

A Journey with Christ the Messiah

The Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats

Matthew 25:31-46

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing a series that I have entitled *A Journey with Christ the Messiah*. In the last several weeks we have embarked on a journey through both the Old and the New Testaments with the purpose of discovering Christ the Messiah that is written there. We have looked at Old Testament prophecies and saw Jesus fulfilling all of the Messianic prophecies concerning Him. We have looked at His birth, His miracles, and His seven "I AM" proclamations. We have examined His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead and the significance of those events. Recently we have reviewed His teaching especially in parables.

This morning we are going to continue in the 25th chapter of Matthew. Chapter 25 starts with two of Jesus' parables. The first concerning the ten virgins. Ten were wise. They were prepared for the bridegroom's arrival by having oil with them for their lamps. Ten were foolish. They did not bring oil for their lamps. When it was announced that the bridegroom had arrived, they were caught unprepared and had to scramble to find oil.

The second parable was the parable of the talents. A master was preparing to leave on a long journey. He left the responsibility of maintaining his estate with three of his servants based upon their ability. One was given five talents (a very large sum of money). While the master was gone he diligently worked and earned five more talents which pleased his master. The second servant was given two talents. While the master was gone, he diligently worked and earned two more talents which pleased his master. The third was given only one talent. He was lazy and decided to bury his talent in the ground. When the master returned he was very disappointed with the lazy servant because he was lazy and had not worked for his master.

The theme of both of these parables was that we must be watchful for the master's return, work diligently while he is gone, and be prepared for his return.

The five foolish virgins were not prepared for the bridegroom's return. Although they **professed** to be a Christian, they did not **possess** oil for their lamps. The fact that they were virgins suggested that they were good moral people but they had not prepared for the bridegroom's arrival.

In the parable of the talents, the emphasis was also on awareness and preparedness but that **preparedness** is demonstrated by **working**. In the parable of the virgins that **preparedness** was demonstrated by the acquisition of oil in their lamps through **genuine saving faith**. Here, in the parable of the talents, the servant's preparedness for the return of the Lord was demonstrated by fruits of that genuine saving faith by their working. We

must diligently work for the master while he is away so that we will be prepared to meet him when he returns.

Now Jesus is going to follow both of these parables with a description of his second coming. The second coming was represented by the bridegroom in the parable of the virgins and by the master in the parable of the talents. Instead of wise and foolish virgins and faithful and unfaithful servants, Jesus is going to refer to the saved and the lost as sheep and goats. Then He is going to spell out exactly how the sheep and goats will be identified as well as the final destination of each.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Matthew 25:31-46 (NASB)

³¹ “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

³⁴ “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. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? ³⁸ And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.’

⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

As we prepare to continue this journey, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

Let's continue the journey!

BODY:

I. THE CERTAINTLY OF HIS COMING.

The Bible promises over and over the certainty of the return of Jesus Christ.

Jesus himself said,

John 14:2-3 (NASB)

² In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I **will** come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

Christ's return will be personal to the faithful. He says that when He comes again, He will receive **YOU** unto Himself.

We do not know when Christ will return, but we do know that everyone will know that He has arrived. It will not be a secret return, it will be accompanied with the sound of trumpets and everyone will see Him.

It will also be unexpected and sudden. The scriptures tell us that He will come as a thief in the night when no one suspects His coming.

The return of Christ will be terrifying for the unsaved. But it is going to be **glorious** for the people of God! It's going to be glorious because when He returns we'll get to shed these old corruptible bodies for glorious ones!

Paul described it this way.

1 Corinthians 15:51-57 (NASB)

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep (die), but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. ⁵⁵ O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Christians we no longer fear death. We know that when we die we will finally be free from the sin that surrounds us and we can be in the presence of the Lord with a new eternal body that is free of pain, thirst, and hunger!

I can't wait for the day when our Lord Jesus Christ parts the sky with the sound of a trumpet in power and great glory! I can't wait to see His face shining in the brightness of His glory!

As the song goes:

“What a day that will be, when my Jesus I shall see!
When I look upon His face, the One who saved me by His grace,
When He takes me by the hand, and leads me through the Promised Land,
What a day, glorious day, that will be!

II. IDENTIFYING THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS.

We have seen in the first two parables that we must have the Holy Spirit in our lives and that we must diligently work for Christ while we are on this earth or until He returns.

Based upon how faithful we are with the talents that we have given will determine if we are a sheep or a goat.

The scriptures tell us that if we do not have the Holy Spirit indwelling in us we are lost.

Romans 8:5-10 (NASB)

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Then listen to this carefully! ⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, **if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you**. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ¹⁰ If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

So how do we receive the Holy Spirit in our lives? It comes to us when we turn our lives over to Christ. When we are born again.

Acts 2:38 (NASB)

³⁸ Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Not only must we have the Holy Spirit within us, we also know that we must bear fruit in order to be found faithful.

I believe that many Christians are confused on what being fruitful for the Lord entails. We tend to think that that fruitfulness means that we must be going door to door witnessing to people and winning them to Christ. That our fruitfulness will be determined upon how many people are baptized because of you.

Thus when we read scriptures like John 15 we worry that we are not fruitful enough.

John 15:1-8 (NASB)

¹⁵ "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

You may think of yourself. "Well I don't have it. I don't have the personality. I don't have the talents. I don't have the skills. I don't have the knowledge or understanding. I don't have the discipline. I don't have, I don't have, I don't have!

Here John 15 says Abide in Him and you will! It is not a matter of YOU. It is a matter of abiding in Him. Abide in Him and He will produce fruit in you. And by that the Father is glorified.

Jesus tells us in our scripture this morning how to be fruitful.

Matthew 25:35-36 (NASB)

³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

You see, if we just practise the first two commands it will cause us to bear fruit:

Matthew 22:36-40 (NASB)

³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'" ³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'" ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

When we love God and our fellow man, we will exhibit the fruits of the Spirit within us. These characteristics are the result of fruitfulness in our lives.

Galatians 5:22-24 (NASB)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

People see us exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit in our lives and see God. By this God is glorified and pleased with us. It is not how much talent one has, but how one uses that which has been given to you that is important to God.

Our salvation is not a salvation by works, but a salvation that works because of our love to God and man and our thankfulness to Christ for saving us. It is only through Christ that we receive our salvation. The work that we do as Christians is in response to our love for the Lord and for what He has done for us. When you call Christ your Lord, you are claiming to be His servant. So serve Him!

Those who have the Spirit dwelling within them and are diligently bearing fruit for Him will be among the sheep. Those who are unfaithful and refuse to be prepared will unfortunately be among the goats.

III. THE FINAL DESTINATION OF THE FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL.

Notice how the master responded to the servants who increased the talents given to them.

Matthew 25:23 (NASB)

²³ 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.'

They were judged on their faithfulness. The servant with two talents received the same praise as the servant with five because each **faithfully** worked with the talents that had been given them.

The master says three things to reward each of the first two servants that all of us want to hear when we face Him on Judgment Day.

- 1) "Well done, good and faithful servant."
- 2) Since they have proven themselves to be faithful the master says "You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things."
- 3) Then they are invited to "enter into the joy of your master," which would seem to be the salvation of lost sinners.

The main characteristic of the third servant that differentiates him from the first two was, in a word, **lazy**, and thus useless. Instead of being diligent and hardworking, he does not "go to work" with his master's money, over a lengthy period of time, and thus make a profit. He does not diligently work for his master and thus is useless.

Jesus said that those who are unfaithful will be the goats that are separated from the sheep. And then He said:

Matthew 25:46 (NASB)

⁴⁶ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

CONCLUSION:

ILLUSTRATION:

A small country church was holding a revival in a packed building. It was so crowded that they had to put up chairs everywhere, right up to the pulpit. The evangelist was preaching about the second coming of Christ and was getting very heated up on the subject. He was one of those fire and brimstone kind of preachers that marched back and forth behind the pulpit. At one point of his sermon he leaned over toward the audience and shouted out Jesus' promise: "**I am coming soon!**"

He marched back and forth on the stage some more and then leaned out again over the edge of the stage and cried out, **Jesus says "I am coming soon!"**

Several minutes went by and again he shouted out, "**I am coming soon!**" But this time, he got tangled up in the microphone cord and lost his balance. Tumbling off the stage, he landed right on the lap of a couple sitting in the front row of chairs. The preacher got up and apologized to the couple, but the man replied: "**Oh, that's ok, you warned us three times!**"

Jesus IS coming again! The question that each of you must answer for yourself is this: Will it be a **glorious event** or will it be a **terrifying event** for you?

Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ? Have you obeyed Christ's command to repent of your sins and be baptized for the remission of those sins? Do you have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within you? Are you remaining faithful and bearing fruit? Jesus IS coming again. You must be ready for His return!

He is Lord!