

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 16TH-17TH, 2019 // BOOK OF REVELATION - MATT. 25

TEN VIRGINS (25:1-13)

This first parable Jesus tells, like many of His other parables, taught another aspect of reality in the Kingdom of Heaven.

- Jesus used a wedding to symbolize His return-this closely parallels what we see in Revelation 19 at the "wedding supper of the Lamb".
- In Jewish culture, there were really two phases of a wedding ceremony.

The 1st phase was betrothal, where the bride and groom were "married", but lived apart and hadn't consummated their marriage.

- The 2nd phase was the wedding ceremony: at his father's command, the groom went (often in the night) in procession to the bride's house with his wedding party to escort her and her wedding party back to his home for an elaborate feast of several days.

The "virgins" in the parable are bridesmaids invited to be a part of the wedding ceremony.

- They represent all who have been invited to be citizens of God's kingdom- some who will make it in, and some who won't.
- Everybody wants to go to heaven, but the problem is many don't want to make the choices in this life that lead to heaven.
- Two groups of bridesmaids- 5 foolish, 5 wise.

The 5 "foolish" bridesmaids took with them insufficient oil to keep their lamps burning for the wedding procession.

- Why was it important to keep their lamps burning?
- In Jewish weddings, everyone in the night-time procession had to have a burning lamp- those without lamps would be assumed to be wedding crashers.
- These bridesmaids weren't prepared.

What they had spent their time doing instead of preparing, we don't know- the point is, they'd wasted a lot of time and weren't ready for what really mattered.

- There will be many in this life who neglect the necessity of preparing themselves spiritually to meet God.
- They'll waste a lot of time and won't have their souls ready for the day of Christ's return.

Although they wanted to participate in the celebration, they displayed a lack of respect for the bride and groom through their neglect of their responsibility to come prepared.

- On the other hand, the 5 "wise" bridesmaids demonstrated their respect and love by keeping their torches burning throughout the procession.
- However, Jesus is clear that preparedness cannot be transferred or shared (vs. 8).

It doesn't matter how many Godly people you surround yourself with or how great your church attendance - if you truly don't have a trusting relationship with Jesus Christ, you're not ready.

- Therefore, we are to be keeping watch (vs. 13) and making sure our souls are prepared for the day of Christ's return.
- If we're not prepared spiritually, we won't be granted entrance into the Kingdom.

READY FOR CHRIST'S RETURN

- An understanding of the "oil" could be that it represents the presence of God in our lives.
- We must ultimately know that we've been truly born again through real, saving faith in Christ.
- Real, saving faith in Christ will manifest itself in our lives through the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and a desire for greater holiness and less sin.

ENTRUSTED WITH TALENTS (25:14-30)

The 1st parable emphasized that we must always be ready, but it didn't reveal anything about the specific ways we are to live.

- In this parable, and in the final account of the judgment (vs. 31-46), Jesus gives His disciples practical direction about how to live in readiness for His return.
- A certain man (representing Jesus) was about to set out on a journey.

The time that the man was gone on a journey represents the time before Jesus' return.

- While the man was gone, he needed to be sure that his property was well cared for, so he called his servants and entrusted his possessions to them before leaving (vs. 14).
- The servants became responsible for managing these "talents" that their master entrusted them with.

From the time of creation of humanity, each individual has been entrusted by God with resources of time,

talent, personality, intelligence, experiences and material wealth.

- In the parable, the talents were assigned to "each according to his ability" (vs. 15).
- No one is entrusted with more than they can handle, but neither is a person entrusted with less than they can handle.

God knows our potential, and all of us are to live up to our full potential by God's strength for His kingdom.

- Over a "long time" (vs. 19) the first two servants took their talents, invested them, and presented their master with an amount that was double what they were originally given.
- When the master returned, they praised and rewarded with more! (vs. 21)

In contrast, the third servant- who had received one talent- played it safe by burying his talent and waiting for his master's return.

- His life failed to realize any impact or gain for his master, and he also demonstrated a lack of understanding of his master (vs. 25-26).
- Too many that truly don't know God fail to trust Him enough to obey, and reveal their lack of faith through passive spirituality.

Sins of "omission" and neglect can be just as deadly as sins of "commission".

- For his fear, lack of trust, and neglect of the talents he'd been given to manage, the 3rd servant is scolded, rejected, and punished.
- The point is this- when Jesus returns, He will require an accounting from all of us.
- We will be held responsible for how we managed the "talents" we've been given.

A RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- Souls brought into the kingdom. -Needs of others compassionately ministered to.
- Spiritual infants raised to maturity. -Justice for the oppressed.
- Wounds healed. -Conflicts reconciled. -Truth lovingly told.

SHEEP & GOATS (25:30-46)

The final section of Jesus' teaching involves evaluation, while the previous 2 parables spoke on judgment coming to the unprepared.

- While this passage does have elements of a parable, it's not really a parable as much as it is a glimpse into the day of judgment- a real event in future history.
- On this day, before Christ the nations will be gathered, and He will separate them.

Jesus will separate all people as a "shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (vs. 32)- sheep on the right, goats on the left.

- Goats tend to be strong-minded, hate to be confined, they're often times stubborn, and don't like to be led.
- Sheep, on the other hand, follow the shepherd's voice and go where He directs.

Here we see two categories of humanity- those who are redeemed and saved ("sheep"), and those who are condemned and lost ("goats").

- The sheep are praised by the King for the kind of behavior they exhibited in their lives.
- In taking care of those who were hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, sick and imprisoned- they actually cared for Jesus Himself (vs. 40).
- The sheep are "blessed" and given eternal life!

The King then turns to those on the left and addresses them as "cursed" (vs. 41).

- These people, "goats", didn't care for the needs of the King- they lived their lives ignoring the needs of those around them- therefore ignoring the King (vs. 43-45).
- Their sentence for ignoring the King and not caring for Him or His people? "Eternal punishment" (vs. 46)

At 1st glance, we might come away from this passage believing that the sheep earned their eternal life by being charitable and kind- thus, it's our works that save us.

- However, the actions of both groups simply reveal their true character and identity.
- Our works are not the cause of our salvation, they're the effect of our salvation.

Our behavior over our lifetime is a window into our true identity (Matt. 7:17).

- Sheep and goats may run together in the same flock- but their actions over time reveal who they truly are.
- A self-centered existence that displays no compassion or care for anyone other than ourselves is an indication that we're not following the shepherd and we don't know the King.

We must keep watch over the state of our souls- what are we trusting in to be made right before God? **In what things are we investing** our time, talent, personality, intelligence, experiences and wealth? Are they eternal or temporary? **Are we displaying our love for Jesus** by loving His people, or are we revealing our identity by our self-centeredness?