

General Comments on Matthew 25

As noted in the comments on ch. 24, any division between that chapter and this one is artificial. The primary subject of this chapter starts in 24:32 with the parable of the fig tree. From that point on Jesus changes turns his focus away from the events and towards the necessity of being ready for judgement at any time. In ch. 24 Jesus gives the parable of the fig tree (cf. 24:32-36, the Day of the Lord is likened to the time of Noah (cf. 24:37-41) and a thief in the night (cf. 24:43-44), and then gives another parable of a faithful and an evil servant (cf. 24:45-51). The central thesis being given in 24:42.

Ch. 25 continues the same theme with the parable of the ten virgins (v. 1-13) and the parable of the talents (v. 14-30). Jesus then ends the discourse with the presentation of a universal Judgement (v. 31-46).

The two parables presented in this chapter serve to parallel one another in that the first parable presents the ten virgins as waiting for the lord, and the second parable presents the servants as working for the lord. The first represents the heart and mind of the disciple, and the second represents the hands of the disciple. These two parables are then connected to the Judgement theme which follows them. Those wise virgins who are good and faithful servants are the sheep whom the Lord keeps, and those foolish virgins and slothful servants are the goats whom the Lord rejects.

All of this material is unique to Matthew's account, being absent from the other Synoptic Gospels.

Comments on Matthew 25

1 THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five [were] foolish. 3 They that [were] foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, [Not so]; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door

was shut. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

v1-13 Jesus gives a parable which discusses the spiritual quality of those who will be accepted into the Kingdom of Heaven. There are ten young women waiting for the bridegroom (v. 1). Some of them wisely took extra oil with them, but some of them only took what was in their lamps (v. 2-4) assuming the bridegroom would come quickly.

The bridegroom was later than expected, so everyone fell asleep (v. 5). At midnight they are awoken when someone tells them the bridegroom is finally coming (v. 6) so they all get up and prepare their lamps so they will have light (v. 7). The foolish ones see they have run out of oil and ask the wise ones for some of theirs (v. 8), but the wise ones defer saying they don't have enough for all of them. The foolish ones will have to go and get their own (v. 9).

As the foolish go and try to buy some oil at that late hour, the bridegroom comes and the wise young women go into the wedding feast with him (v. 10). Some time afterwards the foolish ones come and ask to enter (v. 11), but the bridegroom is offended by their actions and denies them (v. 12).

Thus is the Day of the Lord, we must be ready whenever it comes (v. 13).

v1 "ten virgins", John Lightfoot (1602-1675) in A Commentary of the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica states:

The nation of the Jews delighted mightily in the number ten, both in sacred and civil matters: A synagogue consisted not but of ten at the least: which we have observed before, when we spoke about synagogues. This also was current among them, An order or ring of men consisted not but of ten at the least. The text is speaking of a company to comfort mourners: which the Gloss thus describes, "When the company was returned from burying a dead body, they set themselves in order about the mourners, and comforted them: but now such an order or ring consisted of ten at the least." To this commonly received number there seems to be an alluding in this place: not but that they very frequently exceeded that number of virgins in weddings of greater note, but rarely came short of it.

Thus, the number 10 was the common minimum for an social gathering of the contemporary Jews. That Jesus divided them half

wise and half foolish was probably intended simply to indicate there are two groups.

v2 "five wise...five foolish", Lightfoot quotes a similar Rabbinical parable which sheds some light on this one:

A parable, not unlike this, is produced by Kimchi:
"Rabban Jochanan Ben Zaccai saith (as he hath it), This thing is like a king, who invited his servants, but did not appoint them any set time. Those of them that were wise adorned themselves, and sat at the gate of the palace; those that were foolish were about their own business. The king on a sudden called for his servants: those went in adorned; these, undressed. The king was pleased with the wise, and angry at the foolish."

What separates the wise from the foolish is whether upon the notice of the king the servants prepare themselves and wait, or if they pursue their own interests in the mean time.

Note the ten virgins are not "good and evil", but are "wise and foolish". The good can still be foolish, and are warned to be both good and wise.

v4 The oil represents the Holy Spirit, cf. Exod. 30:23-25, Ps. 45:7, Hebr. 1:9, Zech. 4:1-14, 1 Sam. 16:13.

That the foolish only took the oil that was in their lamps and the wise took extra oil with reflects their expectations. The foolish ones assumed the bridegroom would come quickly, while the wise ones prepared for his arrival whenever it might be.

This is the core thesis of the parable. The apostles asked Jesus in 24:3 when the Day of the Lord would come. He does not tell them when it is, only to always be ready. If our expectation is the Lord will come quickly, then we will run out of oil before He fulfills our expectations, and we will be left spiritually in the dark, and ultimately rejected at Judgement.

That the wise young women cannot share their oil of the Holy Spirit only makes sense, as a person cannot share their inward spirituality with another as they can some physical object such as literal oil.

v5 It was the expectation of the ancient Jews that the Messiah would come imminently, it was the expectation of the ancient Christians that Jesus would return imminently, and the early LDS Church leaders thought it was imminent as well. Since then, the Lord has tarried, and they have all fallen asleep. We now see the Second Coming as imminent. A fair number of us will pass on to the other side, or "fall asleep", before the Day of the Lord as well. But, will be judged.

v12 The IV changes "I know you not" to "Ye know me not". The IV places the burden of knowing not upon the bridegroom but upon the young woman. The Semitic idea of knowing is that of knowledge of experience, not intellectual knowledge. The foolish young women did not know the bridegroom well enough to know what his plans or expectations were. As such, they do not know him well, and are rejected of him when they offend him by the discourtesy of not being ready and coming late.

14 For [the kingdom of heaven is] as a man travelling into a far country, [who] called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made [them] other five talents. 17 And likewise he that [had received] two, he also gained other two. 18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, [thou] good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, [there] thou hast [that is] thine. 26 His lord answered and said unto him, [Thou] wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and [then] at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give [it] unto him which hath ten talents.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

v14-30 The master of a household is going to be gone for a long

time, so he puts his servants in charge of his household in his absences. He gives them charge according to their abilities and leaves (v. 14-15).

The servant who has five talents works and earns five more (v. 16). The servant with two talents works and earns two more (v. 17). The servant with one talent hides it (v. 18).

The master returns from his journey and the two diligent servants present their gain. He rewards them by making them rulers over his household (v. 19-23).

The servant with the one talent presents the one talent to the master and then says it was his fear of the master's harshness and austerity which prevented him from profiting any (v. 24-25). The master recognizes this servant's laziness and judges him with the words out of his own mouth. The master gives his portion to the one who earned most, and then casts him off his estate where he bitterly weeps over his condition (v. 26-30).

This parable is similar to the parable of the pounds, cf. Luke 19:11-27.

v24-25 The lazy servant accuses the master of being harsh and merciless. This accusation comes immediately after the master has just rewarded the two hard-working servants with lordship over his estate. Clearly, the accusation is inaccurate and unjust. The servant is lazy and looks to excuse himself from his laziness by blaming others around him.

v24 The IV changes "strawed" to "scattered", making it more plain what is meant. Fields that are planted have seed scattered on them after they were plowed.

v25 The IV indicates the lazy servant expects the same treatment as the other diligent servants received. He believes his returning what was given him is good enough so he wants the master to take it from him just as he took the increase from the other servants. The lazy servant's expectation is he did not lose or squander the talent, so he has done well, even though he has not increased it at all.

v26 The master does not deny the accusation verbally, but his actions in the previous verse indicate the accusation is patently false. Rather, the master uses the accusation to judge the lazy servant. If the servant knew beforehand that the master was really as harsh as he says, then he should have at least put the money to lenders so he could have safely gained some interest on it. But, the lazy servant didn't even do that, so the master has shown the accusation is false by the lazy servant's own inaction.

v27 The IV makes explicit what is otherwise implicit, by adding "Having known this..." to the beginning of the verse. If the servant really believed the master was like this, then he would have acted accordingly. But, he didn't, so it is just an idle accusation.

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed [thee]? or thirsty, and gave [thee] drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took [thee] in? or naked, and clothed [thee]? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of the least of these, ye did [it] not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

v31-46 Drawing on the substance of the preceding parables, Jesus now makes a plain statement regarding Judgement. On the Day of the Lord He will return with the power of Heaven (v. 31) and separate out (v. 32) the righteous from the wicked (v. 33). The righteous will inherit the kingdom of God (v. 34) because of the good works they did in helping those in need (v. 35-40). The wicked are cast out with the adversary to suffer (v. 41) because of their selfishness and unwillingness to help others (v. 42-45). The wicked suffer eternally, while the righteous obtain eternal

life (v. 46).

This statement lifts Judgement out of the context of the perception that the Day of the Lord is imminent and we will be judged based on how we are doing then.

The judgement the Lord passes on the Day of the Lord will be based upon how the people lived their lives and treated one another, not upon how they are acting at the moment of the Day of the Lord.

If people know when the Day of the Lord is, then they will prepare and be ready for it when it comes, but sin up until then. This is precisely what Jesus doesn't want. He wants people to live their lives in a godly fashion the whole time, and not look to some day or hour where they have to repent. Thus, the message here that people will be judged according to what they did their whole lives.

v31 "all the holy angles with him", cp. Deut. 33:2, Dan. 7:9, Jude 1:14, Hebr. 1:6, 1 Peter 3:22.

v33 "right hand", the right hand is the favored hand in Eastern thinking, cf. 1 Ki. 2:19, Ps. 110:1.

v34-35 Note the test at Judgement is how Christlike the disciple's walk is. There is no requirement for knowledge of doctrine, no requirement for professions of faith, or acceptance of creedal statements. The requirement is to love your neighbor in deed and not in word.

v34 The IV inserts a verse preceding this one indicating the twelve apostles will be accompanying him as he judges that nations. The intent is probably to evoke the subject discussed in 1 Ne. 12:9, Mormon 3:19, and D&C 29:12.

v35 "the King", Jesus makes it clear to them that he will not be considered king of the Jews until the Day of the Lord. All of the messianic hopes of the contemporary Jews of Jesus overthrowing the Romans are vain.

Note this statement by Jesus that he would be the heavenly King comes on the eve of his mortal humiliation. This mortal humiliation is precisely what will make him the heavenly King.

Matthew 25 Parallel of KJV & IV Translations

KJV

1 THEN shall
the kingdom of heaven
be likened unto ten virgins,
which took their lamps, and
went forth to meet the bridegroom.
2 And five of them were wise, and
five [were] foolish.
3 They that [were] foolish
took their lamps, and
took no oil with them:
4 But the wise
took oil in their vessels
with their lamps.
5 While the bridegroom tarried,
they all slumbered and slept.
6 And at midnight
there was a cry made,
Behold, the bridegroom cometh;
go ye out to meet him.
7 Then all those virgins arose, and
trimmed their lamps.
8 And the foolish
said unto the wise,
Give us of your oil;
for our lamps are gone out.
9 But the wise answered, saying,
[Not so]; lest there be not enough
for us and you:
but go ye rather to them that sell,
and buy for yourselves.
10 And while they went to buy,
the bridegroom came; and
they that were ready
went in with him to the marriage:
and the door was shut.
11 Afterward came also
the other virgins, saying,
Lord, Lord, open to us.
12 But he answered and said,
Verily I say unto you,
I know you not.
13 Watch therefore,
for ye know neither the day
nor the hour
wherein the Son of man cometh.

14 For [the kingdom of heaven is]
as a man travelling
into a far country,
[who] called his own servants, and
delivered unto them his goods.

IV

1 And then, at that day,
before the Son of Man comes,
the kingdom of heaven
shall be likened unto ten virgins,
who took their lamps, and
went forth to meet the bridegroom.
2 And five of them were wise, and
five of them were foolish.
3 They that were foolish
took their lamps and
took no oil with them;
but the wise
took oil in their vessels
with their lamps.
4 While the bridegroom tarried,
they all slumbered and slept.
5 And at midnight
there was a cry made,
Behold, the bridegroom cometh;
go ye out to meet him.
6 Then all those virgins arose,
and trimmed their lamps.
7 And the foolish
said unto the wise,
Give us of your oil;
for our lamps are gone out.
8 But the wise answered, saying,
Lest there be not enough
for us and you,
go ye rather to them that sell,
and buy for yourselves.
9 And while they went to buy,
the bridegroom came; and
they that were ready
went in with him to the marriage;
and the door was shut.
10 Afterward came also
the other virgins, saying,
Lord, Lord, open unto us.
11 But he answered and said,
Verily I say unto you,
Ye know me not.
12 Watch therefore;
for ye know neither the
day nor the hour
wherein the Son of Man cometh.
13 Now I will liken these things
unto a parable.
14 For it is like
as a man travelling
into a far country,
who called his own servants, and
delivered unto them his goods.

15 And unto one
he gave five talents,
to another two, and
to another one;
to every man
according to his several ability;
and straightway took his journey.
16 Then he that had received
the five talents
went and traded with the same, and
made [them] other five talents.
17 And likewise he
that [had received] two,
he also gained other two.
18 But he that had received one
went and digged in the earth, and
hid his lord's money.
19 After a long time
the lord of those servants cometh,
and reckoneth with them.
20 And so he that had received
five talents came and brought
other five talents, saying,
Lord, thou deliveredst unto me
five talents:
behold, I have gained
beside them five talents more.
21 His lord said unto him,
Well done,
[thou] good and faithful servant:
thou hast been faithful
over a few things,
I will make thee ruler
over many things:
enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
22 He also that had received
two talents came and said,
Lord, thou deliveredst unto me
two talents:
behold, I have gained
two other talents beside them.
23 His lord said unto him,
Well done,
good and faithful servant;
thou hast been faithful
over a few things,
I will make thee ruler
over many things:
enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
24 Then he which had received
the one talent came and said,
Lord, I knew thee
that thou art an hard man,
reaping where
thou hast not sown, and
gathering where
thou hast not strawed:

15 And unto one
he gave five talents,
to another two, and
to another one;
to every man
according to his several ability;
and straightway went on his journey.
16 Then he that had received
the five talents,
went and traded with the same;
and gained other five talents.
17 And likewise he
who received two talents,
he also gained other two.
18 But he who had received one,
went and digged in the earth and
hid his lord's money.
19 After a long time
the lord of those servants cometh,
and reckoneth with them.
20 And so he that had received
the five talents came, and brought
other five talents, saying,
Lord, thou deliveredst unto me
five talents;
behold, I have gained
besides them, five talents more.
21 His lord said unto him,
Well done,
good and faithful servant;
thou hast been faithful
over a few things,
I will make thee ruler
over many things;
enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
22 He also that had received
two talents came and said,
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23 His lord said unto him,
Well done,
good and faithful servant;
thou hast been faithful
over a few things,
I will make thee ruler
over many things;
enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
24 Then he who had received
the one talent came, and said,
Lord, I knew thee
that thou art a hard man,
reaping where
thou hast not sown, and
gathering where
thou hast not scattered.

25 And I was afraid, and
went and hid thy talent
in the earth: lo,

[there] thou hast

[that is] thine.

26 His lord answered and
said unto him,
[Thou] wicked and slothful servant,
thou knewest that I
reap where I sowed not, and
gather where I have not strawed:

27 Thou oughtest therefore
to have put my money
to the exchangers, and [then]
at my coming
I should have received
mine own with usury.

28 Take therefore
the talent from him, and
give [it] unto him
which hath ten talents.

29 For unto every one
that hath
shall be given, and
he shall have abundance:
but from him that hath not

shall be taken away
even that which he hath.

30 And

cast ye the unprofitable servant
into outer darkness:
there shall be
weeping and gnashing of teeth.

31 When the Son of man
shall come in his glory, and
all the holy angels with him,
then shall he sit

upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him
shall be gathered all nations: and
he shall separate them
one from another,
as a shepherd divideth

[his] sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep
on his right hand,
but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King
say unto them on his right hand,

25 And I was afraid, and
went and hid thy talent
in the earth; and lo,
here is thy talent;

take it from me
as thou hast from
thine other servants,
for it is thine.

26 His lord answered and
said unto him,
O wicked and slothful servant,
thou knewest that I
reap where I sowed not, and
gather where I have not scattered.

27 Having known this,
therefore, thou oughtest
to have put my money
to the exchangers, and
at my coming

I should have received
mine own with usury.

28 I will take, therefore,
the talent from you, and
give it unto him
who hath ten talents.

29 For unto every one
who hath obtained other talents,
shall be given, and
he shall have in abundance.

30 But from him that hath not
obtained other talents,
shall be taken away
even that which he hath received.

31 And his lord
shall say unto his servants,
Cast ye the unprofitable servant
into outer darkness;
there shall be

weeping and gnashing of teeth.

32 When the Son of Man
shall come in his glory, and
all the holy angels with him,
then he shall sit

upon the throne of his glory;

33 And before him
shall be gathered all nations; and
he shall separate them
one from another,
as a shepherd divideth

sheep from the goats;

the sheep
on his right hand,
but the goats on his left.

34 And he shall sit upon his throne,
and the twelve apostles with him.

35 Then shall the king
say unto them on his right hand,

Come, ye blessed of my Father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you
from the foundation of the world:
35 For I was an hungred, and
ye gave me meat:
I was thirsty, and
ye gave me drink:
I was a stranger, and
ye took me in:
36 Naked, and ye clothed me:
I was sick, and ye visited me:
I was in prison, and
ye came unto me.
37 Then shall the righteous
answer him, saying,
Lord, when saw we thee
an hungred, and fed [thee]? or
thirsty, and gave [thee] drink?
38 When saw we thee
a stranger, and took [thee] in? or
naked, and clothed [thee]?
39 Or when saw we thee sick, or
in prison, and came unto thee?
40 And the King shall answer and
say unto them,
Verily I say unto you,
Inasmuch as ye have done [it]
unto one of the least
of these my brethren,
ye have done [it] unto me.
41 Then shall he say
also unto them on the left hand,
Depart from me, ye cursed,
into everlasting fire,
prepared for the devil and
his angels:
42 For I was an hungred, and
ye gave me no meat:
I was thirsty, and
ye gave me no drink:
43 I was a stranger, and
ye took me not in:
naked, and ye clothed me not:
sick, and in prison, and
ye visited me not.
44 Then shall they also answer him,
saying, Lord, when saw we thee
an hungred, or athirst, or
a stranger, or naked, or
sick, or in prison, and
did not minister unto thee?
45 Then shall he answer them,
saying, Verily I say unto you,
Inasmuch as ye did [it] not
to one of the least of these,
ye did [it] not to me.

Come, ye blessed of my Father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you
from the foundation of the world.
36 For I was an hungered, and
ye gave me meat;
I was thirsty, and
ye gave me drink;
I was a stranger, and
ye took me in;
naked, and ye clothed me;
37 I was sick, and ye visited me;
I was in prison, and
ye came unto me.
38 Then shall the righteous
answer him, saying,
Lord, when saw we thee
an hungered, and fed thee; or
thirsty, and gave thee drink?
39 When saw we thee
a stranger, and took thee in; or
naked, and clothed thee?
40 Or when saw we thee sick, or in
prison, and came unto thee?
41 And the king shall answer and
say unto them,
Verily I say unto you,
inasmuch as ye have done it
unto one of the least
of these my brethren,
ye have done it unto me.
42 Then shall he say
also unto them on the left hand,
Depart from me, ye cursed,
into everlasting fire,
prepared for the devil and
his angels.
43 For I was an hungered, and
ye gave me no meat;
I was thirsty, and
ye gave me no drink;
44 I was a stranger, and
ye took me not in;
naked, and ye clothed me not;
sick, and in prison, and
ye visited me not.
45 Then shall they also answer him,
saying, Lord, when saw we thee
an hungered, or athirst, or
a stranger, or naked, or
sick, or in prison, and
did not minister unto thee?
46 Then shall he answer them,
saying, Verily I say unto you,
Inasmuch as ye did it not
to one of the least of these
my brethren,
ye did it not unto me.

46 And these shall go away
into everlasting punishment:
but the righteous into life eternal.

47 And these shall go away
into everlasting punishment;
but the righteous into life eternal.

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