

## ***Session 2 The Forerunner Message in Matthew 25***

### **I. REVIEW: JESUS' PRIMARY TEACHING ON THE END TIMES (MT. 24-25)**

- A. The best teaching on the forerunner message in the Bible was given by Jesus in “one teaching” that is recorded in four chapters—Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21—which are to be studied together. The most complete record is in Matthew 24-25— Mark 13 and Luke 21 give a shorter version of it.
- B. Jesus taught on the end times in Matthew 24-25, highlighting various signs of the times (24:5-14), important warnings (24:15-28), the responses He wants from His people as seen in five parables (Mt. 24:32-25:30), His response to them (25:21), and then He concluded by describing Himself as a King sitting on His earthly throne, judging the responses of each person and nation (25:31-46).
- C. Jesus revealed Himself as ***Bridegroom*** (25:1), ***King*** (25:31), and ***Judge*** (25:32-46). The body of Christ can thrive spiritually in pressure by encountering Jesus as Bridegroom, King, and Judge.
- D. **Outline of Matthew 25**
- 25:1-13**     The parable of the ten virgins  
**25:14-30**    The parable of the talents  
**25:31-46**    Jesus judging the nations from His throne of glory in Jerusalem
- E. Jesus taught 5 parables highlighting how we are to respond to Him with vigilance (24:32-25:30). There is an important progression in the five parables that Jesus taught in Matthew 24-25. These parables are incomplete by themselves. They bring together the love of God and the fear of God.
1. ***Parable #1: The parable of the fig tree*** (24:32-35) exhorts us to see the value of recognizing the signs of the times and connecting them to the approach of the return of Jesus.
  2. ***Parable #2: The parable of the thief*** (24:42-44) exhorts us to “watch” the signs of the times as they unfold so that we might be ready to respond faithfully to Jesus in the escalating crisis.
  3. ***Parable #3: The parable of the faithful and wise servants*** (24:45-51) exhorts us to be faithful and wise servants who work diligently with good motives as we give spiritual food to others in a way that is appropriate to each season. Jesus contrasted faithful servants with evil servants. This parable highlighted that *Jesus' delay may be shorter than expected*.
  4. ***Parable #4: The parable of the ten virgins*** (25:1-13) alerts us to the fact that faithful service can only be sustained by cultivating a heart connect with Jesus as our Bridegroom God. Some faithful leaders who serve with good motives work with a wrong spirit by inadvertently neglecting to maintain their intimacy with God. Jesus defined the essence of wisdom as prioritizing this. This parable highlighted that *Jesus' delay may be longer than expected*.
  5. ***Parable #5: The parable of the talents*** (25:14-30) alerts us to the fact that faithful service is sustained by cultivating the fear of God or knowing that the Lord is watching us and that there are serious consequences to our actions. Faithful service is defined as not quitting but persevering with diligence in small and hard tasks even when some of God's promises are delayed (25:21, 24). This parable highlighted that *Jesus' delay may be harder than expected*.

## II. PARABLE #4: THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS (MT. 25:1-13)

A. *The parable of the ten virgins* (25:1-13) emphasizes the need to cultivate intimacy with Jesus as our Bridegroom God and to grow in the First Commandment as we diligently serve God (24:46). Faithful service can only be sustained by cultivating a heart connect with Jesus as our Bridegroom.

B. Some faithful leaders who serve with good motives work inadvertently with a wrong spirit in neglecting to maintain their intimacy with God. Jesus directed this parable to the faithful servants in parable #2 who served diligently. What we gain in our intimacy with God can be lost (25:8).

<sup>1</sup>***“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.*** <sup>2</sup>***Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.”*** (Mt. 25:1-2)

1. ***Then:*** When is *then*? The word, *then*, points to the end-time as emphasized in 24:4-51. In the end times, the kingdom will function as virgins meeting the Bridegroom (Rev. 22:17).

<sup>17</sup>***The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come!”*** (Rev. 22:17)

2. ***Virgins:*** All believers are as virgins before God because of receiving the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17; 11:2).

<sup>2</sup>***I betrothed you to one husband...I present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*** (2 Cor. 11:2)

3. ***Lamp:*** Each of these virgins had a lamp, which spoke of a ministry that brought God’s light to others (Mt. 5:15-16; Rev. 1:20; 2:5; 11:3-6; cf. Zech. 4:2; Isa. 62:1; Jn. 5:35).

4. ***To meet the Bridegroom:*** All ten ministries had insight into Jesus as the Bridegroom God.

C. Five wise virgins acquired oil as their ministry lamps shone brightly. The *oil* speaks of the presence of the Spirit touching our heart as we spend time with God (2 Cor 1:21; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27).

<sup>2</sup>***Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*** <sup>3</sup>***Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,*** <sup>4</sup>***but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*** (Mt. 25:2-4)

1. ***Five were foolish:*** They took their lamps (ministry) but ***took no oil***. They pursued ministry as their first priority, instead of acquiring the “*oil of intimacy*” in their walk with Jesus. Here, Jesus defined foolishness as seeking to serve faithfully without the “oil of intimacy.”

2. ***Five were wise:*** The wise ministries ***took oil*** in their vessels with their lamps. They pursued acquiring oil as their first priority before seeking to expand their ministry. Their relationship with Jesus is their most important priority, or “dream,” instead of their ministry assignment.

D. To “acquire oil” is to ***connect with God’s heart***. The oil of the Spirit touches us in different ways:

1. It tenderizes our heart, enabling us to feel more of God’s desire for us.
2. It enlarges our desire for Him by seeing desire for us.
3. It illuminates our understanding by receiving greater insight into Jesus’ beauty.
4. It imparts zeal for righteousness in us, which helps us to resist and overcome sin.

E. It is presumptuous to think we can sustain diligent service without growing in the oil of intimacy. This takes time. I compare it to the need to take time to put fuel in our car instead of pushing it.

### III. THE FORERUNNER MINISTRY: A TWOFOLD CRY (MT. 25:5-7)

- A. At the midnight hour of history, forerunners will cry out with a twofold message to the nations.  
*<sup>5</sup>While the Bridegroom delayed, they all slept. <sup>6</sup>At midnight a cry was heard: “Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him.” <sup>7</sup>Then all...arose and trimmed their lamps. (Mt. 25:5-7)*
- B. **The Bridegroom is coming:** The proclamation that Jesus is coming as Bridegroom with deep desire for relationship with His people and will openly manifest His victory and judgment. Even before Jesus appears in the sky, He will “come to us” progressively in waves of revival that will intensify more and more until Jesus comes in the sky to rapture the Church.
- C. **Go out to meet Him:** We must go out to meet Him or to make the necessary effort to position ourselves in worship, obedience, prayer, the Word, and fasting to encounter Jesus.
- D. **They all slept:** Both the wise and unwise virgins sleep. Sleeping in this parable is not negative. This speaks of cultivating oil in context to the natural processes of life. In other words, we all are called to sustain intimacy with Jesus in the midst of the rigors, routine, and mundaneness of life.

### IV. JESUS EMPHASIZED THE GREAT NEED TO CULTIVATE OIL IN THE END TIMES

- A. The foolish ministries recognized their mistake in neglecting to acquire oil.  
*<sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.”  
<sup>9</sup>The wise answered, “No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.” (Mt. 25:8-9)*
- B. **Give us some of your oil:** The foolish did not understand that the wise cannot impart their spiritual preparedness to them. We must all develop our own personal history in God; it is not transferrable.
- C. **Our lamps are going out:** Many “ministry lamps” will go out, lacking the Spirit’s oil. Christian self-help and pop psychology sermons will not meet the need of the hour in that day.
- D. **The wise answered, “No”:** Faithful servants (24:46) must be able to say no to people at times. This is difficult because it involves being misunderstood and rejected by those to whom we say no. The snare for some who serve with diligence is basing their identity or deriving their sense of importance from being known as always being “available”—this sounds good, but is not realistic.
- E. **Buy for yourselves:** Jesus exhorts us to “buy oil.” That is, to engage in the God-ordained process of acquiring intimacy with God. We do not earn this, but invest ourselves in a costly way to receive it. It takes time to go deep in relationship with Jesus and to get prepared to prepare others.  
*<sup>18</sup>“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich...” (Rev. 3:18)*

## V. BEING PREPARED FOR THE NEXT WAVE OF THE SPIRIT

- A. I do not see this passage as a warning about losing one's salvation but, rather, losing one's role in the end-time "Bridegroom revival." In my view, when Jesus says, "I do not **know** you," He is referring to not "knowing" or recognizing them as ones who engaged with Him in a deep way as the Bridegroom God. Jesus did not refer to this group in the way that He spoke of others in this passage as *evil, wicked, or cursed* (24:48; 25:26, 41), nor did He say, "I *never* knew you" (7:23).

*<sup>10</sup>"While they went to buy, the **Bridegroom came** [progressive seasons of revival], and those who were **ready** went in with Him to the wedding; and the door [of opportunity for usefulness] was **shut**. <sup>11</sup>Afterward the other virgins [foolish] came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, **open to us!**' <sup>12</sup>He answered, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not **know** you.' <sup>13</sup>**Watch** therefore, for you know neither the day nor hour in which the Son of Man is coming.'" (Mt. 25:10-13)*

- B. It was customary for a Jewish family to celebrate a wedding over several nights (sometimes seven nights for a wealthy family). Those closest to the married couple were invited on the first night and subsequently on the following nights. I compare this to the Lord inviting His servants to participate in the increasing "waves" of the Spirit's activity that will eventually lead up to the fullness of the end-time revival, culminating at the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).
- C. **Those who were ready:** Only those who were ready by growing close to the Bridegroom celebrated on the first night and, thus, on the nights that followed in the wedding celebration. Earlier, Jesus called them to watch and be ready (24:44) to respond to His leadership. Jesus will use people in the end-time Bridegroom revival who are ready by having engaged with Him as the Bridegroom God.
- D. **Open to us:** The others cried out, "Open to us!"—give us a place of usefulness in end-time revival.
- E. **Watch:** Jesus exhorted us to watch or to recognize the signs of the times (24:42) and to develop intimacy with Him. The most effective way to acquire oil is by pray-reading God's Word.

## VI. PARABLE #5: THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS (MT. 25:14-30)

- A. **The parable of the talents** (25:14-30) alerts us to the fact that faithful service is sustained by cultivating the fear of God or knowing that the Lord is watching us and that there are consequences to our actions (rewards or loss of them). Faithful service is defined as not quitting but persevering with diligence in small and hard tasks even when some of God's promises are delayed (25:21, 24).
- B. The Lord holds each of His people accountable to diligently use the talents that He gave them. According to one's own ability, God gives each of us a specific assignment for our life based on the capacities that He gave us physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, etc.

*<sup>14</sup>"For the kingdom...is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and **delivered his goods** to them. <sup>15</sup>And to one he gave **five talents**, to another **two**, and to another **one**, to each **according to his own ability**...<sup>16</sup>He who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and **made another five talents**. <sup>17</sup>And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. <sup>18</sup>But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and **hid his lord's money**.'" (Mt. 25:14-17)*

C. The Lord sees and rewards His people for the “few things” in which they are faithful (25:21).

***<sup>19</sup>“After a long time the lord...settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord...I have gained five more talents...’ <sup>21</sup>His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’” (Mt. 25:19-21)***

1. ***Settled accounts:*** Each person will be evaluated according to what God entrusted to them, not according to what they do not have or what others have.

***<sup>14</sup>If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. (1 Cor. 3:14)***

2. ***Well done*** (25:21, 23): Our life vision is to hear Jesus say, “Well done,” at the end of our life.

3. ***Good and faithful servant*** (25:21, 23): Faithful emphasizes diligence in following-through in our commitments to do good in the face of pressure, difficulty, mundaneness, and temptation. The definition of being faithful includes persevering in our labors and service over the years.

4. ***Faithful over a few things*** (25:21, 23): Jesus defined the one with five talents as having few things. I believe that 99% of the Body of Christ has a small personal assignment, yet it is very important to God. We must see the dignity of the small work that God entrusts to us.

***<sup>17</sup>Well done...you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities. (Lk. 19:17)***

5. ***I will make you ruler over many things*** (25:21, 23): The saints will reign with Jesus in the age to come related to their diligence and humility in this age (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4; 22:5; cf. Mt. 19:28; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30). Our assignment in the Millennium has nothing to do with how big our impact is in this age, but our faithfulness, diligence, and humility.

6. ***Enter into the joy of your Lord*** (25:21, 23): The saints will have great joy ruling in partnership with Jesus. He rewards us with the privilege of close partnership with Him.

D. Those responding wrongly worked with the wrong evaluation of God and of their work; thus they drew back from serving with diligence.

***<sup>24</sup>“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown...<sup>25</sup>I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground...’ <sup>26</sup>But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant...’ <sup>28</sup>Take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For to everyone who has, more will be given... but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.” (Mt. 25:29)***

1. ***I knew you to be a hard man:*** He was saying that God requires too much and offers too little help and too little reward for our struggles and efforts. That the Lord is too demanding in what He requires from us, that He does not understand the difficulty of our life.

2. ***Reaping and gathering:*** The accusation is that God asks too much from us without helping us, and that He asks for more than He gives back or requires more than is reasonable. The accusation is that the Lord takes more from His servants than He invests in them.

3. ***You wicked and lazy servant:*** Jesus revealed his root problem as sinfulness and laziness.

## VII. JESUS JUDGING THE GENTILE NATIONS (MT. 25:31-46)

- A. Jesus will come back to Jerusalem in great glory and majesty as the Son of Man as promised in Daniel 7:14 (25:31-32; cf. 19:28; 24:30). This judgment will occur when Jesus returns to judge the nations and people who survived the Tribulation to determine who will enter the Millennium.
- <sup>31</sup>When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His Glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them...<sup>33</sup>He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. (Mt. 25:31-33)*
- B. Here, Jesus prophesied the gathering of all the nations to His throne in Jerusalem as seen in Joel 3. Joel 3 describes the same scene—God gathering nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat (Jerusalem).
- <sup>1</sup>In those days...when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat [Jerusalem]; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations...<sup>3</sup>They have cast lots for My people [sold in slavery]...” (Joel 3:1-3)*
- C. Joel’s prophecy of the “captives” of Judah and Jerusalem being regathered at the end of the age reveals Israel’s condition at that time as described in 25:35-36. Jesus mentioned Israel’s plight as prisoners in the end times earlier in this message in Luke 21:24 (as did the Old Testament prophets).
- <sup>35</sup>“...I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” (Mt. 25:35-36)*
- <sup>24</sup>“And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Lk. 21:24)*
- <sup>2</sup>“I will gather all the nations...half of the city shall go into captivity...” (Zech. 14:2)*
- D. People will express their relationship to Jesus by obeying Him in His sovereign plan to bless Israel. This is a significant issue in the end times—it is a litmus test of genuine faith that demonstrates obedience to Jesus. This principle is true now, but it has its ultimate application in the end times.
- <sup>34</sup>The King will say to those on His right hand, “Come...inherit the kingdom...”<sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you clothed Me...I was in prison and you came to Me.” (Mt. 25:34-36)*
- E. Jesus taught that the way they treated His brothers revealed how they viewed Him (25:37-40).
- <sup>37</sup>“The righteous will answer..., ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You...?’ <sup>40</sup>The King will answer...‘Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me’... <sup>41</sup>He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me...<sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave Me no food...’ <sup>45</sup>He will answer, ‘...inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ <sup>46</sup>These will go away into everlasting punishment...” (Mt. 25:37-46)*
- F. The major interpretive issue is to identify who His brothers are. I believe He was speaking of the unsaved Jewish survivors of the Tribulation who will come to saving faith after Jesus returns. Helping the Jewish people will be important in the Tribulation and in the transition period after it.