

Jesus Explains Discipleship Using Parables

Matthew 25

Group ¹	C	V	Description
Parable of Ten Virgins	25	1-13	Jesus teaches the Parable of the Ten Virgins: Preparedness in anticipation of Christ's second coming
Parable of the Talents		14-18	Jesus teaches the Parable of the Talents
		19-21	Servant who received 5 talents gained 5 more, pleasing the master
		22-23	Servant who received 2 talents gained 2 more, pleasing the master
		24-25	Servant who received 1 talent hid his talent in fear, disappointing the master
		26-28	The master's judgments concerning his lack of action
		29-30	Wise stewardship will be rewarded
The Judgment		31-33	The Judgment: Sheep and Goats
		34-40	Sheep: those who show compassion to those in greatest need resulting in salvation
		41-46	Goats: those who don't show compassion resulting in condemnation
Themes in the Chapter ²		Love, Prophecy, Salvation, Sin	

Reflections

Jesus had just been teaching about always being prepared no matter what you are doing and now He teaches about what this preparedness should look like through a series of parables: the ten virgins, the talents, and the separation of the sheep and the goats. One thing to keep in mind is this word of caution from Arnot³ regarding looking for meaning in the parables: "It is cruel to put the parable to the torture and compel it to give meanings which it never received from its Author."

Questions

1. What does Jesus say the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to? V1-2
2. What made five prudent and five foolish? V3-4
3. What time frame is given to describe this period of waiting? V5-6
4. What will happen at the time of the announcement? V7
5. How will the foolish respond to their lack of preparedness? V8-12
6. What warning does Jesus repeat? V13 cf. Matthew 24:42
7. How does Jesus describe the kingdom of heaven next? V14-15
8. How did the three servants mentioned respond? V16-18

¹ (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

² (Full Color Bible) Theme suggestions without references to allow the reader to discover them in their reading.

³ (Lockyer 239, quoting Wm. Arnot, "The Parables of the Lord")

Jesus Explains Discipleship Using Parables

9. What happens then when the master returns and how did the master respond to each servants report? V19-30
10. How does Jesus then show how these parables apply to Himself and His disciples? V31-46
11. How does Jesus describe the management of the allotment given to all disciples? V35-45

Conclusion

Watch! We are to live in anticipation of what is to come and will happen. This is not a defensive attitude but one of anticipation, not fearful but with much joy, for we have a reason to celebrate. Our Master is and will come again. I pray that you will hear these words of Jesus.

Mathew 25:21 NASB "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

Matthew 25:34 NASB "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

Come quickly Lord Jesus!

There and Then: Here and Now

Answer the questions below as you reflect on your own life and this part of our study⁴: *my LOG vs others SPECK. Here are some possible responses I've identified from the text that might apply to anyone.*

S - Are there *sins* for me to avoid or confess?

•

P - Are there *promises* from God for me to claim?

•

E - Are there *examples* for me to follow or avoid?

•

C - Are there *commands* for me to obey?

•

K - How has this passage increased my *knowledge* about God / Jesus / Holy Spirit?

•

⁴ *Navigator Bible Study Handbook* (The Navigators), with additions & Matthew 7:1-5.

Response to Questions

1. The kingdom of heaven will be compared to ten virgins who were preparing for the arrival of the bridegroom: five were foolish and five were prudent. The IVP Bible Background Commentary⁵ notes that “Weddings were held toward evening and torches were used as part of the celebration, which focused on a procession leading the bride to the groom’s house. ... In many traditional Palestinian villages in more recent times, the wedding feast occurs at night after a day of dancing; the bridesmaids leave the bride, with whom they have been staying, and go out to meet the bridegroom with torches. They then escort him back to his bride, whom they all in turn escort to the groom’s home.”

Barnes⁶ adds the following: “Marriage “ceremonies” in the East were conducted with great pomp and solemnity. The ceremony of marriage was performed commonly in the open air, on the banks of a stream. Both the bridegroom and bride were attended by friends. They were escorted in a palanquin, carried by four or more persons. After the ceremony of marriage succeeded a feast of seven days if the bride was a virgin, or three days if she was a widow. This feast was celebrated in her father’s house. At the end of that time the bridegroom conducted the bride with great pomp and splendor to his own home.”

Ice⁷ also adds this, “The symbolism is taken from Eastern marriage customs. The official “engagement” (see note on [Matthew 22:2](#)) was an agreement to marry. When the time came for the Wedding feast, the bridegroom came to the bride’s house and took her during the night to his own house. The bridesmaids waited at the bride’s house, and escorted the group to the marriage feast. Thus the oil lamps, since it would be at night.”

Henry⁸ offers this, “That by which it is illustrated, is, a marriage solemnity. It was a custom sometimes used among the Jews on that occasion, that the bridegroom came, attended with his friends, late in the night, to the house of the bride, where she expected him, attended with her bride-maids; who, upon notice given of the bridegrooms’ approach, were to go out with lamps in their hands, to light him into the house with ceremony and formality, in order to the celebrating of the nuptials with great mirth. And some think that on these occasions they had usually *ten virgins*; for the Jews never held a synagogue, circumcised, kept the passover, or contracted marriage, but ten persons at least were present. Boaz, when he married Ruth, had *ten witnesses*, [Ruth 4:2](#).”

There is a great deal of symbolism in this parable and much has been written on it through the years which I won’t go into here. If you would like to read what some have written on this passage you can find some commentaries and notes on [biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com/matthew/25.html)⁹. Click on the link or search for Matthew 25 and scroll to the bottom of the page to see the reference works.

Finally, we need to point out that the parable at the end of chapter 24 and the first two parables in this chapter show Jesus, as master, bridegroom, and King, being absent at the present and coming to conclude His matters with those who would follow Him in faith. Lockyer¹⁰ describes them like this, “All three parables speak of an absent Lord, but in each case He returns to deal aright with those who, during His absence, were left with certain

5 (Walton et al. on Matthew 25:1)

6 (Barnes on Matthew 25:1)

7 (Ice on Matthew 25:1)

8 (Henry on Matthew 25:1)

9 (“Biblestudytools.com” url: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/matthew/25.html>)

10 (Lockyer 237-251)

Jesus Explains Discipleship Using Parables

responsibilities. In the first parable we have *communal* responsibility. In the second, the responsibility of our *individual* life. In the third, our responsibility in relation to our *imperial* matters, or trading for Him during His absence.” In each of the parables, the focus is on what the individuals do and how they live and the need to be ever mindful of their master’s, bridegroom’s, or King’s potential imminent arrival. This is applied to all those who would seek to be one of Jesus’ disciples. We are given communal, individual, and imperial tasks by Jesus we are to be doing daily until His return.

2. Five were called prudent and five were called foolish because of their preparedness or lack thereof. The five prudent ones had sufficient oil for their waiting and the procession that would take place. The five foolish did not have sufficient supply for both. So they were in a position of jeopardy by not having planned ahead for the anticipation and the arrival of the bridegroom.
3. The time of waiting appears to be longer than expected. This results in some of those who are expecting him to become drowsy and fall asleep. At which point they are jolted awake with the announcement of His arrival.
4. All those waiting will start preparing for the arrival and the procession and celebration to follow.
5. They will ask for help from those who were more prepared. They then went to buy oil and were passed by and unable to join in the celebration. Wiersbe¹¹ offers this comment, “The church has known for 2,000 years that Jesus is coming again, and yet many believers have become lethargic and drowsy. They are no longer excited about the soon-coming of the Lord. As a result, there is little effective witness given that the Lord is returning. ... When the bridegroom and bride appeared, half of the bridesmaids were unable to light their lamps because they had no oil. ... The bridesmaids who had oil were able to light their lamps and keep them shining bright. This suggests that not every professing Christian will enter heaven, for some really have not trusted Jesus Christ sincerely. Without the Spirit of God and the Word of God, there can be no true salvation.”
6. Watch! To be specific: “to *keep awake*, that is, *watch* (literally or figuratively): - be vigilant, wake, (be) watch (-ful).”¹² Thayer¹³ adds this, “to take heed lest through remission and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one.” CWSD¹⁴ summarizes this condition as the following: “Watchfulness or watching indicates that the Christian is alert or vigilant in order to defend himself against a spiritual foe. He is properly prepared for any surprise or sudden change in his circumstances, and above all, in order that his fellowship with God in prayer may be undistracted and efficacious.” Why? Because Christ’s return is imminent and could happen at any moment.
7. Jesus described the kingdom of heaven like a man about to go on a journey and gives instructions and authority to his servants to conduct business in his stead. The man recognizes that each one had different abilities and so gave to each what they would be able to effectively use and manage. Upon doing so, he took his leave.

Of course, we have the benefit of hindsight and know that this is exactly what Jesus did and is still doing with His disciples. He gave His direct disciples certain rights and responsibilities to conduct the affairs of His kingdom until His return at a yet future date and time, which only

11 (Wiersbe 91-92)

12 (Strong on G1127: γρηγορεύω; grēgoreuō; gray-gor-yoo’-o)

13 (Thayer on G1127)

14 (Zhodiates, Baker, and Carpenter on G1127)

Jesus Explains Discipleship Using Parables

the Father knows (see Matthew 24:36). These rights and responsibilities are passed on to each succeeding generation of believers with the urgent need to be watchful.

8. The first two, the one who received 5 talents and the one who received 2 talents, began managing their allotment and each doubled the amount given them. The third responded in fear not wanting to lose it and hid his allotment. We need to ask ourselves, what have we done with the things God has entrusted to us? I must caution, this parable is not solely about money, although good stewardship of financial things is important to the Christian. We have been given the most precious gift of proclaiming the good news of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection and the salvation to all who respond in faith and remain faithful until the end of our life on earth or His return.
9. Upon his return, the master asks for an accounting from his servants of how they managed the allotment given to them. As each gave their report, the master then determined what further allotment would be given to each.
 - The 5 talent servant reported that he doubled his allotment and was blessed by his master.
 - The 2 talent servant reports that he too doubled his allotment and was blessed as well.
 - The 1 talent servant reported that he hid his talent in fear and was dismissed to a life of torment and unending grief and what was given to him was taken away from him and given to the one who had the ten talents.
10. Just like the master and servants of 24:45-51, the 5 prudent and 5 foolish bridesmaids of 25:1-13, and the master and his servants of 25:14-30, Jesus is going to leave and bestow allotments upon His servants which they are to actively manage in such a way to bring glory to their master by their actions. When He returns they are to give an account of the actions and the result of their faithfulness, or unfaithfulness, which will result in either great celebration or torment. Thus the need for watchfulness at all times and for preparation for whatever comes our way to bring the best possible result for our Master upon His return.
11. What allotment is given to Jesus' disciples. It is not monetary, although that might certainly be part of it. Instead, it is the treatment of others, in particular those in the greatest need: hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, ill, and in prison. As I mentioned earlier, there is a monetary aspect to this in that there are costs to providing for the needs of other but there is also the condition of our heart and the sincerity of our faith that must accompany our actions.

Key Words: New Testament, Gospels, Matthew, Jesus, Parables, Ten Virgins, Talents, Sheep & Goats, Judgments, Love, Compassion



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