy 6 :14 ; 2 Timothy 4 :1, 8; Revelation 19 :11);
7. The Millennium (Revelation 20 :2 – 6 ; Matthew 25);
8. Satan's release (Revelation 20 :7 – 10);
9. The Great White Throne (Revelation 20 :11 – 15).

and then

10. The Eternal State (Revelation 21 :1 – 8) (See: (Much of this information is from) Scripture Truth Volume 62 No. 5, January - March 2024, pages 135ff, STP Publications, Crewe).

The Apostle Paul has given clear teaching concerning the Second Coming of our Lord about which we will say something later in this talk. But even in considering the Lord's teaching in the kingdom parables, there are Biblical principles which can be applied for Christian believers living today, as it says in Romans 15:

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15: 4).

And so to the Return of the Lord as illustrated in the three parables.

1. Verses 1 – 13: The Ten Virgins – here we learn about True Disciples and False Professors of Christ (v.6).
2. Verses 14 – 30: the Eight Talents – Faithfulness in service (v.19).
3. Verses 31 – 46: The Sheep and the Goats – Separation at the judgement of the nations by the King (v.31). All of these are preparatory to His millennial reign (verse 34).

So, I'm going to read Matthew 25, verses 1–13: (ESV)

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, five

were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, "Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him. Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise. "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." But the wise answered, saying, "Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves. And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us." But he answered, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you." Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

From the description, given in verses 1 – 13 we learn that the ten virgins are waiting to meet the Bridegroom to form the Bridal party for going to the Wedding Supper.

We need to set this parable in context – both in its subject matter and in relation to the period intended for its application. Let's remember what a parable is, and that the Lord Jesus told these by referring to subject matters with which the hearers would be familiar. So, in the parable of the 10 bridesmaids, the sequence of events for a wedding at the time would be known to them. There were three parts: 1) on the wedding day the bridegroom went to the bride's house for the ceremony; 2) then the bride and groom, along with a great procession, returned to the groom's house, where 3) a feast took place.

"The first word, "Then" in Verse 1, refers to the time preceding and up to the Lord's Second Coming. The kingdom of heaven can be defined as all those people in the world who profess to be Christians. The Lord Jesus says that at the time of His return, those who profess to be His disciples will be like the ten virgins in this parable. They will be distinguished by whether or not they had oil for their lamps. The five wise virgins represent true disciples in Christendom. The foolish virgins stand for those who profess to be Christians but who have never been converted, and thus do not have the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Oil is generally acknowledged to be figurative of the Holy Spirit. A lamp without oil is useless. We must ask ourselves, "Have I ever truly repented of my sins and believed the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?" For upon believing, we read in Ephesians chapter 1 each one is sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). It's the Holy Spirit who enables us to witness for Christ, and to shine as lights in the world, during the night-time of His absence.

Notice, in verses 5 and 7, we read that all ten virgins "slumbered and slept" also that "they arose and trimmed their lamps" - giving the impression of being ready and not much to differentiate them. And so it is to the world at large, all Christians appear the same; but there are some in Christendom who are not awake or living in expectation of the Lord's imminent return.

Notice also, the foolish ones, lacking oil, asked the others for some, but were sent to "buy" some. The wise ones' refusal seems selfish, but in the spiritual realm, no one can dispense the Spirit to another.

The bridegroom is Christ, the Lord. The wedding takes place in heaven (Ephesians 5:27) after the Rapture. He will return from the wedding – with His Bride, the Church (1 Thessalonians 3:13). The faithful saints will go in with Him to the marriage feast. With them, lamps were trimmed and burning brightly, and there was light in the darkness fuelled by the Spirit-given assurance that the Lord is coming.

Verses 14 – 30: the parable of the 8 talents: Service rewarded - Again, the Lord Jesus here is speaking of a time to come when accountability for faithfulness in service is assessed by the Lord.

“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away” (Verses 14 – 15).

In verse 19 we read:

“Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.”

So, in the Master’s absence we have evidence of diligence on the one hand and negligence on the other. Two servants “went and traded”, but the third “went and digged” (KJV) in the earth and hid his lord’s money. The Lord Jesus was the most industrious Servant. He traded in divine truth, and diminished “not a word” (Jeremiah 26:2). So for us, we are to “always excel in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:18, Berean Standard Bible).

We note here that considerable amount of trust is displayed by the One who knows his workers well. He gave not the same amount to be invested but to each according to his ability. Or we might say: “He does not give boots that are too big for our individual feet!” The Lord Jesus is now absent from earth in body, having travelled into a far country. But He is giving responsibilities to those He has left behind. No recipient was better off than another, as emphasised in verse 15. It is their faithfulness in using their talents that is their reward. The parable stresses that lesser ability does not lessen the personal responsibility.

Verses 21, 23, 30: Rewards we read this -

“His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. ...And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness, in that place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.””

And so to the final parable,

Verses 31 – 46: The judgement of the nations – here we learn about separation and positioning

In the final parable we learn about “The Son of Man” – a title that the Lord Jesus bears as a Judge and ruler of the world to come.

So, I would like to conclude this talk on Matthew, Chapter 25 by making reference to three vital truths: The certainty, the manner, and the purpose of the Lord’s return.

## **1. The certainty**

We have already referred to The Lord Jesus speaking about His Return in John’s Gospel. The Angels announced it in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. In Chapter 1:10 – 11 we read:

“And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from

you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.””

And in the same Book, Acts 17 verse 31 we read:

God “has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31 ESV).

## **2. The manner**

“Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30 ESV).

Contrast this with His first Coming and His rejection: We read in Zechariah 9 and Matthew 21:

“Behold your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:5 ESV).

“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in the manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7 ESV).

And His rejection: We read:

“The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22 ESV).

## **3. The purpose**

He will sit upon His throne of glory and He will judge. We read in John chapter 5:

“For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son” (John 5:21–22 ESV).

His return will fulfil Old Testament prophecies and covenants not fulfilled at His first Coming. He will keep the promises He Himself gave to His disciples in John 14:3 before He went back to heaven. Also the promises given to the Church through the inspiration of the Apostles, e.g., in Titus 2 we read this:

“Looking for the blessed hope” (Titus 2:11 – 14 ESV).

At the beginning of the Olivet discourse, Matthew 24:9, Jesus had foretold the sufferings of His witnesses. He identified Himself with them when His people were hounded and persecuted by Saul of Tarsus. Acts 9:4, we read this, “Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?” In this chapter, He identifies Himself with “the least of His brethren.” They are those who were mistreated during the Great Tribulation. “In as much as you did to the least one of these, you did it unto me” (verse 40) and “as you did not do it to one of the least of these” (verse 45).

In Ezekiel 34:17 – 24 we read about the shepherd separating the sheep from the goats. Here in the final part of Matthew Chapter 25, we see how the judgment of the nations will lead to the separation: – the sheep and the goats. That is to say: of those who are His obedient followers from all pretenders and the unbelievers. The wicked will go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

The Bible teaches that we are going to reign with Jesus Christ. In His message to the Churches, to those who overcame, He said that they would rule over the earth: We read this in Revelation 3 verse 21:

“The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne.”

When the Apostle Paul taught on the subject of the Lord's Return, The Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4: 13– 17; and 1 Thessalonians 1:10 ), he wanted Christians to be very clear about this. And then again Paul said,

“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ...But you are not in the darkness for the day to surprise you like a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:1– 4).

To this we add the words of the Lord Jesus from Matthew 25 v13:

“Watch, therefore, for you know not neither the day nor the hour”  
(Matthew 25:13 ).

Averse from a well known hymn:

Jesus is coming! The promise is true:  
Who are the chosen, the faithful, the few  
Waiting and watching, prepared for review?  
D.W. Whittle (1840-1901)

Paul's writing to the Thessalonians and to us today was meant to bring about comfort in our hearts. We believe that Jesus died for us and rose again for our salvation. And we know this:

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today Talk “Matthew Chapter 25”, Jesus Talks about the Future, Talk Number T1353, in the Matthew's Gospel Series.

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