

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 21 Jesus
The Last Week of the Life of Jesus III

Opening: "Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4

Today's lesson is from Matthew chapters 24-25 because only Matthew contains the parables of the virgins and the talents.

The Destruction of Jerusalem Foretold

Read Matthew 24: 1-14

1. As His disciples showed Him the buildings of the temple, what prophecy did Jesus make concerning it? The strength and wealth of the temple roused the admiration of the Galileans. The great stones in its fortifications promised safety from its enemies. According to Josephus, some of the stones were nearly seventy feet long, twelve feet high, and eighteen feet wide. The temple was built of white limestone, and its beauty and strength made it admired by all nations. It took forty-six years to finish, and ten thousand skilled workmen worked in its construction. Jesus startled them by foretelling its utter destruction, which, within forty years, was fulfilled. In 70 AD after a three-year siege, the Roman emperor took Jerusalem and destroyed its temple. Nothing was left of the temple but the vast platform upon which it stood. The destruction of the city and temple was so complete that those who visited it could hardly believe that it had ever been inhabited.
2. After hearing the above prophecy, what questions did the disciples of Jesus ask of Him? Fourfold tells us that during this discussion that there may have been only Peter, James, John and Andrew based on the account in Mark. They wanted to know when the temple would be destroyed. What signs would come before its destruction. What will be the signs of Christ coming and what signs will show the end of the world?
3. In response to the disciples' questions, what warnings did Jesus give to them? There would be appearance of false christs. While we don't have names of any of these, but Josephus does allude to some groups. Given Jesus' popularity and the desire of the people for a political leader, the times would have produced false leaders. He told them there would be wars and rumors of wars but Jerusalem would be safe during these. Alford cites three threats by Roman Emperors against the Jews as well as three uprising by Gentiles during this period. He also cites five

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 21 Jesus
The Last Week of the Life of Jesus III

different earthquakes that happened before 70 AD. There are famines and a pestilence that killed 30 thousand in Rome recorded by historians of the time.

4. What, in relation to the gospel, did Jesus say would occur before the "end" would come? The persecution of the Christians would start before the destruction of Jerusalem. The gospel would be preached to all the known world. Paul wrote this in Colossians seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Colossians 1: 23 You must, of course, continue faithful on a firm and sure foundation, and must not all yourselves to be shaken from the hope you gained when you heard the gospel. It is of this gospel that I, Paul, became a servant this gospel which has been preached to everybody in the world.

Read Matthew 24: 15-28

There are further warnings to the disciples that may be in Judea or Jerusalem when the armies surround the area. You must run and not wait. The pregnant women and those with little babies will have a harder time to move quickly.

5. What is the "great tribulation" mentioned in verse 21? The destruction of Jerusalem. For whose sake would its "days" be shortened? God's chosen people. Why? If God had not shortened the siege and restrained the Romans, they would have exterminated the Jewish race. According to Josephus, one million one hundred thousand died and 97 thousand were taken captive. Many were tortured including on crosses. Josephus wrote afterward that no other city "ever suffered miseries, nor did any age, from the beginning of the world, ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness that this was." He emphasized that no city was punished so badly. The Roman armies were fittingly called the abomination of desolation, because, being heathen armies, they were an abomination to the Jews, and because they brought desolation upon the country. The sight of them, therefore, became the appointed sign for Christians to leave the city. Most commentators agree that most Christians were not in Jerusalem when it fell because they had listened to the warning and left the city. The Jews however seeing Jerusalem as a fortified city, came into the city from the countryside and many were destroyed with the city.

6. Why did Jesus warn about "false christs?" Josephus records that there were false Christs during this time. Jesus warns His followers not to be deceived. What figure does He use to illustrate how obvious the coming of the true Christ

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 21 Jesus
The Last Week of the Life of Jesus III

would be? He equates it to lightning flashing across the sky that everyone can see for themselves.

Read Matthew 24:29-35

Jesus now moves ahead to the events surrounding his return in glory. These are signs of the end. These may not be literal images but rather, the significance of what is about to happen is so great that life as it has been previously experienced cannot continue. A new age is dawning.

7. After telling His disciples the signs which would precede the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, when did Jesus say the destruction would occur? This is the only place where Jesus refers to the "sign" the disciples requested in verse 3, and he does not tell them what it is. Isaiah 11:12 talks about a signal flag to show the nations that He is gathering scattered people of Israel from the four corners of the earth. The 18th chapter of Isaiah adds the blowing of the bugle to the signal flag. The 49th chapter of Isaiah says that the Sovereign Lord will signal the nations and they will bring your children home. Jeremiah mentions the blast of trumpets, while the 51st chapter of Jeremiah says to blow the trumpets so that all nations can hear. All of these signs are a part and parcel of Christ's coming but they are not something that allows believers to predict when the second coming will occur. The Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven partially recalls Daniel 7:13-14, in which a privileged human is ushered into the very presence of God to be given universal authority over the kingdoms of the earth. Here, though, the clouds usher Christ from heaven to earth. It is not clear if "the peoples of the earth will mourn" in repentance or in grief because it is now too late to repent. The fig tree can be a symbol for Israel but here Guzik believes that Jesus is using an everyday tree that was seen often in Israel. The fig tree follows reliable growth cycles related to the seasons. He tells His disciples that just as they know summer is coming when they see leaves on the fig tree that when they see the signs, they will know that the coming of Jesus in glory is near. Just the physical world changes with the seasons the spiritual world will show signs of change. To a Christian these changes indicate the coming of the Son of God—a change from a worse to a better season. Most commentators believe that the word "generation" in this passage refers to the fact that the Jewish people will be preserved until the second coming of Christ. He assures His disciples that His words are more durable than even the great temple which He described accurately as being destroyed.

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 21 Jesus
The Last Week of the Life of Jesus III

Read Matthew 24:36-44

8. Who alone knew the precise time the above event would occur? Only God knows. This is a profound secret. Explain. The knowledge of his return was not given to angelic heavenly beings, who apparently have superhuman but not unlimited knowledge. Their comprehension accords with what is God's will for them to know. Nor was it given to the Son to know the time of his return. What did Jesus say would be the general conditions at the time of this destruction? Just as people were doing their daily routines in the time of Noah and of Lot, people will do their daily routine during the last days. Jesus' point is not that these activities were sinful, but that the people were so wrapped up in everyday activities that they were caught off-guard because they had no concern for righteousness and spiritual realities. He cautions His disciples and their followers to be ready. Fourfold stresses that this just doesn't apply to the end of times, but also to our own death. We should be ready.

Read Matthew 24:45-51

9. In order to teach His disciples to be ready for His coming, to what did Jesus liken the manner of that coming? The parable of the two servants continues the theme of the preceding parable, now focusing on faithfulness as one's responsibility in being prepared for the Lord's return. A steward was the chief servant, head over the master's household affairs and staff and expected to care for the master's personal affairs. The test of his responsibility occurs when the master is absent; will he faithfully carry out his tasks? If he has done so, when the master returns, he will be given more responsibility. However, the test of the master's absence will also reveal an unfaithful steward. The long absence of his master allows the servant to abuse his authority, mistreat his fellow servants, and consort drunkenly with bad acquaintances — activities that are characteristic of idolaters, pagans, unbelievers, and those who have turned away from the faith. When the master does return, the servant is caught unaware. The wicked servant is further described as being placed with "the hypocrites," one of Jesus' favorite expressions for sinners who put on external righteousness that attempts to mask an evil heart. His place with hypocrites deserves treatment that is proverbial for the eternal condemnation of hell, "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth". The wicked servant is a false, professing disciple. The master's departure

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 21 Jesus
The Last Week of the Life of Jesus III

and delay give rise to a test, while his return demands an accounting that reveals the servants for what they were even before the master's departure and delay.

The Parables of the Virgins and the Talents. The Final Judgment.

Read Matthew 25:1-13

10. In the parable of the ten virgins, what preparation did the five wise virgins make that the five foolish one did not? This parable is about watchfulness. The point of the parable is the unknown in the coming of the Son of Man. The Old Testament portrayed Yahweh as the "husband" of his people Israel which paves the way for Jesus to become the bridegroom of the church. The ten virgins are bridesmaids who are not yet married. Following typical Jewish marriage customs, a groom left his parents' home with a group of friends to go to the home of his bride, where nuptial ceremonies were carried out. After this, the entire wedding party formed a processional to a wedding banquet, normally at the home of the bridegroom. The wedding feast was often held at night. The lamp was a larger dome-shaped container with rags soaked in the oil to light the way while a person was walking outside. These outdoor torches could last for several hours when extra containers of oil were brought for replenishing the lamp, as the wise virgins have done. They are prepared for be a long wait.

11. What request did the foolish virgins make of the wise ones? Since it is a long wait, they fall asleep and when they are awakened, the ten foolish virgins ask the wise ones to share their oil. They can't or their own lamps would go out so they tell them to go and buy more oil. There probably weren't shops open at this late hour so they may have awakened an owner because they do return with oil but the door is closed.

12. What happened while the five foolish virgins were gone to get more oil? While the foolish virgins are off to find oil, the procession with the bridegroom finally arrives. The wise virgins are "ready" to go with the bridegroom to the wedding banquet because they have adequately prepared. The foolish virgins are not, which Jesus accentuates by stating, "And the door was shut." Throughout the Old Testament God was described as "knowing" people He had chosen. This theme is carried on in the New Testament with Christ.

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 21 Jesus
The Last Week of the Life of Jesus III

13. In concluding the parable of the virgins, which admonition is given to all who hear it? Jesus addresses his disciples directly to drive home the lesson of the parable: "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

14. What is the main lesson of the above parable? This is another distinction between two types of people — those who are truly disciples of Jesus and those who are not. Disciples of Jesus will be ready for the arrival of the Son of Man. The destiny of those who are not ready awaits outside the shut door.

Read Matthew 25:14-30

15. Briefly summarize the parable of the talents. This parable is a continuation of the qualities of those who serve God. The landowner is portrayed here as wealthy, for he has liquid assets of at least eight talents. In terms of today's value, the landowner disperses approximately \$1,977,600 to the three servants. Comparisons are difficult to appreciate, however, because such a sum in first-century Palestine would have been far more disproportionate to the average worker than in modern times. The sums are distributed according to the talents and abilities of the servants. The first and second servants immediately make effective use of their entrusted amounts, probably setting up some kind of business and making a capital return on the original investment that equals the original five and two talents. The third servant simply digs a hole, into which he places the master's one talent. After a long time, the landowner returns. "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" The identical statement of praise to both servants indicates that the point of the parable is not on the total amount earned but on faithful responsibility in living up to one's potential and giftedness. The reward of earnings bestowed may differ, but both servants received the identical joy in the presence of their master. The wickedness of the third slave primarily stems from his attitude about his master, which in turn has led to laziness and bad stewardship. The way he conceives of him "you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed" causes him to fear and then to hide away the talent and not seek to advance the master's capital. The servant's misperception of the master has produced alienation, mistrust, fear, and then personal laziness. Had he truly loved his master, he would not have attempted to place the blame on him but

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 21 Jesus
The Last Week of the Life of Jesus III

would have operated out of love. It reminds me of the attitude of people who see God in the Old Testament as angry and fearsome, and yes, He displays those qualities but more often He displays love and unfathomable patience. As we discovered in an earlier parable, burying money was quite common. While Jews were prohibited from charging interest on loans to other Jews, they could loan money to Gentiles and charge interest, which they did. The moneychangers who made these loans are probably who Jesus is referring to as the bankers. In a surprising twist, the talent that this servant had was taken away and given to the man with ten talents.

16. What is the main lesson of the parable of the talents? It demonstrates that the use of our God-given talents is a responsibility for those who follow Jesus. The first two servants are true disciples; the third is not. A person's faithfulness is evidence as to whether he or she is truly one of Jesus' own.

Read Matthew 25:31-46

17. What will occur when the "Son of Man comes in His glory?" Jesus gives promises of reward and warnings of judgment that will accompany his coming as the glorious Son of Man. The emphasis is squarely on judgment of those who are excluded and the reward for those who are admitted to the kingdom. The scene switches now to the glorious coming of the Son of Man. He is accompanied in his glory with all the angels, and he sits on his throne of glory. Before him all of the nations will be gathered. The expression "the nations" means both Jews and Gentiles who have followed the Great Commission. The nations aren't judged but rather the people within them: "He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." "Sheep" is a consistent symbol for the people of God. Goats aren't mentioned very often in the New Testament but in the Old Testament they are mentioned as animals of sacrifice. Remember the scapegoat sent out in the wilderness on the Day of Atonement. In most areas of the world sheep and goats aren't mixed. But in the lands surrounding Palestine they often run together, and native breeds can look alike in size, color, and shape.

18. In the depiction of the judgment Jesus gives in this chapter, what will the King say to those on His: A. Right hand? The right-hand is the place of honor and while the left hand usually doesn't denote dishonor, it does here. The King addresses the sheep on his right as "blessed by my Father." The blessing consists

Bible Study Class
Clayton Presbyterian Church
Lesson 21 Jesus
The Last Week of the Life of Jesus III

of their inheritance, which is the kingdom they now receive, not because they have earned it through their own efforts but because it is a gift of their relationship with the Father and the Son. Why? The sheep cared for Jesus when he was in need with hunger, thirst, being a stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned.

Read Isaiah 58: 6-10

The surprise of the "righteous" sheep indicates that their actions are done from their love and not from seeking reward. In caring for the needs of "the least" of these brothers of Jesus, they have served Jesus. Jesus affirms that believers are to care for one another, but especially the least and insignificant among them. This does not absolve a general mercy that Christians must demonstrate toward all in need. B. Left hand? The goats are just as surprised as the sheep. They were not condemned to eternal punishment for some external sin but for their failure to do the right thing. Why? "Sins of omission" are also worthy of eternal damnation, because they are evidence that a person has not been made righteous by association with the kingdom of God. Righteous acts spring from a heart sanctified by the Spirit of God while unrighteous acts, even of omission, indicate a heart lacking in the Spirit's work of transformation.

19. What will be the reward of the righteous? Eternal life. The wicked? Eternal punishment. How long will each experience their respective "rewards?" For all eternity.

Closing prayer: Jesus, help us to follow the directions that You have given. While we wait for Your return, help us to serve all who need our help. In your holy name, Amen.

Matthew 24: 1-14	Matthew 25:1-13	Isaiah 58: 6-10
Matthew 24:15-28	Matthew 25:14-30	
Matthew 24: 29-35	Matthew 25:31-46	
Matthew 24: 36-44		
Matthew 24: 45-51		