

Notes on Matthew 25

By Pastor Graham West

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

'Then,' says Pentecost, indicates the resuming of chronological events from 24:31 (The illustrative parable is parenthetical). The 'ten virgins' then are professing Jewish believers in the context of the tribulation. 5 with oil are the wise and the 5 without oil are the foolish which represent the REGENERATE AND UNREGENERATE respectively (oil being symbolic of the Holy Spirit). While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. This may imply the period of Jewish inactivity spiritually during the church age. And at midnight there was a cry made, speaks of the dramatic awakening to the nearness of Messiah's kingdom under the preaching of the 2 witnesses and the 144,000. The foolish virgins do (at some point) see their lack of oil, thus it appears that they may know they are not really saved and are in the process of seeking out how to be saved, but it will be found that they responded too late for their actions to be considered to have issued from genuine faith. Perhaps their desperate seeking is motivated only by the fact of facing what at that point will seem an inevitable collision course with the judge. Because of obvious circumstances the event will seem certain to the point it no longer requires faith to grasp it. When this point is reached it is deadly, because there can be no salvation without genuine faith. People cannot be coerced into the kingdom at the point of the Messiah's sword when he comes. This is probably what vs 10 is conveying: 'And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came;' They then sought entry but were shut out of the marriage feast, hearing those dreadful words, 'Verily I say unto you, I know you not.' They were simply NOT PREPARED for the MESSIAH'S RETURN (Ezek 20:33-44). Note also that it may be viewed as most unlikely that the church is to be seen in these ten virgins, because she is repeatedly portrayed in Scripture as the bride, and we know that—true to Jewish marriage tradition—the bridegroom surprises the virgins when already accompanied by his bride they are on the way to the marriage feast. Thus, those virgins waiting on earth cannot be the bride.

The Parable of the Talents (vv. 14-30):

It is difficult to find many features here that would clearly indicate that this parable was intended specifically for the Jews who'll live through the Great Tribulation and have their works judged by Christ prior to entrance into or exclusion from the kingdom. It is also true that the principles contained here no doubt do and probably were designed to have application to the wider community of all who claim to be servants of God. STILL, I believe the parable does speak primarily to Jews, those Jews who will live through the Great Tribulation and enter into the judgment to determine who is worthy to go into the kingdom. It speaks of the same event as the 10 virgins parable, but the focus here is on STEWARDSHIP, whereas there it was of PREPAREDNESS. There are several reasons I feel it must speak to Jews primarily:

1. Context. Jesus is still dealing with the disciples' question related to Jerusalem, Israel, and the Lord's second coming. It is evident that Jesus is still focused on this, because immediately subsequent to it He is still dealing with what happens at the Messiah's return (though THEN, and only then, he digresses to deal with the fate of the Gentile nations to bring to a close the whole subject of His return).

2. This is the position taken by both Pentecost and Walvoord and Zuck.
3. The relegation of the unprofitable servant into 'outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,' is a very Jewish phrase. It ties in very neatly with the judgment on Israel prior to entering into the kingdom, which Ezekiel speaks of in ch 20:33-44. Vs 37 says 'I will cause you to pass under the rod' (an action whereby shepherds separated out the rogues) and vs 38 says 'And I will purge out from among you the rebels.' The passage speaks of God gathering them 'out of the countries wherein' they were 'scattered with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.' He further says, 'I will bring you into the wilderness of the people and there will I plead (judge) with you face to face.' English, quoted by Pentecost on p. 284 says, 'The "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (in the parable of the talents) is the entrance into the land for the Kingdom blessing; Ezekiel 20:40-42 (vs 42: --'I shall bring you into the land of Israel'), while the fate of the unprofitable servant who was cast into outer darkness is the "they shall not enter into the land of Israel" of Ezekiel 20:37, 38.' Though I have heard no commentator say it, the thought occurs to me that very possibly Israel's experience in Rev. 12:13-17 where she is whisked away into the wilderness for the last 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation to be protected from Satan's fury, may well be preparatory to the Lord's complete angelic gathering of them for judgment. It seems as Ezekiel says it will be in the wilderness.

For these three reasons I think it is best to interpret the parable of the talents in a Jewish tribulation context.

Judgement of the Living Nations (vv. 31-46):

'When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him then shall he sit on the throne of his glory.' Clearly Jesus speaks here of the beginning and establishment of His millennial kingdom. 'Before him shall be gathered all nations.' At this point Jesus enters into judgment with the living Gentiles who have survived the Battle of Armageddon. Of course they are judged as individuals, not as nations. Jesus will separate the sheep from the goats on the basis of what their attitude and their practical help has been towards the Jewish people, who will by this stage have as a nation embraced faith in Jesus and will indeed for the past 7 years have been the source of Gospel light to the world. As the bearers of the Gospel light and hence objects of the fierce wrath of Satan and the antichrist, the whole world will be forced to polarize either for or against Israel. Of course, to side with those who preach the Gospel is to side with God and His Christ. On the other hand, to side against them is to oppose God and His Christ. Thus Jesus says, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' 'My brethren' are of course the Jews. The sheep on Jesus' right hand shall hear the words, 'Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the KINGDOM prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' The goats on his right hand shall hear those terrible words, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' This whole scenario is pictured in Joel 3:11-16.



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