

New Testament 22
Inherit the Kingdom Prepared for You
(Matthew 25)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(The powerful parables in this chapter have deeper meaning than we usually recognize. Seeing their full depth helps us be better prepared for the coming of Christ. Furthermore, they are all related to the same theme. Understanding that helps us understand them all!)

I. The Parable of the Ten Virgins had meaning for **both** of Christ's comings, and spoke of how to be prepared.

A. **The parable pointed to Christ's First Coming as well as His Return in the Last Days.**

B. We should understand and remember that the covenant made at Sinai was as a marriage contract between Jehovah and Israel. Old Testament prophets and events had repeatedly emphasized that **Jehovah was as a bridegroom to Israel**, and *there were severe consequences for not keeping the covenant to worship Him and Him alone.*

C. John the Baptist testified Jesus was that Bridegroom. *"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, [John the Baptist was that "friend"] which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled (John 3:29)."* (Emphasis added).

1. In fact there was an Israelite wedding tradition that a "friend" of the bridegroom would serve as witness at the betrothal. So **John was witnessing that the Bridegroom had come**, and that His bride should therefore be ready to receive Him. He himself as the "friend of the Bridegroom" was therefore rejoicing in His coming.
2. Furthermore, Jesus through His words and actions, repeatedly testified He was the Bridegroom, who had come.
3. The problem was that **the Bride was not ready to receive Him**. That is, a great number of those who had covenanted with Him were not ready to receive Him now that He had come.
4. All things teach of Christ. So we should ask ourselves whether we are today "friends" of the Bridegroom --- **bearing witness that He has come to restore His Gospel, and will soon come to reign on the earth. And whether we are ready, with our lamps filled, to be called into the wedding feast.**

II. We can learn from those who were not ready at His first coming, how to be prepared for His Second Coming.

A. As we have studied the New Testament, we have seen the tragic reasons for not being prepared. That can help us avoid those things today.

B. Some of the chief reasons of being unprepared were:

1. A lack of desire to know the truth.
2. Lack of faith and belief in spite of all the witnesses of truth given.
3. Unrighteousness.
4. Not knowing or fully understanding the scriptures [Most had not read the scriptures carefully enough to know there would be two comings, and that Jesus would be crucified at the first. For **the scriptures did contain prophecies of everything that happened to Jesus**].

C. Today it is even more needful **to keep our lamps filled with oil, which this parable teaches. But how do we do that?**

1. Additional revelation helps show us how.
2. It was not long after giving these parables that Jesus went to Gethsemane. The very name "Gethsemane" means "The Olive Press." In Gethsemane Jesus endured tremendous suffering to pay the price for and make atonement for our sins.
3. Thus the suffering He endured in that "Olive Press," for the sake of an atoning sacrifice, *provides the most essential "oil" with which to fill our lamps.* We should first fill our lamps with the oil of faith in His atoning sacrifice.
4. Furthermore, *we covenant each Sabbath, to always remember His sacrifice there and upon the cross.* And we are promised if we keep that covenant, we will "always have His spirit to be with us."
4. So keeping His spirit with us continually through that remembrance of Him and His sacrifice is another crucial way to have our lamps filled with oil continually.
5. Christ has renewed His covenants with us in these Latter-days. Keeping those covenants is very essential oil for our lamps.
6. Because the Restoration and all its revelations, covenants and blessings should make it easier to keep our lamps filled, *failure to do so becomes a greater sin.*

IV. The Parable of the Talents is more significant than most of us realize (Mat 25:14-30).

- A. We too often read this parable as relating to just the development of our "skills" [though we know the word "talent" Jesus used does not mean the same thing as it does in our day.]
- B. Jesus gave the parable as a deliberate "follow through" to the Parable of the Ten Virgins, and thus *its theme is related to it.*
- C. After all, when the Savior says of those who were unprofitable servants and buried their "talents" that they should be "*cast... into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 25:30)," we should recognize that is pretty harsh punishment for just neglecting musical or other skills. [If this is so, I am in deep trouble, for what little musical talent I have had is shot]. So the Savior must have had something more significant in mind.
- C. Furthermore, the placement of this parable right after The Parable of the Ten Virgins and before the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, shows it speaks of more serious gifts. And truly, the thoughts behind all three parables are related. Jesus did not just jump willy-nilly from subject to subject. Like all great teachers, He used a train of logic, building His teachings line upon line!
- D. *The real Gifts the Lord was bestowing upon Israel were His teachings, His Priesthood, His sacred ordinances and His sacred covenants. For He was the one "travelling into a far country" -- back into His Father's presence. And He was leaving "His own servants, and delivering unto them His goods." And the question He was asking them was: "What are you going to do with these precious Gifts I have given you?"*
 1. For most of ancient Israel had squandered and yes, *buried* the similar gifts God had given them. They *had not multiplied those blessings by diligently taking them to other nations.*
 2. As a witness of what would be their lot for not multiplying their gifts, *Jesus had cursed the fig tree so that it withered, showing that would be their upcoming fate.*
- E. Now Jesus was establishing a New Israel, with the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy. And one of the first things He stressed was "Go ye unto all nations!" *This New Israel was not to bury their talents as the Old one had done.*
- F. Similarly, we in the Last Days, a Restored Israel, have been given the *Gifts of the Restored Gospel and its New and Everlasting Covenant.*
 1. The question for us is the same --- whether we are going to bury *these* same great gifts given in the Latter-days, or multiply their blessings by sharing them through missionary work,

temple work, and by strengthening others.

IV. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Mat 25:31-46).

A. First, this powerful parable, coming from the Master Himself, shows it is a fallacy to believe that while men are saved by grace, there will be no judgment rendered when it comes to their works!

B. Jesus shows clearly in this parable that men *will be judged* by how they treat others, as well as by their faith in Christ. For Jesus makes clear that how we treat others, even the least of those among us, is counted as *how we treat Him*.

C. Jesus is obviously teaching we must be charitable to those who are **physically** in need: such as the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned.

D. **But Jesus' parable goes far beyond that! For it too relates to what we do with His Gifts of the Gospel.**

1. This parable teaches that men and nations will be judged and rewarded according to how they cared for the **spiritually** needy.

2. When we spread the Gospel we are feeding the *spiritually* hungry and giving drink to the *spiritually* thirsty.

3. When we bring others into the Church, we are "taking in the stranger." We are giving him the comfort and blessings of Jesus' full teachings --- the greatest kind of care and blessings.

4. Particularly important, when *we do temple work, we are visiting those in Spirit Prison.*

5. And even more important, we are helping to set them free!

a. Very few people actually "visit captives in prison." But through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, **all members** can be involved in freeing those in Spirit Prison, and are even urged forward in this **very important work**: by doing Family History and Temple work.

6. Even more wondrous, when one realizes it, through Temple Work, we are *also "clothing the naked."*

a. That is, we are offering to the living doing temple work for themselves, and to the deceased, the special blessing of a witness of the atonement through Jesus' sacred covering. [The word "atonement" means "to cover"]. We do this through the sacred ordinances of "clothing" provided in the temple.

E. While warning men of the judgment, this parable also gives great comfort.

1. If we are diligently serving in these ways unselfishly and not self-righteously, His words add great comfort and satisfaction to such service.

2. Especially when we know **our service is as being done to our dear Savior Himself.**

F. While such service should be given just for the joy of giving, without any hope of reward, still His promises of reward add additional hope, comfort, and anticipated joy.

"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" (Matthew 25:34).

G. Men are indeed saved by Grace. But the Savior has made it very clear in this parable, that in addition to basic "salvation" there are additional rewards given for our Works. And we also testify to our non-member friends that **Latter-day Saints know we are indeed saved by grace. The works we do are to help save others!**