

Prophetic Parables

Study of Matthew 24:32 – 25:30

Introduction

Late on Tuesday afternoon of the Passion Week, just a few days before His crucifixion, Christ met with His disciples on the Mount of Olives. It was there that they asked *the* question, “*What will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?*” For the next 27 verses (v. 5-31), Matthew records Jesus’ response which has become the cornerstone of prophetic study. However, the *Olivet Discourse* (as it is known) did not end with Christ’s exciting and climactic description of His coming in the clouds to gather (rapture) the believers. He continues with several parables and illustrations that outline how we (Christians and the Church) should live in response to the anticipation of His return.

Parable of the Fig Tree (Matthew 24:32-35) – **Aware and Discerning**

This passage has traditionally been interpreted in two ways:

- The “fig tree” is Israel and the time to which Christ is referring is 1948, when Israel became a nation, and the generation who was alive in 1948 would not die before Christ’s return (some going so far as adding 70 years to 1948 and arriving at 2018 as the possible year which Christ would return).
- The generation to whom Jesus is talking would not die before He returned (they did).

If we take a look at this from a different perspective, we see that Christ is saying that in the same way people are able to determine that summer is approaching based on the appearance of a fig tree’s leaves, so we are to be aware of, and be able to discern, the signs and events that signal Christ’s return (see also Luke 12:54-56). In addition, Christ is telling His followers that the generation *alive when all of these things begin to occur* - THAT generation would not die until everything connected to Christ’s return was fulfilled.

Illustration of the Days of Noah (Matthew 24:36-44) – **Watchful and Expectant**

Even though no one knows the day or the hour of Christ’s return, knowledgeable believers can understand and interpret the times and be watchful (v. 42) and expectant (v. 44). Unbelievers (and, in some way, believers who prefer to remain ignorant of prophetic truth) are compared to those living at the time of Noah who did not believe that the flood would occur.

Right up to the time it began to rain, they were going on with their lives as if nothing was happening or going to happen. It is to these people that Christ’s return comes as a “thief in the night”, not the watchful believers. Also, notice in verses 40-41, at the rapture, the believer in each pair is “taken” - not vanishes.

Illustration of the Two Servants (Matthew 24:45-51) – **Faithful, diligent service/ministry**

Here, two servants are compared and contrasted. The wise, faithful servant (believers, Christians, the Church) is seen faithfully attending to that which the master has entrusted him (ministering to the master’s household). The evil servant (unbelievers) is seen taking advantage of the master’s absence to disobey the master, live in sin and mistreat those under his care. When the master returns, he will reward the faithful servant and punish the evil servant, plain and simple.

Parable of the Ten Virgins/bridesmaids (Matthew 25:1-13) – **Prepared**

Without going into a detailed description of the typical Jewish wedding, suffice it to say that the groom comes for his bride (after preparing their home) and leads a procession to the wedding and the reception. Those not part of the procession are not welcome or allowed into the wedding. We must conclude that, although these girls were bridesmaids, they may not have been formally introduced to the groom. The introduction must have occurred while the “foolish” bridesmaids were away buying oil for their lamps. Thus the groom *did not know them* when they tried to get into the wedding/reception.

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How can we be prepared for the coming of the bridegroom?

- Accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior – in other words, **make sure that the groom knows who you are!** ☺ (that way He is certain that you are part of the wedding party – aka associated with the bride)
- **Keep the oil in your lamp filled.** Spend time in the Word and in prayer (and fasting). We cannot run on an empty tank, nor can we be useful if our lamp is not burning. In fact, we are called to be a visible light to the world that is like “a lamp set on a lampstand” and like “a city on a hill”. (*Matthew 5:14-15*)

*“Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning
Give me oil in my lamp I pray, hallelujah!
Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning,
Keep me burning ‘til the break of day.”*

Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) - Stewardship

This is another parable that has been taught from various perspectives and, as a result, raised numerous questions:

- Are the “talents” money or natural abilities?
- Why does the servant with five talents make exactly five more, and the servant with two make exactly two more – does this mean God will double our money, talents or efforts or would the master have been disappointed if they had not doubled his money? (I honestly believe that the servant with two talents would have still been commended if he had made one additional talent, or if the one with five had made three - in other words a positive contribution to the kingdom)
- Why did the “evil and lazy” servant bury his talent if he knew the master was greedy?
- Is the evil, lazy servant a Christian who refuses to use the talents God has given him? (probably not, considering the resulting punishment)
- If the master represents Christ, then why does he admit to being greedy? (he doesn't, he merely parrots back the evil servant's accusation, with a logical rebuke)

In the parable, the talent was technically money, or more exactly, a measure of weight by which a currency's value was determined. However, we can allow this to mean any type of resource that God (“the master”) has entrusted to us or with which He has blessed us. The evil servant in the story is, again, an unbeliever who refuses to acknowledge the resources which the master has bestowed upon him, decides against an obedient relationship with him, but rather chooses to view him as a selfish, vindictive master and selfishly squanders that which he has been given.

We are called to be wise and faithful stewards of the resources with which God has blessed us – our **time, talents and treasure** – to grow and impact His kingdom. The bottom line of the parable is that the resultant rewards or punishments ties in directly to the final judgments before which we all will stand - either the Judgment Seat of Christ for rewards or the Great White Throne for punishment.

Conclusion – Christ has given us clear direction on how we are to live in anticipation of His return – Wise stewards who are aware, discerning, watchful, expectant, faithful and prepared!

“Amen. Even so, Come Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” – Revelation 22:20-21