

ARE YOU READY FOR HIS COMING?

Matthew 25:1-30

For generations, preachers have struck fear into the hearts of Christians by applying some of Jesus' parables to the church in the last days.

Parable of the virgins is used to warn us that if we're not ready for Jesus' coming—if our lamp isn't lit—we'll be left behind and miss out on the rapture of the church.

Parable of the talents is used to warn us that unless we are using our talents for God, we'll be condemned and miss out on the great celebration.

Some even say that unless we're ready, we'll be doomed to the wailing and gnashing of teeth in hell.

Unless we understand what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 24 and 25, we'll never understand how to apply that message to our lives today!

Two Parables on readiness—build on theme of Matt. 24

Messianic expectation was high in Israel—everyone's expecting Messiah.

Matthew's perspective:

Messiah came as promised

He demonstrates who He is

Evidence is sufficient for anyone who wants to know the truth.

Israel rejects their Messiah

He rejects them

=> **Jesus proclaims judgment against that evil generation 23**

Judgment announced in 24-25 is continuation of Matt. 23.

PREDICTION OF JUDGMENT 24-25:46

He announces what's ahead for that generation which rejected Him.

He doesn't want his followers to be unprepared for the unfolding of God's plan in the coming days.

Warning of imminent judgment 24:1-3

Disciples come out admiring the great beauty of the temple.

Jesus warns them: its gonna come tumblin' down.

TWO QUESTIONS

When will this happen?

What will be the sign of the end of the age (your coming)?

What are the signs to watch for?

Tribulation 4-26

Notable Sign of His Coming 27-30

Regathering of Israel 31

TRIBULATION 24:4-26

Begins with international upheaval, caused by politics and nature. 4-8

Just the beginning of the birth pangs!

Bad conditions intensify in 2nd half; conclude with persecution of those who proclaim Christ. 9-14

Warning to flee 15-21 Therefore, when you see this, *drop everything and RUN!*

People waiting for Christ during that time of tribulation should be alert.

When you see the appearance of an abominable thing which desolates that fulfills Daniel's prophecy, *RUN!*

Limitation of length 22 God will intervene and prevent total destruction of all people!

—But it's not going to look like it. It will seem impossible!

Appearance of false Christs 23-26

People will want His coming so badly they'll be subject to all kinds of deception. *Don't go!*

NOTABLE HEAVENLY SIGN OF CHRIST'S COMING 24:27-30

When He comes back it will be apparent to all, like lightning in the sky.

REGATHERING OF ISRAEL 24:31

He'll send angels to gather His people from wherever they have been scattered.

WHEN WILL THE END OF THE AGE—HIS COMING—OCCUR?

Two answers:

During the generation that sees all these signs fulfilled.

Lesson from the fig tree 24:32-35

When the world least expects it

Therefore, *BE READY!*

Lessons about **keeping watch** 24:36-51

Lesson from **Noah's days** 36-41

People paid no attention until judgment came and it was too late.

Lesson from **thief** 42-44

Thief robs people who aren't expecting him!

Lesson from **servant** 45-51

Servant whose master goes away for a long time will be faithful as long as he thinks his master may return any time.

He becomes careless and unfaithful when he forgets about the master, and fails to be concerned about his coming.

Jesus' followers ought to be aware of His plan and expecting His return.

What's going to happen at His return?

JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL 25:1-30

Ch. 25 continues theme of *readiness* begun in ch. 24.

When Jesus returns, He judges Israel on basis of their readiness

Two parables on readiness--predict nature of judgment:

PARABLE OF TEN VIRGINS 1-13

2nd coming depicted as wedding banquet.

Jewish concept: bridegroom comes to banquet with bride to celebrate with friends the union they've *already consummated* together.

1-5 Bridegroom's delay in coming results in lack of readiness

6-12 Invited guests who aren't ready are shut out of the banquet

MORAL: 13 Those invited to the Lord's banquet must be ready for His coming!

Frequently misunderstood because we don't ask key questions:

Who is the **Bridegroom**?

Who is **His bride**? = Church

Key focus on *Bridegroom*, but banquet demonstrates *the bride is with Him!*

What is "**the banquet**" to which virgins are invited?

Kingdom frequently depicted as a great banquet.

Who are **the virgins** waiting for the bridal party to appear?

—not the bride; she comes with Him!

Lesson based on wedding customs:

God has sent an invitation to His wedding banquet.

Those invited should prepare for His return.

Those who don't care enough to prepare (*e.g., that generation!*) are excluded.

Matt. 22:1-14, Jesus: Servants sent to call the invited guests to the banquet. They make excuses; they don't want to come!

Those who want to participate in His kingdom must prepare for it.

What's significance of "**being ready**" for the bridal party—esp. in context?

For Jewish people waiting for Messiah's coming?

They ought to prepare for the kingdom by preparing for the coming of the Bridegroom.

Israel demonstrated at 1st coming they aren't interested in Him—aren't ready for His coming.

They have 2nd opportunity at His return! *Will they be ready for His coming?*

—some will; some won't. Warning: get your lamps ready!

For us?

Specific exhortation isn't for us.

General warning to all people: *Are you concerned about preparing for the Lord's coming?*

Are you living for other things? Too busy for Him?

A day will come when He appears, it'll be too late to get ready!

We ought to be watching for our Lord's coming for His church. *We're the bride!*

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS 14-30 Describes God's judgment of His people.

Master goes on journey and entrusts resources to His servants 14-15

He is going away for a while 14

He entrusts resources according to abilities of servants 15

What's a "talent?" monetary unit = 15-20 years wages of working class people.

We apply idea to talents God gives us.

Application is legitimate in context, but it's not main idea in story.

To each one He gives a stewardship, according to their ability.

They're given different quantities.

They're responsible for what they do *with what Master gave them*.

Quantity isn't the issue!

The servants use His resources in different ways 16-18

Faithful servants use His resources for His benefit.

They care about Him and want to serve Him.

The first servant jumps right in!

He went AT ONCE and put his money to work!

He couldn't wait to take advantage of the opportunity to earn a profit for the Master!

They use what He gives them wisely—for His profit!

Foolish servants don't care about His interests.

Their main concern is self-preservation.

He plays it safe!—takes no risks—earns nothing for Master.

The Master returns to settle accounts 19-30

The Master rewards the faithful servants 19-23

They're both faithful.

Issue isn't how much they make!— It's faithfulness!

They're concerned about what pleases their Master—what benefits Him!

They'll be rewarded with greater opportunities to serve.

They're invited to join in the Master's celebration.

The Master judges the worthless servant 24-30

The servant reveals his attitude toward his Master 24-25

He sees him as hard judge and looks out for his own interests.

He's more concerned about self-preservation, than about his Master's benefit.

The servant is judged for his failure to serve his Master 26-30

His failure is identified 26-27

He is wicked, lazy, and worthless.

Unfaithful servant is *evil*, not just unfruitful.

He doesn't care about what his Master wants

He *knows* what his Master's like—knows what he wants—but does nothing about it! He doesn't care!

His failure is compensated.

His talent is taken away from him 28

His talent is given to the most faithful servant 29

The principle: those who are faithful are given more.

Most faithful receive greatest opportunities to serve.

He's excluded from the celebration 30

Judgment: thrown outside the Master's kingdom.

Consequences: weeping and gnashing of teeth.

(cp. **Matt. 8:10-12; 22:1-14 (13-14)**)

Lord uses these terms for those *outside* His kingdom.

Those who are faithful enter His kingdom.

Unfaithful are excluded from the kingdom; their part is given to others.

Isn't salvation by works.

Conduct is evidence of what's in their hearts.

They're excluded from kingdom because their hearts aren't interested in serving the King!

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE SAY TO US? At least 2 areas where incidents speak to us.

1) Parables concerning readiness—

Importance of being ready

Importance of not seeing world events through the eyes of the world.

Observe what God is doing and be prepared to be involved in it.

People of Noah's day, like victims of the thief, pay no attention to God and what He wants them to see.
 Servant forgot about the master and his coming.

Virgins were **too busy seeing to other things; they weren't ready** for His coming!

What priorities are WE pursuing?

We should be alert to what God is doing in the world and cooperate in it.

2) **Parable of the talents**

About Israel and *their* preparation for kingdom. *What can it teach us?*

We've received stewardship from God also.

Master determines how to distribute His resources—to whom He will entrust them.

We should be faithful in our use of it—use it for His benefit—not our own (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

We're responsible for how we use what He places in our hands until He comes again.