

"The Olivet Discourse"

Matthew 24-25

Part 25

Introduction: Tonight as we come back to our study of the Olivet Discourse we have now come to Matthew 25:1-13. Here in this passage we will find a very familiar parable and it is the Parable of the Ten Virgins. This is a passage which I have heard taught from many different angles and you probably have also. It is my goal tonight to help you to understand the true meaning of this parable.

Let me review a few thoughts with you if I could that way your mind will be ready for what we are about to look at.

In Matthew 24 and 25 the teaching of our Lord is the result of some questions which His disciples had asked Him.

Matthew 24:1-3

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.

² *And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

³ *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

His disciples asked Him 3 questions:

1. When would the temple be destroyed?
2. What would be the sign of His coming to set up His Kingdom?
3. What would be the signs of the end of the age?

Jesus never answered the first question but He did answer the next 2. That is what we find starting in Matthew 24:4-24:31. Then in Matthew 24:32-25:46 Jesus spoke about the need for people to be prepared for His return.

Now in 24:32-35 Jesus used the Parable of the Fig Tree to help people to be prepared. In 24:36-41 our Lord pointed back to the people of Noah's day to show how all but eight

people were caught unprepared for the flood. He then told His disciples that it will be the same when He returns to set up His Kingdom here at the end of the Great Tribulation. Jesus then spoke of the cost of unpreparedness in 24:42-44 when He compared His 2nd coming to a thief coming in the night. He then gave an illustration in 24:45-51 in which He contrasted the wise servant with the evil servant and in this illustration Jesus pointed out the characteristics of the saved and the unsaved.

This now brings us to where we are tonight and that is Matthew 25.

This week I have been reading a book on prophecy and in that book the writer had several good points to consider about the day and age in which we live in. He said that in our world today there is an overall feeling that our world is about to change. People can sense that our world cannot continue to operate under the same tension which we feel today for a long period of time. I agree with these thoughts also. Many people who I speak with tell me that things cannot continue as they are for much longer. They will tell you that something is about to happen. Now some people are "preparing" by stocking up on supplies while others are investing in underground bunkers. Let me share something with you about this:

"The Vivos Survival Shelter and Resort in Atchison, Kansas is the world's largest private underground shelter. The developers are converting an enormous underground limestone mine that covers 135 acres into square footage equal to the Empire State Building (2.25 million sq ft). The luxury doomsday bunker has enough food and water to provide for 5000 people for a year."

Let me show you the results of some results polls:

1. Almost one in three Americans see Syria's recent conflict as part of the Bible's plan for the end times.
2. One in four thinks that a U.S. military strike in Syria could lead to Armageddon.
3. Nearly 15 percent of people worldwide believe the world will end during their lifetime.
4. 41 percent of all U.S. adults, 54 percent of Protestants, and 77 percent of evangelicals believe the world is now living in the Biblical end times.
5. Nearly 4 in 10 Americans (65 percent of white evangelicals) believe recent natural disasters are evidence of the End Times.

All of this comes from the book, "Blood Moons Rising" by Mark Hitchcock.

I give you all of this to show you that many are living on the edge of their seats but at the same time the preparations they are taking are of no eternal value.

"The Parable of the Ten Virgins"

Notice Matthew 25:1

The first word here tells us what time period this parable applies to and we know from what we have been looking at that the setting is the end of the *Great Tribulation*.

Now in order to understand this parable we need to understand how the Jewish wedding ceremony was carried out. In the days of Christ on earth, a Jewish wedding was the most celebrated social event. The reason being almost everyone in a village or in a neighborhood of a large city would be involved as a participant and a guest. It was a time of great happiness and festivity. Now a typical Jewish marriage was a three part event spread out over many months.

Step 1 was a legal engagement contract, usually arranged by the parents and sealed with the payment of a bridal price, a dowry and normally this engagement was arranged by the fathers of the bride and groom, and the engagement amounted to a contract of marriage in which the couple had little, if any involvement. Now step 2 was the betrothal period, launched by a public ceremony where vows and gifts were exchanged in the presence of family and friends. And betrothal could last for as much as a year, and during that time the couple was considered to be married and their relationship could be broken only by formal divorce. Now during this time the new husband was responsible to demonstrate that he could make a livelihood. He also used the betrothal period to build a home where the couple would start their lives together. It was a time of testing and even though the couple was considered married the physical union was not consummated. This can be seen in the lives of Mary & Joseph (Matthew 1:18-23). Mary & Joseph were considered husband and wife, they were betrothed and had not consummated their marriage physically, which when Mary was found to be pregnant, Joseph was going to put her away privately. Again they were betrothed and Joseph initially thought Mary had not been faithful. Now with that in mind, step 3 was a wedding banquet, held at the end of the betrothal period. The banquet was usually held at the bride's home. And only after the wedding banquet did the bride return to her husband's house, and then the union was finally consummated. Now the

ceremony described in Matthew 25:1-13 is the wedding banquet, the final stage in the marriage festivities and at the start of the wedding banquet, the bridegroom and his groomsman would go to the bride's house. His arrival was a ceremonial event, heralded by the bridesmaids, who would come out to meet the bridegroom and escort him to the bride's house. However, on their way, the whole wedding party would go through the streets of the community proclaiming to all that the wedding feast was about to begin. And such ceremonies were often held at night; so the bride's attendants carried torches, and these torches both lighted the way and added to the pageantry of this special celebration now get this! Often, especially if the bridegroom was coming from a distance, the precise time of his arrival could not be known in advance.

Everyone in the community would know that a wedding feast was imminent, but waiting for the bridegroom could be a drawn out affair.

Which reminds us of the central message of the parable we are going to study today, and that is, Jesus will return at the end of the Great Tribulation and many people will be found unprepared. And he may delay longer than expected, so people will need to make preparations and stay alert, even if the hour seems late. For in reality, when he does arrive, there will be no further delays and no second chance.

Now with that background let us notice the verse again.

Notice Matthew 25:1 again.

Now we can better understand the setting. We are introduced to ten virgins here who are NOT the bride but they have been invited to be a part of the celebration, they are the bridesmaids. They are waiting for bridegroom so that they can join in the celebration.

Let me remind you that in the study of the parable we must be very careful about spiritualizing. However we do know that because of the context of this parable that the Bridegroom would be Jesus Christ, the Bride who is not mentioned is the church, and the bridesmaids or the ten virgins would be those who are alive at the end of the Great Tribulation and they are waiting for the wedding celebration which would include the marriage supper and that will take place in the Kingdom after Jesus returns. So the ten

virgins here represent those who are waiting for the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ. They are people who profess to be saved. Looking at them from the outside they would all look the same. They all are waiting. They all have been invited. They all have their torches or their lamps. But there is an inward difference.

Notice Matthew 25:2

Here we see that 5 were wise and 5 were foolish.

Notice Matthew 25:3-4

Here we see the contrast between the 5 who were wise and the 5 who were foolish. The wise took the oil for their lamps but the foolish did not. So this makes us ask a question, "What does the oil represent?" With this we must be very careful. First of all Jesus does not tell us so we must not go too far with this.

Many teach that the oil represents the Holy Spirit and therefore 5 of them had the Holy Spirit and 5 did not. Oil does picture the Holy Spirit many times in the Bible and therefore it could represent the Holy Spirit here.

But let me raise a question, "Will the believers of the Great Tribulation be indwelt with the Holy Spirit like the believers are today?" Let me remind you that the Old Testament saints did not possess the Holy Spirit as we do today. The Spirit came upon them for specific ministries and then departed.

Judges 11:29-32

²⁹ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.

David is the only Old Testament saint who permanently had the Spirit.

1 Samuel 16:13

*¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and **the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.** So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.*

So, the question remains, "Will the tribulation saints be given the Spirit or will they be like the Old Testament saints?" Is it only the "Bride of Christ" who is given the Spirit? The Bible does not answer that question so we cannot be dogmatic either way. Let's get back to Matthew again. The oil may represent the Holy Spirit but we cannot be dogmatic however we can be very sure that the unwise virgins without oil are those who will be unprepared when Jesus returns at the end of the tribulation. This we are safe in saying.

Notice Matthew 25:5-7

While they were all sleeping the cry came that the bridegroom was returning so they all went and trimmed their lamps or their torches.

Notice Matthew 25:8

Here is an interesting verse. The foolish virgins had no oil but their lamps burned for a short time. No doubt it was only the wick which was burning.

But there is far more that I want you to see here. These foolish virgins represent those who are religious but are not saved. They wait for the Lord, they look like believers on the outside, they even seem to "burn" for the Lord for a while. But they are not saved. Let me also point out that 5 out of 10 were unprepared. This does not mean that half of the world will be saved and half will be lost. The point I believe Jesus is making here is that there will be MANY who are not prepared and some will be people who really who will look the part of true believers.

Notice Matthew 25:8-9

Some would look at these verses and say that the wise virgins were very greedy with the oil that they had. But Jesus is making a very important point here. He is not pointing to greed in the wise virgins He is making it clear that salvation is personal for every person. Those who are prepared to enter the Kingdom will not be able to take those who are not prepared, by the hand and bring them into the Kingdom. Salvation is something which is between you and the Lord. It is each person's responsibility to repent and by faith receive Jesus Christ. I cannot do it for you and you cannot do it for anyone else. We can share the Gospel with people who are not saved but they must make their own decision.

2 Corinthians 13:5

⁵ *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

Notice Matthew 25:9b

Here we see that the foolish virgins were encouraged to go and "BUY" their own oil. There is something here that I want you to see. We know that salvation is a free gift from God that is received by faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

So how are we to understand Matthew 25:9b? Let me explain. The foolish virgins neglected to bring oil with them because they apparently did not want to part with their money.

They would be a picture of the unsaved person who is not willing to walk away from their sin and their love for this world. They would represent the people who profess to be saved but their lives have never changed. They would be people who desire to be Christians but at the same time they desire to hold on to their sin and their love for this world.

Matthew 19:16-22

¹⁶ *And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*

¹⁷ *And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

¹⁸ *He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,*

¹⁹ *Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

²⁰ *The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*

²¹ *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

²² *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*

This man who came before Jesus that day is a picture of the attitude of the foolish virgins. Neither were willing to repent and turn their backs on this world.

Notice Matthew 25:10-13

When they went out to buy oil the bridegroom came and the door was shut. Those at the end of the tribulation who are not saved will be shut out of the Kingdom.

Here is the point; there will be a cut off at the end of the Great Tribulation for salvation. The cut off is the return of Jesus Christ. When He returns the people who are not saved will never have another chance.

Conclusion:

The Bible tells us that today is the day of salvation and the reason is because there are cut-offs. Death is a cut-off today. If you are not saved before you die all chances are gone. The rapture will be a cut-off for many. When the rapture happens all of those who have heard the Gospel and rejected it will be sent a strong delusion from God and will never have another chance to be saved. The entire point of the parable is to help people see the need to be prepared for eternity.

