

Matthew Chapter 24-25 – The Olivet Discourse – Part 15
The Parables of the Olivet Discourse – Matthew 24:42-51 – Always Be Ready

Introduction

In this section of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus teaches in parables. There are three parables in this section: Parable of the Fig Tree, the Ten Virgins, and Talents. The final section in this discourse (Matthew 25:31-46) informs the disciples about the judgment of the nations after His return.

These parables are in the purview of the kingdom of heaven, which is about the literal Messianic reign and the restoration of Israel. This discourse, although spoken to the disciples, concerns the Remnant, the final generation of Jewish believers during the time of Jacob's Trouble.

In conjunction with the parables, we find three analogies: the days of Noah, like a thief, and faithful or evil slave. These analogies concern the fact that the day of the Lord and the return of Jesus Christ is going to happen at an unknown time. Therefore, always be ready.

Review

In the previous lesson, we discussed Matthew 24:36-41 and the meaning of "the days of Noah." Read Matthew 24:36-41. We found that many use this passage, coupled with human imagination, to make various unbiblical claims.

The text itself records Jesus' explanation for this comment. It has nothing to do with morality, corruption, or the Nephilim. Rather, this analogy means that, although there will be signs and proclamations, those who dwell on the Earth at that time will not recognize that they are in the day of the Lord; they will be living as if everything is normal even up to the finality of all these things, and they will not understand that the Lord is returning very soon. Then they will be overtaken by the judgment while others will be saved.

Like a Thief

Matthew 24:42-44

Therefore, be on the alert. The word *therefore* (oun) is an inferential particle that indicates that the preceding content leads to the obvious conclusion that follows.

Because nobody knows when the day of the Lord is, because very few will be looking for the signs, because life will be normal up to the final day, so be on the alert.

Be on the alert – γρηγορέω gregoreo – This word is rooted in "ἐγείρω egeiro," which means to wake up, rise, and is used in terms of the resurrection. This cognate means to stay awake, stay up, to rise, and not sit back down.

Verse 43 contains the analogy of a thief in the night. Jesus is saying that if a homeowner knew the exact time during the night that a thief was coming, then obviously he would not allow his house to be broken into. The problem is that it can happen anytime in the night. To prevent a thief from coming and robbing you, you have to be alert all night long. In the same way, no one will know the exact time of Christ's coming. Therefore, to be prepared, they will have to be perpetually alert. The command is for constant watchfulness of the times so that they recognize the events of the tribulation unfolding around them.

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Verse 44 concludes this point with a reiteration of verse 42. Therefore, you must be ready. The imperative verb here is *be*. The verb is “γίνομαι ginomai.” This verb is similar to “eimi” in that it is often transited as a “be” verb. But “ginomai” indicates a process, a performance, something that has come about. A fuller translation of this would be “you are to become....”

Ready - ἔτοιμος hetoimos. This means something prepared to serve a purpose. Matthew 24:44 is probably best translated as: “You are to become prepared.”

In conjunction with the word “gregoreo,” the aspect of being ready is to be watchful and alert concerning the signs of the day of the Lord.

The Good and Evil Slave

Matthew 24:45-51

A master is leaving on a journey. During his absence, he appoints some of his slaves to be in charge of the rest of his slaves. Those slaves who are in charge of the other slaves have the responsibility of feeding the other slaves at the proper time. When the master returns, He will judge the slaves who are put in charge.

In this analogy, we can identify the characters. The master is obviously the Lord, the Son of Man. Jesus is now leaving and there is a responsibility left for the slaves. In general, who are the slaves? The slaves are the Nation of Israel. Who are the slaves put in charge of the rest of the slaves? They are the leadership of Israel.

What is the responsibility they are given? Feeding them. Is this indicative of physical feeding? No, this is spiritual feeding – caring for and preparing those who they are in charge of. This points to the leadership of Israel.

Who is the faithful and sensible slave? An individual leader of Israel who recognizes the events of Jacob’s Trouble and proclaims the truth, the gospel of the kingdom, and prepares those who he leads for the second coming. What is his reward? He will be granted further authority in the kingdom.

Who is the evil slave? An individual leader of Israel who fails to recognize the events of the day of the Lord and therefore, misleads the people. As we have read and studied in Daniel 9, those who do not have insight are not part of the Remnant, they are in alignment with the prince who is to come, the beast. This leader will mistreat Israel and turn the Remnant over to the beast. What does he receive when Jesus returns? He will not be permitted to enter the kingdom but will be cut in pieces and assigned a place with hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

What is being taught? This is about the judgment of the leadership of the Nation Israel. The leadership is responsible for recognizing when the return of the Son of Man is near and preparing the people of Israel appropriately. The first time He came, the leadership of Israel did not fulfill this responsibility. The second time, there will be those who are of the Remnant and will lead those who have insight appropriately. Those leaders will enter the kingdom with great reward. The evil leaders will not enter the kingdom at all. They will be judged and destroyed.

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Matthew 24:51 says the Lord Jesus will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The phrase *assign him a place with the hypocrites* refers to being assigned to hell.

In Matthew, the term *hypocrites* always refers to the unbelieving Pharisees and scribes (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16, 15:1-9). Just like the time of Jesus, the hypocrite is a designation for an unbelieving Israeli leader.

The word cut him in pieces refers to the dismemberment of a condemned person. This is demonstrated regularly in Matthew as Gehenna where dead bodies are burned and not given the honor of a burial. The judgment of Hell is because they are not believers. The condemnation of not entering the Kingdom and the harshness of the death they will receive points to their evil nature as leaders in Israel.

Controversy

Personally, I think this is very easy as long as we keep it in the context of the Jews, the time of Jacob's Trouble, and the leadership of the Jews.

However, many in our ilk try to make this about the rapture and believers as they approach the time of the rapture. In their view, they think this is describing a judgment of unfaithful Christians and a particular judgment for those who do not live a life worthy of Jesus at the Bema.

We covered this prior in Chapters 8 and 13; this teaching is a horrible error. Not only is it a poor exegesis of the text, but now it places punitive damages on the believer in a glorified state.

How could a Christian retain the joy of meeting his Savior if he thinks he might be cut into pieces and cast into a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth?

How can we take a phrase such as *cut them into pieces*, which speaks to the dismemberment of a condemned person, and change it into a metaphor for Christ punishing a believer?

There is no sin or rebellion that is not paid for at the cross of Jesus. There are no punitive damages for those who are in a glorified state.

The expression *in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth* means to be assigned to a location where there is extreme suffering due to torment, but they change this to mean an experience of profound regret which a glorified saint will experience because he did not live a life that is worthy of Jesus Christ.

This type of language is only reserved for those who are lost and experience torment in hell.

Conclusion

In summary, the application of the parable of the fig tree, the days of Noah, the thief in the night, and the good and evil slave are lessons for Israel during the time of Jacob's Trouble and in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

What can we learn from this passage?