

Today we move into some of the most dramatic dialogues that we can find in the entire New Testament about the second coming of Jesus. Four times in Matthew 24 Christ spoke of His coming again (verses 36, 42, 44, 50). Today's parable reminds us to be ready for this event that Christ repeatedly told us will happen.

The setting for the parable is a wedding. There was no greater social event in a community than a wedding. There were three elements of the marriage ceremony in Jewish culture. First there was the engagement. This was a contract entered into by the father of the groom and the father of the bride. Many, if not most, marriages were arranged in Jewish culture. But even those that were not, the first engagement phase was still contractual between the fathers. The second phase was the betrothal. This was an actual ceremony and it was entered into by the bride and the groom. The engagement was an agreement entered into by the fathers; the betrothal was a covenant by the bride and groom. They were promising to spend the rest of their lives together in marriage. Joseph and Mary were betrothed when Mary miraculously became pregnant with Jesus. After this stage the groom would go back to his parents' home to build on a room for him and the bride to share. That's right; the tradition was to add-on to the husband's parents' house and live with them. Sounds cozy, huh? When the room was complete the groom would return with a great procession of people, which would include all his family and friends and there would be a great celebration and marriage feast. This celebration would last up to one week. At the end of the marriage feast the groom would take the bride to the new room he had built for them. We see Jesus describe this very process in John 14. Read John 14:1-4. What 2 things does Jesus promise us, His bride, that He is going to do?

In today's parable the bride is in the waiting stage prior to the wedding feast. She is excitedly anticipating the great celebration that will take place when she is reunited with her groom for the wedding feast. We see another element of this marriage ceremony in Revelation chapter 19. Read Revelation 19: 6-9. What does this passage tell us will take place in Heaven?

What does verse 7 tell us that the bride has done prior to the celebration?

Knowing that you and I can do nothing to earn salvation, what do you think is meant by "prepared herself"?

This parable is a picture of those who do not prepare themselves. Let me remind you that “once saved, always saved” is not just saying. It is a framework for theology. In other words, since we believe that once you have been saved you cannot lose that salvation we have to read this parable with that in mind. The 10 virgins represent people in the church. They are waiting for the groom to return. However, only 5 were really preparing themselves for the return of the groom. When does the groom return according to verse 6?

Turn to Exodus 12:29. When does this passage tell us the death angel passed over Egypt?

Last week in your study you read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2. Look back at verse 2. How does that verse tell us Christ will return?

The significance of these timeframes is that it is a time when no one expects activity. The 5 foolish bridesmaids seem to be waiting for the groom to return. In reality, they were doing nothing to prepare for that day they knew was coming.

Paul dealt with people like this in 2 Corinthians, people who came to church and appeared to be followers of Christ. However, Paul did not see the “preparation” being made in their lives. He did not see the fruit of a walk with the savior. What does he tell them in 2 Corinthians 13:5?

How does a person do that which Paul instructs us to do in this verse?

**Prayer Primer:** Pray that you will be “preparing” yourself.

Week 5, Day 22

Matthew 25:14-30

Yesterday we studied the preparations that we, as followers, make for the coming of the Lord. Today we will continue that study of the preparations we continuously make as we follow Christ. In today's parable there are three servants or slaves. The Greek word used here is the word "*doulos*". It is translated other places as the term "*bond slave*" or "*bond servant*". It is one of the preferred titles that Paul uses to describe His relationship with Christ. The term comes from the Old Testament. Turn to Deuteronomy 15 and read verse 12-16. What is the end relationship between the master and the slave in this passage?

How is the decision made to remain a slave?

These slaves are slaves by choice. That is the reason the master entrusts his property to slaves. These slaves have chosen to bond themselves to the master and so the master knows they can be trusted. We have bonded ourselves with Christ and Christ entrusts to us the ministry of carrying the Gospel to the entire world. How do we do that? How do we carry the Gospel to the entire world? There are several ways but the most straight-forward is to follow the instructions in the Sermon on the Mount. I want us to remember a truth we have already studied this year. Turn back to Matthew 5:16. How does this verse say we are to take the Gospel to the world?

There is no doubt that we, as followers, are bond-servants. We follow Christ by choice and in following Him we are to show others who He is. Turn to 2 Corinthians 5 and read verses 18-20. In those three verses you find some form of the word reconciled five times. FIVE times in three verses! That would indicate that it is fairly important. Using a dictionary look up the word reconciled and write the definition here:

Now, using that definition of reconciled, write a paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 here:

Now let's turn our attention back to Matthew 25. The point of this parable is that God, who is our master, has given each of us talents. In the parable each of the three slaves received a different amount of talent or, in our case, gifting, or ability. We are not to focus on the different amounts, rather the results. The slave with 5 talents and the slave with 2 talents went about using those talents to increase the master's kingdom. The one slave with 1



Week 5, Day 23

Matthew 25:31-46

After you have read today's passage in the book of Matthew, turn to the book of Revelation and read chapter 19 verses 11-16. In this passage you will see a description of at His second coming. Look up the following words in a dictionary and write the definition beside the corresponding word.

Faithful –

True –

Righteous –

Thinking about the above definitions and referring back to the passage in Revelation, write a description of Jesus at His second coming in your own words.

What emotions are stirred when you read this passage in Revelation?

The parable you read in Matthew 25:1-13 on day 21 of this study was in reference to the rapture of believers in Jesus. Today's passage deals with the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ and the judgment that will follow. Revelation refers to this judgment as the Great White Throne Judgment.

Paraphrase the judgment as Jesus presented it in this passage. To the best of your ability, write what defines a sheep and a goat in this text.

While works will never lead to salvation, salvation will always lead to works. Look up and read James 2:14-26.

Did Abraham's willingness to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice lead to his faith in God or did his faith in God lead to his willingness to offer up his son as a sacrifice? Explain your answer in the space below.

Finish this sentence: Faith without works \_\_\_\_\_.

What does that sentence mean? How do you live that out in your life?

**Prayer Primer:** Pray that you will have an opportunity to put your faith to work today.

Week 5, Day 24

Matthew 26:1-16

Beginning in verse 6 of today's passage is one of the most beautiful acts of worship in the New Testament. Jesus arrived in Jerusalem earlier in the week, coming to the destination that would culminate His earthly ministry. It is apparent that Jesus traveled back and forth to Bethany during the Passion Week. (Glance back at Matthew 21:17) Bethany was just a couple of miles away from Jerusalem. Jesus likely would have traveled through the Kidron Valley and over the Mount of Olives to get to Bethany.

I think we can make the assumption that Simon is really Simon, the former leper. It is possible that Jesus healed him some time prior to this encounter. Isn't it interesting, however, that his former ailment was what identified him. We see that in our own culture in some ways. Perhaps cancer survivor is an example of that.

All of the events surrounding the final week of the physical life of Jesus before His crucifixion and resurrection are significant. In your opinion, what is significant about the actions of the woman in verses 6-7?

Just as the perfume was poured out, Jesus would be poured out as an offering for the sin of humanity. The woman gave her best gift. So did Jesus. She gave liberally and without holding anything back. So did Jesus. Yet, His gift was the best gift ever to be given. His gift prompted worship. It continues to compel us to worship.

But, instead of joining in on the worship, the disciples were indignant. Mark's gospel gives us the added information that the disciples thought the perfume might have been sold for 300 denarii. (Mark 14:5) Look back at the parable found in Matthew 20:1-16. What amount did the laborers and the landowner agree would be the wage for one day's work?

What distracted the disciples from worship?

What distracts you from worship?

Read Psalm 95. It is a psalm of praise and worship but also one of warning. Summarize the message of the psalm in your own words in the space provided:

The bookends to today's act of worship and the conversation that followed are found in verses 1-5 and 14-16. What is the subject of those two sets of verses?

As we conclude Matthew 26 and study chapter 27 over the next few days the intensity of the situation will increase. You are likely very familiar with the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus. It is our desire, however, that you will read and study from a fresh viewpoint that starts with worship. Many things will come up in your life over the next few weeks that might tempt to distract you. Persevere, follower, and seek to learn something new and powerful through the message of God's Word.

**Prayer Primer:** Use portions of Psalm 95 in your time of prayer today.

Today we look to the events of the Passover feast. I want to give you just a little insight into the Jewish festival calendar. There was, for example, the Feast of Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, as it is known. That particular feast was to celebrate God's provision in the harvest. They would celebrate the fact that God had given them everything they had through their crops. So every year on Pentecost they would have this wonderful time of celebration remembering God's provision.

There was also the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, was a feast to commemorate their wandering in the wilderness when they lived in tents. They recounted how God provided for them there by giving them food and water and leading them through those days in the wilderness.

There was the Feast of Lights. The Feast of Lights is usually associated with celebrating the deliverance of Israel brought about by Esther, the queen, and intervening when Israel would have been wiped out. The Feast of Lights celebrates that time of deliverance.

There was the Feast of Dedication. We know it as Hanukkah. The Feast of Dedication commemorated the deliverance of Israel under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus in the time between the Old and New Testament. It has only been celebrated since about 167 B.C. when it happened.

There was the Feast of Trumpets which is the new year.

Those were the major elements of the Jewish commemorative calendar that they were busy celebrating. Above and beyond all of those, the greatest of all their celebrations in many ways was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Both are mentioned in verse 17 of today's text. First, there was the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the end of the verse, the word Passover. This was an eight-day festival. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were combined. The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted one week, from the fifteenth of Nisan until the twenty-first, as prescribed by the Old Testament. That was a seven-day feast. The day before was the Passover. The combination was an eight-day festival. In fact, they were connected in the minds of the people so much so that the Feast of Unleavened Bread could be a term describing the whole eight days or the Passover could be a term describing the whole eight days.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread dates back to the Exodus. Turn to Exodus 12 and read verse 15-25. Israelite women would make the dough for the bread and before baking it they would take a small piece off and let it sit over night. The dough would ferment and it would make yeast. This practice is called using a "starter." They would "start" the next batch of dough with what they had carried over from the day before. In the Exodus passage the Lord tells them to take no "starter" with them for the bread. Why did God tell the Israelites to use no "starter for the bread?

The feast called The Day of Atonement was a festival that was highlighted by a sacrifice in the Holy of Holies. When the sacrifice was made, the blood was taken in the Holy of Holies

and sprinkled on the altar. Once a year the high priest did that in order to atone for the sins of the nation for the year. This is the highest holy day of the year for the Jews, even today.

That is the backdrop for this passage. Now let's think on the deeper truth of the Passover meal. In verse 28 Jesus tells them that the cup symbolizes the "new covenant". Using a dictionary write the definition of the word covenant.

When dealing with biblical covenants the important thing to remember is that God has to be involved. Marriage is a covenant because you cannot love your spouse the way you are instructed to love them without God empowering you to love them that way. Write the covenant that God establishes with His people in the passages listed below:

Genesis 9:8-11

Genesis 12:1-3

Ezekiel 37:27

Revelation 21:3

The new covenant is really simple. People owe a sin debt. We are not able to pay it. However, as long as it is owed we cannot come into the presence of a Holy God. Jesus paid the sin debt. We must accept His sacrifice in order to ratify the covenant. It is that simple. The new covenant basically says that God will provide the sacrifice, but we must choose to accept the sacrifice. Jesus knew, in that moment, that this new covenant that He spoke of would require His ultimate sacrifice.

According to Luke 9:23, what does the new covenant demand from those who chose to accept Him?

**Prayer Primer:** Say thank-you to God for the wonderful new covenant.

