

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series - Matthew (Lesson SB_MT25)

Matthew 25 – Parables Regarding the Second Advent

The Parable of the Ten Virgins (25:1-13)

In association with our Lord's return (24:30) and the regathering of the elect of Israel to the land (24:31), Jews will be brought under judgment. This judgment will also affect Gentiles; however, remember Matthew is writing to Jews primarily with an emphasis on their relationship to Jesus as the Messiah – a fact that Matthew has previously established (see notes on Matthew 1). Remember also that the Messianic (Millennial) kingdom will be inaugurated with believers only. These facts are critical to a proper interpretation of this passage.

The parable of the ten virgins is based upon the marriage customs of our Lord's day. Prior to the wedding, an invitation would be sent to those who were invited to the wedding feast. During the Tribulation period (a.k.a. Daniel's Seventieth Week), the invitation to participate in the Messianic kingdom will be extended to Jews (and Gentiles) through the preaching of the *gospel of the kingdom*, i.e. that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (24:14 cf. 10:7). The kingdom of heaven is by analogy likened to a wedding feast (22:1-14). Therefore, the ten virgins are representative of Jews during the Tribulation who have heard the *gospel of the kingdom* and who have been invited to the wedding feast. Some prepared themselves to enter the kingdom and others did not. Their preparation (or lack thereof) is an outward representation of inward faith (or no faith) in the gospel of the kingdom. Like the faithful servant of Matthew 24:45, the wise virgins anticipated and prepared for the Messiah's Coming. Like the unfaithful servant of 24:48, the foolish virgins assumed things would continue as they always have and they did not prepare in faith. Other interesting points of observation regarding this parable include the following:

- The marriage that is the backdrop for this parable is not a reference to the Church per se being united with Christ in the Messianic kingdom to rule and reign with Him. While it is true that the raptured Church will rule and reign with Christ in their resurrection bodies during the Millennium (2 Tim 2:12 cf. Re 5:10) and be present at the Millennial wedding feast, the "bride" (as we have seen in previous studies) is more expansive and includes more than just the Church.
- The Church is not in view in this passage. The Church is a part of the bride. The bride consists of believers of all dispensations prior to the Messianic kingdom who rule and reign with Christ in their resurrection bodies during the 1000 years. (Most dispensationalists interpret the bride to be the Church exclusively and thereby see the Church present in this parable in an indirect sense. I differ in the sense that I see the bride in the New Testament to be a reference to believers of all dispensations in their resurrection bodies during the Millennium. The Church is a part of this group, thus the Church is a part of the bride. There is no passage that states that only the Church is the bride of Christ. Such a conclusion is an interpretation of certain passages John 3:29).
- The New Jerusalem from which Christ reigns and rules during the Millennium will be inhabited by believers of all dispensations and is the bride. Note the following passages:
 - 1 John 5:4-5 ("overcomers" are those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God)
 - Hebrews 12:22-24 ("spirits of just men" are believers of dispensations prior to the Church Age)
 - Revelation 3:21 ("overcomers" sit with Christ on the throne)
 - Revelation 5:10 (saints reign on the earth)
 - Revelation 7:9-17 (Tribulation believers serve the Lord in heaven – see also 21:24-27)
 - Revelation 19:7 (the "bride" or "wife" at the marriage supper of the Lamb is believers in their resurrection bodies)
 - Revelation 20:4, 6 (Tribulation believers reign in the Millennium)

- Revelation 21:2, 9, & 10 (the bride = the New Jerusalem)
- Revelation 21:7 (“overcomers” inherit the New Jerusalem)
- Revelation 21:12, 14 (mention of the 12 tribes and 12 apostles – Israel and the Church)
- Any interpretation of Matthew 25:1-13 must be consistent with the interpretation of Matthew 22 – the parable of the wedding feast.
- In Matthew 22, the “marriage” (22:2) is the uniting of all believers on earth under the rule of the Messiah. Believers of prior dispensations rule and reign with Christ during this period [Heb 12:22-24; Re 3:21; 5:10; 20:4, 6] and Israel has a very prominent position among the nations once again [e.g. Is 2:1-4; 11:11-16; 44:21-28 among many others]. The “wedding” (22:4) is the same as the “marriage supper of the Lamb” [Re 19:9] or the “wedding feast” that pictures the Messianic kingdom after the Second Advent of Christ. The “wedding garment” is the righteousness of God possessed by every believer as a result of trusting in Christ as the Messiah (Age of Israel) or trusting in Christ’s death as the payment for sin (Age of the Church). Both are in reality the same message with just a different emphasis on Christ’s person and work. Believers of all dispensations possess the righteousness of God. However, only believers of the Church Age are said to be in union with Christ.

In this parable of the ten virgins, Christ taught that during the period before His Second Coming, those believers who had faith in the gospel of the kingdom would manifest that faith through proper preparation for His arrival. They would **not** have an attitude similar to the “evil servant” of 24:48 who believed that Christ would not be coming for some time and live their lives based upon their own selfish interests (e.g. self-preservation and denial of the Messiah in the face of persecution). Christ’s return at the Second Advent will terminate the opportunity for people to prepare themselves to enter the millennial kingdom, and only the prepared will be accepted.

Psalms 24 presents a picture of pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem for a festival. They are seen approaching the city with the hope that they might on that occasion meet Messiah and welcome Him to His kingdom. As they proceed, some ask, “Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?” (See verse 3). Others provide the answer, “He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.” (See verse 4). Thus only the pure in heart shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

The Parable of the Talents (25:14-29)

In this parable, Jesus is teaching the principle that each Jewish person in the Tribulation is individually responsible and that their faith would be manifested through service. The third servant in the parable had been presented the gospel of the kingdom; however, he merely knew it intellectually and did not manifest his faith by producing with it. He was thereby excluded from the kingdom.

In Luke 19:11-27, Jesus taught using a similar parable (the parable of the ten minas); however, in Luke there is equal distribution and the emphasis is upon equal opportunity. Here in Matthew, there is unequal distribution and the emphasis is upon individual responsibility.

Judgment Upon the Gentiles (25:31-46)

Matthew has sometimes been called the gospel of judgment because the subject occurs so frequently. This is consistent with Matthew’s emphasis upon Jesus as the rightful King and Messiah Who will one day rule over His Kingdom. In this final passage in chapter 25, Matthew explains the basis for judgment upon Gentile nations as the Messianic kingdom is being established. Gentiles will be part of the Messianic kingdom and the blessings by association that the Gentiles who believe in Israel’s Messiah will receive have been a subject of much OT prophecy (e.g. Isa 42:6; Mal 1:1). While on David’s throne after His Second Advent in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:16), Christ will rule over not only Israel, but also the Gentiles.

The judgment of Gentiles in this passage is not a judgment of national entities, but of individuals from each national entity. As the judged Gentiles are separated into two groups (sheep and goats), representatives from each nation will go into each group. The sheep are believing Gentiles who enter the Messianic kingdom. The brethren of Christ (verse 40) are most likely the believing of Israel who had been assisted by Gentile believers during the Tribulation. The Jewish believers who are assisted by Gentiles will include the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are saved at the beginning of the Tribulation. Since they do not have the mark of the beast, they will depend upon such generosity to survive. The works of the Gentiles (assisting Jewish believers) will manifest their faith in the Messiah.

The bulk of Matthew 24 and 25 is Jesus' response to the disciples questions in 24:3. The disciples understood that Jesus' announcement of judgment upon Israel in 24:1-2 was associated with the establishment of the Messianic kingdom; however, they thought it might be more imminent than it was.