

Matthew 25:1-13 | Mark Minnella

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[0:00] So we're continuing with what is called the Olivet Discourse. It's named that, I suppose, because what we see from chapter 24 and verse 3, it says this, as Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately.

So the setting from the beginning of chapter 24 to the end of chapter 25, Jesus is talking to his closest men up on this mountain. And I thought two weeks ago, David did a very, very good job of presenting the timeline of the 70 weeks of Daniel, or 77s, which really represent years.

They're broken up into 62 weeks, which represents 434 years, then 7, which is 49 years, and then 1, which I believe is the 7-year tribulation period that is now in the future.

So we are currently, where it says that gap, we are currently between the cross and Jesus coming in the clouds, what we would call the rapture, and then 7 years of tribulation on the earth, that terrible time that is talked about in the book of Revelation, also in the book of Daniel.

We're not going to study that today, but we do have to get through some of this in order to understand our passage in the context in which it's written. So today we are in between the 69th and 70th week in that time period.

[1:33] Most people call it the church age or the age of grace. And then if you were here last week, we had a guest speaker, Kevin Fitzgerald. I thought he did a very good job showing us that in spite of the confusion of some people, that scripture teaches us that once we are saved from the penalty of sin, that that's a forever thing, it's a one-time thing, and it cannot be lost.

So as we approach the passage, we need to keep a few things in mind here. First of all, these men were all Jews. It's Jesus with all Jews, Old Testament Jews.

Matthew's Gospel is written to the Jews. I believe Jesus is talking primarily about the future of the Jewish nation. And fourthly, I've said before that while the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are in the New Testament, they're pretty much Old Testament books in terms of setting, especially Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which are called the Synoptic Gospels.

All of the parables are in those three, none in John. Galatians chapter 4 and verse 4 reminds us that Jesus was born of a woman.

He was born under the law to redeem those under the law. I believe that it's very important to remember that this book was written primarily to Jewish people and that Jesus is here talking with all Jewish men.

[3:00] These disciples, while many of them at this point believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, they didn't understand the mission. At this point, they don't understand his mission.

They don't know why he came. They were still looking for a political savior, one who would restore the nation of Israel. In Luke chapter 24, we read the story of Jesus, and he appears to some disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Now, this is after the resurrection. And they say this, the chief priests had him crucified, but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.

They didn't get it. They did not get it. The people who only had the Old Testament could not separate Messiah's first coming from the second coming.

So in the Old Testament, there's over 100 prophecies that talk about the first coming, and almost twice as many that talk about the second coming. But how were people to separate them?

[4:07] They couldn't. They couldn't. There was no way to do it. So they didn't understand that the first coming, he came humbly. He was born of a virgin.

He kept the law. He went to a cross. He died on that cross, and he rose again. And he did that to save people from their sins. But they were looking for the political Messiah.

It's the second coming to save Israel from the Roman Empire. It's been said that when God revealed truth in the Old Testament to the prophets, that he told them what to write, and they wrote it.

You can look for yourself in 1 Peter 1, verse 10 to 12. It talks about that. But they didn't have a timeline. So what I've read is this.

The Old Testament writers, it was kind of like if you're driving west on Highway 70, and you keep wanting to see the mountains, and you cross into the border for Colorado, and you're like, where's the mountains?

[5:15] Where's the mountains? You've got to get to Lyman before you see the mountains, right? But here's what they said. It's called mountain peaks of prophecy is the description of this term. These Old Testament writers would see this mountain, and this mountain, and this mountain.

But they didn't see all the land in between it. And so this is what they had. And the land in between it then would represent those years that they never saw.

So they'd see an event in the future. They'd write about it. In fact, many of them didn't even know what they wrote. God dictated it. They wrote it. But they saw the events in the future, but they couldn't put them in order.

And so we're fortunate now. We have the New Testament. And so we understand some things that those poor folks didn't. We know that when Jesus came the first time, he tried to explain it.

He told them three times at least that it's recorded that I'm going to go to a cross and die. If you want evidence that they didn't get it, Peter stood up with a sword and cut off the guy's ear.

[6:23] We'll never let that happen. Get out of the way, Satan. You don't understand the plan. He will come a second time. He will come a second time to judge and to set up his kingdom. That's in the future.

And so what we see here is that these men are asking Jesus about the future, but mostly as it pertains to the nation of Israel. Hey, Jesus, when are you going to bring in the kingdom?

They think a political kingdom. So today there are some folks who would say that God is done with the nation of Israel and that the church, that's all the saved people of God around the world, the church, they would call spiritual Israel.

I need to say this because how we view and how we interpret the scriptures surrounding this will determine how we understand passages like our passage today.

I told a couple of people, I said, this is not one of my fun passages. I can't have a lot of fun with this. It's really technical. But I think it's very, very important to understand this if we don't understand scripture in its context.

[7:32] Romans chapter 11, verse 25, we read this. Israel has experienced a hardening until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. God is not done with Israel. He's not.

He just hit the pause button. Revelation chapter 7 and Revelation chapter 21 talk about the 12 tribes of Israel.

That's in the future. Now, how can they be the church? We don't have tribes. It's the fact that God has put Israel aside for the moment and is dealing with people on an individual basis.

But at a time in the future, God will go after his people. We need to read and study the Bible in context. We can't just take a passage out of scripture and say this is what it means today, period.

We have to view it in context. I was told a funny story years ago about a person who had never read the Bible and thought, well, I'm going to read the Bible. So this guy didn't know where to start.

[8:35] So he picked up a Bible and he just kind of opened it and said, I'm going to start here. And he read the passage about where Judas went and hanged himself. And he thought, well, that's not very helpful.

Let me try this again. So he closed it and he opened it up again and he read these words. Now you go and do likewise. Not very helpful. Not very helpful.

Can't just pull pieces out of the Bible without understanding the context. In other words, who it was written to originally and why. One important thing to keep in mind is that this is a parable. Most good Bible scholars would say that you don't teach doctrine from parables. Their story is meant to illustrate a point. So on your outline there, it says six things to look at when approaching a parable.

Number one, consider the audience. Who is Jesus talking to? Secondly, consider the introduction. Our introduction is in chapter 24, verse 3, where it says, at that time.

[9:39] So we're talking about a future time. Future for them and future for us. Consider similar parables, especially if they're given together.

We have three of them here. This is the middle of the three. Consider the interpretation provided in the text. Well, we don't have that. Not on this one. Sometimes Jesus will tell a parable to the crowd and then he takes his select guys aside and he explains it to them.

I like that better. Then we know what to believe. But he doesn't do that here. Number five, determine the main characters or elements. Number six, verify that the interpretation is consistent with the rest of Scripture.

Probably the most important one there. One of the reasons we don't teach doctrine from parables is the story many times is just trying to make a point or maybe several points.

The example would be in our parable today. You have five women that are told to go and buy oil at one point in the story. You don't have any oil. Go buy oil. Now, if we say that oil represents the Holy Spirit, which it does in Scripture, then if we got down into this parable, we'd say, well, can you really go buy the Holy Spirit?

[10:53] Well, no, you can't. In fact, there's a story in Acts where a guy tries to do that and Paul rebukes him. So it's a parable. It's a story.

And it's meant to illustrate a point or some points. And then the point really is, okay? So I'll give you the point. That way, if you want to go to sleep, you can wake up at the end.

The point is this. Five were ready and five were not. That's what it is. So two additional things I put. We already mentioned that the word parable never occurs in the Gospel of John. That's interesting. If you look at John 20, 31, you find out John wrote his book specifically to teach people how to get saved. And so there's no parables there. And then number two, it says there's approximately 40 parables of Jesus in the three synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Seven are in all three. Six are in two. Fifteen are in only Luke. Eleven only in Matthew. This is one of them. And there's one that's only in Mark. Now here at Bethel, we teach a dispensational view of Scripture.

[11:58] That is that we see Scripture being laid out in a certain pattern. Okay? Others have taught that before.

I'm not going to teach that today, just to put it up for illustration. But it's important to understand that if you don't do this, then you can make some erroneous conclusions.

I'll put it that way. So one of the things about dispensational truth is that we see that the promises God made to the nation of Israel are not transferred to the New Testament people of God.

They're still valid. They just haven't been fulfilled yet. So again, we'll look at the setting. As I mentioned, it's Jesus with his disciples up on a mountain, the Mountain of Olives. It's just a few days before his death, probably Tuesday, Tuesday night of the Passion Week.

Right? The first night, Jesus does not go back to Bethany. So remember, Sunday, Jesus gets on the colt, rides into Jerusalem, Hosanna, Palm Sunday, we call it.

[13:05] He goes to the temple, chases out the money changers, returns to Bethany. Monday, back to Jerusalem, teaches in the temple, back to Bethany again. Tuesday, back to Jerusalem, lots and lots of teaching.

And then to the Mount of Olives with his disciples. And he stays there for the night. Again, back to Matthew 24, 3. As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. So it's just this little group of guys. Tell us, they said, what will happen and what will be the signs of your coming at the end of the age. So future time. So Jesus now tells them a parable, really three parables.

Our passage, as I said, is the middle one. But we need to understand that the point of this parable is that it's about the future, and it's about a very specific time.

Our passage begins with at that time. So it's a future event. I believe, I believe this is the time at the end of the seven-year tribulation.

[14:09] You can study that in Revelation. It's a terrible, terrible time where God's judgment will be poured out on the earth. We see the groom in this passage, but where's the bride?

Where's the bride? The bride of Christ in the New Testament is the church, us.

And I believe that the bride of Christ is already gone. When we get to this period, we're not going to be here. Those of us who are born again will be in heaven.

There's an event called the rapture that takes place, I believe, at the beginning of the tribulation period so that God does not pour out his judgment on us. I've been freed from that judgment.

Jesus took it and went to the cross and died so that I don't have to take that judgment. And I believe in a physical way, then the church will be raptured out before the seven-year tribulation.

[15:04] This is described in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, starting in verse 13 through 512. You can read that yourself. And also, I believe, in Revelation chapter 4.

So then, looking at chapter 24 and all these horrible things, look at this. It says, The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

That's the tribulation. That's the tribulation. That seven-year period described as the 70th week of Daniel and in the book of Revelation.

But here's the thing. I brought one of these books along. You can always find people to agree or disagree with you, but this is a book that a lot of us use when we study the book of Matthew. It's called Christ-Centered Exposition.

It's by a guy named Platt. And Platt is not a dispensationalist. How do I know that? Because I studied him. All right? And so I'm just going to read a little bit to illustrate a point that if we don't correctly understand context, and we don't see who the original people were, then it could lead us to some conclusions that may not be accurate.

[16:18] All right? So here's a couple excerpts from this fellow. He says, It's clear then that the kingdom of heaven is not for those who simply respond to an invitation. Okay. Got to be saved.

All the bridesmaids had done that, so to speak. Similarly, the kingdom of heaven is not for those who simply make a confession. Skip down a little bit. He goes, I have a problem with that.

I have a big problem with that. You see? You're laughing at me. I have a big problem with that. Because here's the thing, friends.

If I have anything to do with my salvation, if you have anything to do with your salvation, I'll see you in hell. We don't have a chance. It's faith alone and Christ alone and nothing else.

We're doomed. And so when you read these guys, and they say, We need to endure to the end. Yeah, these people need to endure to the end.

[17:32] They're going through a terrible time. There's going to be judgment poured out on the earth. When you read it in Revelation, it's frightening. Yeah, they need to endure to, but salvation is saved from the physical stuff here.

We're born again. We're saved forever. That's the end of that. So I just do that to point out that I think it's just something that is easily confused.

And you can read a lot of guys like that that will confuse you. And so what's going to happen is that because of all this judgment, many of the Jews will be looking for their promised Messiah.

It talks about that. And some of them are going to get saved during this terrible time called the tribulation. And now, boy, they want out, right? So all these bridesmaids, they want to get in.

Hey, let's get out of this judgment. Let's go to the feast. All right? And that's what I think it is. It's talking to Jews who've made it through these terrible seven years, and they should be waiting for their Messiah to usher them into the earthly kingdom.

[18:35] That's called the millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ. So I mentioned in the scriptures that oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. And so I think the point of the whole parable is this. You have these Jewish people.

They wanted to be part of the party. They heard some good things about the feast and they wanted to join in. They wanted to be delivered from the terrible things that were happening. But some of them were not really ever saved.

And just how Kevin Fitzgerald last week reminded us of how once a person is saved, they can never lose it. Well, on the other end, once the door is shut, it's over.

No more time to get saved. When we take our last breath, when our heart beats for the last time, if we're not saved, we're not going to get a second chance.

So, if this is really all about Jewish people, and it's talking about the future, like, what can we learn from this? I think there's a couple of things.

[19:48] There were ten. All ten were invited. All ten were excited. But only five truly belonged to the Lord. They all looked alike. They all got cleaned up and put on their best dresses.

They all even had a lamp. But only five of them had oil. Today, there's lots of churches meeting today. With lots of people attending. A person might look good.

They might sound good. They might have been attending church for years. Involved in programs, ministries. But they've never been born again. They're not saved. They've never had their sins paid for.

And for these folks, when they die, they're going to be knocking on the door. Hey, let me in. I was a good person. I attended church.

I gave money. I gave my time. I served on committees. I helped people. I was baptized. I prayed a prayer. I lived a good life. And sadly, the response from Jesus. Look at verse 12.

[20:49] I tell you the truth. I don't know you. It's going to be a sad day for some people. Glad I'm not one of them.

And I guess the second thing would be this. For us who do know Jesus, we need to keep our lamps burning for him. Amen? Let's pray. Father God, thank you so much.

For your word. Thank you for even the parables that are difficult to understand. Lord, I pray that you would change us from the inside out to be more like Jesus.

That we would keep our lamps burning bright for him as we await that time when you will call us home. Amen. Amen.