

The Church of the Servant King

Mid-Week Bible Study

The Gospel of Matthew

(Mid Week_Matt 25)

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

¹ "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² "Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. ³ "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴ but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ⁵ "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. ⁶ "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ⁷ "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ "But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' ¹⁰ "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. ¹¹ "Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' ¹² "But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

In association with our Lord's return (24:30) and the re-gathering of the elect of Israel to the land (24:31), Jews will be brought under judgment. This judgment will also affect Gentiles; however, we must 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. Remember also that the Messianic (Millennial) kingdom will be inaugurated with believers only. These facts are important 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* (Matt 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*.

Similar to the faithful servant of Matthew 24:45, the wise virgins anticipated and prepared for the Messiah's Coming. Like the unfaithful servant of Matthew 24:48, the foolish virgins assumed things would continue as they always had been and they did not prepare in faith.

Other interesting points of observation and interpretation 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 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.

- Revelation 19:7 - *“For the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready”* – Who is the “bride” of the Lamb? Is it the Church Age Body of Christ as most dispensationalists assert?¹ My view is that the “bride” is the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is portrayed as housing the believers of the Age of Israel and the Tribulation period. Believers of the Church Age Body of Christ are not pictured in Scripture as located there. They could be, but Scripture doesn’t specifically mention them there.
- Note that the bride/bridegroom analogy is always set in Scripture during some portion of the Age of Israel.
- It is mentioned by Jesus Christ, the Lamb, Who frequently referred to Himself as a bridegroom (cf. Matt 9:15; 22:2-14; 25:1-13; Mk 2:19-20; Lu 5:34-35; 14:15-24; Jn 3:29).
- For the Jews, the wedding figure stressed the intimate relationship that will exist between God and His people in the earthly messianic kingdom.
- The passages to which most dispensationalists appeal to support their position that the Church Age Body of Christ is the “bride” of Christ (e.g. 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-32; & John 3:29) are anything but conclusive on the matter.
- 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 [see **APPENDIX** to these notes for more detail] and Israel has a very prominent position among the nations once again [e.g. Isa 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 during the kingdom-proximate portion of the Age of Israel. (See **APPENDIX** for a discussion of the relevance of this concept to believers of the present age).
- Believers of all dispensations possess the righteousness of God.
- There is a strong similarity, if not identical nature to, the Pauline concept of union with Christ (i.e. “in Him”) and Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom relationship between the exalted Christ and kingdom believers (e.g. Jn 15:1-8).

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 Matthew 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.

¹ To support this conclusion, most dispensationalists refer to passages such as 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-32; and John 3:29. In addition, a Scriptural logic is applied to support this interpretation. They admit that such passages as Revelation 21:2, 9-10 & 22:17 equate the bride with the New Jerusalem; however, they contend that Israel cannot be a part of the bride since the bride is described as coming to earth with the Lord at His 2nd Advent and since Old Testament saints are not resurrected until the 2nd Advent (Dan 12:1-2). However, while true, this overlooks the fact that the martyred saints of the Tribulation (Jew and Gentile) are seen in heaven rejoicing over the fall of Babylon (Rev 19:1-10). Even if they have yet to receive their resurrection bodies, Tribulation saints are still associated with the “last days” of the Age of Israel, not the Body of Christ.

An Illustration From the Psalms

Psalm 24

¹The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.
²For He has founded it upon the seas
And established it upon the rivers.
³Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
And who may stand in His holy place?
⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood
And has not sworn deceitfully.
⁵He shall receive a blessing from the LORD
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
⁶This is the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face--even Jacob. Selah.
⁷Lift up your heads, O gates,
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
⁸Who is the King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.
⁹Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
¹⁰Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory. Selah.

Psalm 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 – "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.").

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

¹⁴ "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. ¹⁷ "In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' ²¹ "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²² "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' ²³ "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴ "And the one also who had received

the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. ²⁵ 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' ²⁶ "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. ²⁷ 'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. ²⁸ 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' ²⁹ "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

In this parable, Jesus is teaching the principle that each person (with focus upon the Jews) in the Tribulation is individually responsible and that their faith would be manifested through service or some type of outward action. The third servant in the parable had been presented and heard 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 (Matt 25:31-46)

³¹ "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? ³⁸ 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' ⁴¹ "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' ⁴⁴ "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' ⁴⁵ "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' ⁴⁶ "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

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 Hebrew

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.

APPENDIX

Who returns with Christ and constitutes His army? – There are several passages that, when combined, provide us with an answer to this question. Consider the following:

- Resurrected saints from the Age of Israel –
 - *“Your dead will live, their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.”* (Isa 26:19)²
 - *“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. 2 “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. 3 “And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”* (Dan 12:1-3)
 - *“And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand...But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.”* (Dan 12:9-10, 13)
- Angels – *“...and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the one end of the sky to the other.”* (Matt 24:30b-31)
- Resurrected saints from the Tribulation – The following passages allude to such a conclusion.
 - *“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!”’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors for their deeds follow with them.’”* (Rev 14:13)³

² This passage is set within the context of the Age of Israel and Isaiah is addressing the children of Israel. There seems to be no passage that establishes with dogmatic certainty the timing of the resurrection of believers who died prior to the Age of Israel. However, most dispensationalists associate the resurrection of the saints from that period of human history with the 2nd Advent.

³ There is a close association between salvation faith and works in passages that deal with periods of human history that are proximate to the establishment of the kingdom. *“And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints”* (Rev 19:8) – The “righteous acts of the saints” has

- *“And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.” (Rev 15:2)*
- *“These [the Beast and those aligned with him] will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.” (Rev 17:14)*
- *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in the fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” (Rev 19:7-8)*
- *“And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.” (Rev 19:14)⁴*
- *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” (Rev 20:4)*

Are believers of the present age, the Church Age Body of Christ, members of Christ's army at His 2nd Advent? – Paul alludes to us ruling and reigning with Christ and our appearance with Him; however, details are lacking. Traditionally, dispensationalists have provided the missing details from passages that are Jewish in context.

- We will appear with Him in glory; however, the exact nature of our role is unclear. In addition, the timing of passages that reference our coming with Christ is in reference to the Rapture.

the deeds of believers in view – not just their faith. Throughout the Gospels and the book of Revelation, I think it is important to understand that we are viewing points in history that are proximate to the coming of the Messianic kingdom on earth. During Jesus' earthly ministry and during the Tribulation period, the “gospel of the kingdom” will be proclaimed. The long anticipated and prophesied earthly kingdom over which the Messiah of Israel rules was “at hand” or will be “at hand” (in the case of the future Tribulation period). In other words, all that was needed for it to be made a reality on earth was for certain conditions to exist – namely, acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.

During these periods of human history, Scripture places a strong emphasis upon the “deeds” of believers as evidence of their acceptance of this “gospel” and of repentant hearts toward this message. If the Jews, who are the pivot around which God's program revolves during the Age of Israel, were to be (and are to be during the Tribulation) the primary evangelistic agent to Gentiles during these periods, God expected them to demonstrate their faith in a very visible manner, e.g. baptism, works of charity, works of kindness, etc. Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) and many of Jesus' parables such as the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) and Jesus' description of the righteous at His coming (Matt 25:31-46) as illustrations.

It is clear that in these passages that are set within the context of the Age of Israel, there is a close correlation between the faith of the believer and the works of righteousness worthy of kingdom presence and life. The fact that God expected this correlation to exist in the lives of believers of the Age of Israel (pre-Church Age Body of Christ and post-Church Age Body of Christ) is presented in Scripture as the norm. In contrast to Pauline doctrine regarding the Gentile-centric Body of Christ of the present dispensation that allows for the carnal believer to still possess eternal life, yet be denied eternal rewards, there seems to be no examples of such a condition amongst the people of faith within the Age of Israel proximate to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom on earth.

This fact has led to various interpretations and views regarding the means of obtaining eternal life, i.e. the means of salvation. However, a further development of such topics as “Lordship Salvation,” “arminianism,” and the views of some non-Acts 2 dispensationalists that there are different mechanics or requirements for salvation in different dispensations is beyond the scope of our present study. However, suffice it to say for now that my view is that one's eternal destiny (regardless of dispensation) is determined by the object of one's faith in spite of the fact that Scripture sometimes establishes a close correlation between one's faith and one's deeds – especially in regards to that portion of the Age of Israel that is proximate to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

⁴ While the riders of the horses in this verse could be angels since angels have been similarly described previously in Revelation as clothed in clean and bright linen (15:6), the immediate context of 19:14 seems to indicate that it is resurrected humans that are the subject of this passage (19:7-8).

- *“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.” (Col 3:4)*
- *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” (1 Thess 4:14)⁵*
- *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thess 4:16-17)*
- Scripture references our heir-ship with Christ and our reign with Him; however, details regarding the relationship of our inheritance and reign to the Millennium are few. Again, most dispensationalists allude to passages that are Jewish and/or Age of Israel in context (e.g. Matt 16:24-27; 19:28-29; Lu 22:28-30 and probably Rev 2:26-27; 3:21 are examples).
 - *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of glory of the children of God.” (Rom 8:16-21 cf. Heb 1:1-2)*
 - *“Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?” (1 Cor 6:1-3)*
 - *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” (Phil 3:20-21)*
 - *“...therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.” (2 Thess 1:4-5) [There is some association between believers of the present age and the kingdom based upon passages such as this].*
 - *“It is a trustworthy statement: ‘For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.’” (2 Tim 2:11-12)*
 - *“In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Tim 4:8)*
 - *“...looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” (Titus 2:13)*

⁵ On the surface, this verse seems to reference the 2nd Advent and if true, would lead us to the conclusion that Paul is saying that believers of the present age return with Christ at His 2nd Advent. However, in the verses immediately following, Paul indicates that believers who are alive at Jesus’ coming (the Rapture) will meet Jesus and the believers who have already died in the air (1 Thess 4:17). The *Expositor’s Commentary* clarifies with the following. “Though we might expect Paul to write ‘God will raise’ instead of ‘God will bring with Jesus,’ he used the latter because of an unexpressed connection in his mind between the two ideas. To be brought with Jesus presupposes rising from the dead as part of the process (v. 16). The words ‘God will bring’ point to a continuing movement heavenward after the meeting in the air (v. 17), until the arrival in the Father’s presence A more detailed analysis of the process follows (*gar*, v. 15).” Frank E. Gaebelin, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989-1998), electronic version.

- *“For He did not subject to angels the world to come...” (Heb 2:5)*
- *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet 1:3-7)*